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### 3. Let's Talk about S...: The Influence of *Cinéma Vérité* on Sex Education in French National Television around 1968

Christian Bonah

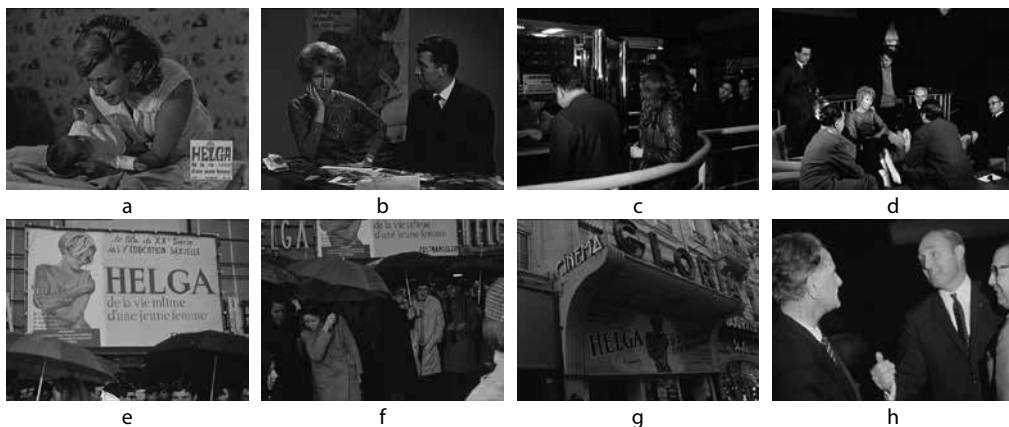
#### Abstract

Studying the French audiovisual mediascape the contribution asks when and how the issue of sexuality and sexual education surfaced on TV. As direct cinema *micro-trottoire* techniques met sex education they challenged classical talk shows. Thereby they reframed who could be a speaking subject in front of the TV camera. Contrasting official TV shows used in a systematic fashion as principal primary source the contribution moves on to look at school television and amateur videos, used as counter-archives. How did these multiple screens differ in informing or educating about sexuality? Their comparative and integrated analysis emphasizes how intimate, ordinary, and 'real' self-exhibition in intimate confessional scenes and unscripted street interviews became key portraits and tropes situated on the fence between exploring and exploiting.

**Keywords:** sex education, television, France, 1970s, direct cinema, school television, ORTF, contraception, birth control, abortion, sexuality

Between late February and early May 1968, four news reports from regional centres for televised news (Centre d'actualités télévisée, CAT)<sup>1</sup>— which had been created in a half-hearted attempt to decentralize and democratize Gaullist television in 1964–1965 by the Minister of Information, Alain Peyrefitte—reported on an unusual event, far from the usual regional, political, or sports news. Barely two months before the heady days of May 1968, a

<sup>1</sup> Lafon, *Histoire de la télévision régionale*, pp. 66–80.



3.1. a/b: Cinéma: Sortie du film *Helga*, Nord actualités télé, 29 February 1968, 02:45 minutes; c/d: Magazine: *Le problème de l'éducation sexuelle*, Provence Actualités, 29 February 1968, 06:33 minutes; e/f: '*Helga*', Limousin actualités, 22 March 1968, 15 seconds; g/h: *Le film Helga à Lyon*, Rhône Alpes actualités 2 May 1968, 26 seconds (source: INA Archives).

cinematic event received television news coverage from Lille to Marseille, Limoges to Lyons. French television news reported on large crowds gathering in front of cinemas, spectators fainting, and politicians and officials viewing and discussing a particular film. At the centre of it all was the commercial theatrical screening of the recently released French adaptation of the West German sex education film *Helga: The Intimate Life of a Young Woman* (1967).<sup>2</sup>

It all began with a two-and-a-half-minute report televised by the Lille regional news. The report included a studio interview with the gynaecologist Marie-Andrée Lagroua Weill-Hallé appearing at the beginning of the French *Helga* adaptation.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Lagroua Weill-Hallé was one of the founders of the French family-planning organization La Maternité heureuse in 1956 (after 1960, known as MFP) who, since 1960, had been establishing birth control centres throughout France, despite the legal barriers posed by the then standing 1920 law. The news report opens with a maternal scene featuring a newborn from *Helga*'s intimate life, then moves to a studio discussion (Figures 3.1a–3.1h). The tone of the interview is set by Dr. Lagroua Weill-Hallé, who states that the film has much to offer young audiences on the subject of procreation. Praising the film as 'sound, precise and clear', the interviewer raises the question of an age restriction for viewers, but concludes that, as a father and educator, he is grateful that the producers had created such an

2 *Helga: Vom Werden des menschlichen Lebens* (UK poster title: *Helga: The Intimate Life of a Young Woman*), directed by Erich F. Bender, RINCO-Film (Munich), released on 22 September 1967. On *Helga*, see: Schwarz, 'Helga (1967)'; Schwarz, 'Vom Jahrmarktspektakel'; Winkler, 'Biology, Morality and Gender'; Laukötter, 'Politik im Kino', pp. 413–430.

3 Le Naour and Valenti, *Histoire de l'avortement*, pp. 207–214.

informative, well-made film. On the same day, a six-and-a-half-minute news report from Marseille broadened the discussion, with Dr. Lagroua Weill-Hallé again the focus. At the studio were a school physician, a representative of a French family-planning organization, a social worker, a representative of the state orphan service, and a general practitioner. The Catholic Church was absent, and the unanimous conclusion was that the film was informative and that it stimulated further questions and discussion about issues in sex education. Three weeks later, *Limousin News*, providing footage for the national Parisian Office de radiodiffusion television française (ORTF) office, took a different perspective. Their sequence switched from the erotically suggestive and provocative *Helga* film billboard (featuring the saucy subtitle 'The Intimate Life of a Young Woman' and a drawing of the naked upper body of a woman covering her breasts, providing an interplay between erotic teasing and sex education) to the back of an ambulance rescuing a young woman who had fainted, to the predominantly male audience crowded in front of the cinema (Figures 3.1e–3.1f). News reports thus oscillated between addressing the issue with frankness and visually suggesting that it went too far. Lastly, on 2 May 1968, the *Lyons CAT* half-minute news short reported on *Helga* with jazz music in the background, stressing that the film was the subject of heated debate and that the Member of Parliament and author of the recently approved French oral contraception legislation, Lucien Neuwirth, had attended a screening.<sup>4</sup>

Commissioned by the West German Federal Ministry of Health and the Federal Agency for Health Education (Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung, BZgA), the film *Helga* was part of a series of initiatives introduced by Minister of Health Käte Strobel between 1966 and 1969 to raise public awareness of the need for sex education.<sup>5</sup> Her campaigns for nationwide sex education were founded in her conviction that sex education needed to be talked about and illustrated without inhibition. 'Without inhibition' meant circumventing traditional forms of moralizing education by developing curricula with information on the biology of sex, postnatal care, and adolescent psychology. Rather than disguising moralizing lessons as education, this new form of sex education provided essential

4 Lucien Neuwirth (1924–2013) was the French right-wing politician who successfully drafted and promoted the law carrying his name that authorized oral contraception and legalized birth control in France on 28 December 1967. Le Naour and Valenti, *Histoire de l'avortement*, pp. 217–224; Marks, *Sexual Chemistry*; Chauveau, 'Les espoirs déçus'.

5 See the contribution by Anja Laukötter in this volume. See also Winkler, 'Biology, Morality and Gender', pp. 142–189; Schwarz, 'Vom Jahrmarktspektakel'; Herzog, *Sex after Fascism*; Laukötter, 'Politik im Kino', pp. 413–430.

biological and psychological information to young people and included nudity and other explicit content. However, *Helga* remained centred on heterosexual partnerships and nuclear family values and avoided scenes of sexual intercourse and direct promotion of birth control. Adapted for foreign countries like France, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States, the erotic, sensualist overtones of the film were ambiguous. They catered to box-office sales and commercial distribution. They teased with commercialized sex. At the same time, their erotic titillation was used as a vehicle to get broader swathes of society to view a film that was part of a rather traditional public-health campaign anchored in family values and teaching about biological reproduction.<sup>6</sup> By early 1968, the female body had become a form of visual erotic capital in the competitive marketplace of the film industry.<sup>7</sup>

This vignette underscores three points. First, it was before May 1968 that the issue of sexuality and sex education surfaced in the French audiovisual public sphere, despite the fact that, since the 1920s, there had been a longstanding political, religious, and legal condemnation and repression of contraception and abortion.<sup>8</sup> Second, it points to the manifold links between cinema and television in France (as in Germany): TV reported on the cinematographic event, direct cinema influenced sequences of *Helga*, and the German original of *Helga* had been conceived initially as an educational (school) film including (school-)TV broadcasting before it was progressively and, in a later stage, transformed into a commercially distributed feature.<sup>9</sup> Historical accounts of visual sources should therefore address television history within this wider visual context of an ecology of viewing practices. Third, it highlights that television news reports on *Helga*'s release in France primarily took the format of studio discussions that staged debates amongst doctors, social workers, and politicians, who played the role of the public.<sup>10</sup> A central concern for this chapter is that, beyond the intimate content, it was the question of who could speak in front of the camera that was challenged in France in the late 1960s when *micro-trottoire* met sex education.

6 For the new imperatives of audiovisual health campaigns since the 1970s, see the contribution by Berlivet in this volume.

7 Hakim, *Erotic Capital*; Neveu, 'Les sciences sociales'.

8 The 1920 law (31 July 1920) against 'provoking' [promoting] abortion and contraceptive propaganda was followed on 27 March 1923 by a law declaring abortion illegal; Le Naour and Valenti, *Histoire de l'avortement*, pp. 160–164.

9 Paci, *Entre promesse et menace*.

10 See the contribution by Timothy Boon in this volume.

Still, the film *Helga* is an example of how sex education films of the 1960s broke with the old schemes that preferred moralizing and shocking as their techniques and sexually transmitted disease as their topic. While depicting a new constellation of biological bodies and adolescent psychology, many traditional and/or reactionary elements dominated educational screens, including nuclear families, marriage, and the avoidance of issues like abortion and contraception.<sup>11</sup> Novelty was not only expressed in explicitness of information, but also in a renewed take on the old tension between eroticism and education. But was that all? In order to testify to the difficulty of talking openly about sex education, *Helga* features a scene in which a reporter pretending to conduct a survey asks passers-by for their experiences with sex education and contraception. The climax of these interviews comes when an interviewee slaps the reporter when he asks her if she takes the pill. These kinds of direct cinematic techniques—made possible by lighter cameras and direct sound recording—became normal in sex education films of the 1960s, positioning their insights as authentic and in touch with social reality.<sup>12</sup> Of course, the technical possibilities of film do not automatically imply accurate representation, and audiovisual production remains a question of approach, framing, narration, and intention. What did interviews display and who spoke in them, from what point of view, to say what and how?

This chapter analyses how state-controlled television in France contributed to and reported on a series of social, political, and legal events that crystallized in 1967 with the legalization of oral contraceptives and culminated in the battle for the decriminalization/legalization of abortion through the Simone Veil law, which was adopted on 29 November 1974. Further, the Fontanet Act (*circulaire Fontanet*) of 1973 rendered sex education obligatory in French schools.

Our approach may be framed as neither history 'of', nor history 'with' but rather history through visual sources of a given period and place. Accordingly, official TV shows are primarily used in a systematic fashion and as principle primary source. Secondly, they are read against other audiovisual sources, used as counter-archives, including amateur film and school television, to explore avenues for reading audiovisuals and the history revealed by contrasting framings in a shared audiovisual mediascape.<sup>13</sup>

11 Schaefer, *Bold*; Eberwein, *Sex Ed*; Bonah and Laukötter, 'Introduction'; Laukötter, 'Politik im Kino'; Winkler, 'Biology, Morality and Gender'.

12 Winkler, 'Biology, Morality and Gender', pp. 142–189.

13 Amad, *Counter-Archive*.

The connection between bodies, capital, and TV screens can be traced as follows. Gary Becker argued in 1962 that human capital is the embedding of a resource in a person to influence future real capital.<sup>14</sup> Erotic capital can be seen as a subtype of symbolic capital based on a bodily materiality associated with its aesthetic, visual, physical, social, and sexual attractiveness.<sup>15</sup> The 1960s was a decade of rising press, television, and film investment in erotic capital. Yet (visual) productions and performances were deeply dividing society as the intimate subject of sexuality had been morally, religiously, and politically loaded and occulted for a long time. Profound changes in Western societies around the sexual revolution of the 1960s have to be acknowledged. They raise the question of how concomitant multiplying audiovisual forms mirrored, participated in, or resisted these changes. Our central hypothesis is that the empirical analysis of the television-related mediascape from 1950 to 1975 in France does not testify to a major investment in erotic body capital. Rather, it engages with the invention of an early form of television of intimacy that is characterized by its engagement with direct cinema and its preoccupation with exploring social situations, conditions, and consequences of male conservative sexual domination by interviewing ordinary citizens. The transition from silent extras to directly speaking to real, ordinary persons gave screened bodies a sociologically and politically critical role at a time when French television was not yet a commercial industry that produced real capital. And, we argue that, in the outcome, ironically, sex education and critically engaged TV productions paved the way for reality television of the 1990s with unknown individuals, purportedly unscripted real-life situations, and their intimacy-revealing confessional sequences.<sup>16</sup>

## Sexual Revolution, Television, and Markets in France

Sex information and education varies from country to country. At the same time, it was influenced by broad transformations of views on sexuality in Western countries in the 1960s and 1970s, commonly referred to as the 'sexual revolution'. This included the liberalization of sexual behaviours; the acceptance of premarital and extramarital sex; the destigmatization

14 Becker, 'Investment in Human Capital'.

15 Hakim, *Erotic Capital*, p. 15.

16 Hill, *Reality TV*; Biessi and Nunn, *Reality TV*.

of homosexuality; the decriminalization of abortion, contraception, and pornography; and a revolt against conservative morals. As a consequence, issues related to sexuality lost, in part, their status as unmentionables and became widely debated in public spaces. Discussions took place in books, journals, fiction films, and documentaries on television and in school education, and were often framed as a 'question of civilization'.<sup>17</sup> As a contemporaneous TV magazine suggested, 1960s France seemed to be at the intersection of two approaches, midway between a Northern 'hygienic tradition', in which nudity and sexuality were culturally accepted and seen as an 'almost natural extension of gymnastics', and an 'oriental mystical tradition where sexuality as initiation and voluptuary techniques' were confidential and taboo.<sup>18</sup>

Historical research on the 'sexual revolution' in the West has contended that it involved a complex and ambiguous transition and that it remains questionable if the attractiveness of sexual liberty *per se* can explain the success of the revolt/revolution.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, historical research has highlighted interconnections between the sexual revolution and the exploitation of sexuality and nudity in post-1950 consumer culture's advertising, marketing, and mass media. The marketing of desire, medical and technical innovations of the early 1960s, and especially the pill helped dissociate reproduction from sexuality, and political activism for women's rights and the liberalization of abortion and contraception played an important role, too. It is thus difficult to discern causes from effects clearly. In France, significant steps included early French emancipation literature, such as Françoise Sagan's *Bonjour tristesse* (1954), which portrayed the loss of virginity; Simone de Beauvoir's *Les Mandarins* (1954), which contained a description of the sexual act beyond pornography; and eroticized films like Roger Vadim's drama *And God Created Woman* (1956), which depicted Brigitte Bardot as a lascivious, sexually uncontrollable female. All these cultural events paralleled mass-media productions that fed into the omnipresence of sexual imagery. All this stood in stark contrast to previous eras, when legal regulations prohibited public mention of contraception, sexually explicit visuals, and detailed

17 'on en fait un problème de civilisation'; 'A propos de l'éducation sexuelle', *Zoom Magazine*, 13 February 1968, 53:51.

18 'civilisation hygiénique', 'où la gymnastique paraît avoir pour prolongation la sexualité', 'allons vers l'Orient, vers l'Inde [...] une tradition mystique où la sexualité est présentée comme quelque chose qui correspond à une initiation [...] aux techniques voluptueuses', 'A propos de l'éducation sexuelle', *Zoom Magazine*, 13 February 1968, 55:22.

19 For different national contexts, see Bänziger et al., *Sexuelle Revolution*; McLellan, *Love in the Time*; Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe*; Cook, *Long Sexual Revolution*.



biological information about reproduction and sexual organs.<sup>20</sup> The pill and pornography were cast between capitalist consumption society and counterculture. Thus, pertinent questions for an analysis of the connection between the sexual revolution and audiovisual media include: Who could address the subject? What were the themes chosen? And in what visual public sphere did they address which audiences?

The years between 1950 and 1974 were marked by industry-based therapeutic innovation, the epidemiological transition, increasing life expectancy, the rise of chronic disease, and the golden age of the European welfare state.<sup>21</sup> These shifts had important consequences for sex education film and television. With the advent of penicillin, venereal diseases disappeared from the screen in the 1950s, and with the therapeutic revolution, the contraceptive pill stepped on the stage. Launched in 1960 for menstruation disorders but rapidly used for contraceptive purposes, first by married women, and, after the late 1960s, by single women, putting the pill on-screen remained difficult given legal and societal restrictions. But, as a contemporaneous French observer put it, these health transitions meant that the prolongation of adult life, coupled with the extension of school education, 'postponed youth's entry into the working world, [creating] a dissociation of youth's biological and social maturity'.<sup>22</sup> In other words, there was a time lag between when youth were biologically capable of reproduction and when their economic situation 'enabled' them to cope socially with choosing a partner and having children.

The move from sexual hygiene to sex education films in the 1960s should also be viewed in the context of the history of sex education in 20th-century France. Yvonne Knibiehler has claimed that, between 1860 and 1960, France experienced 'a dark century for sex education in urban environments'.<sup>23</sup> The then prevailing 'conspiracy of silence' has, even today, not entirely vanished.<sup>24</sup> In 1969, one commentator on the situation in France stated that

20 *Information sexuelle* ('Sexual information', RTS, 1970). See the section concerning the film and Figure 3.3.

21 Greene et al., *Therapeutic Revolutions*.

22 'parce qu'elle [la jeunesse] ne travaille pas [encore] de façon productive [...] le décalage entre la maturité biologique et la maturité sociale crée un déséquilibre'; Natanson, 'Education sexuelle', p. 17. All translations by the author unless otherwise stated.

23 'Le XIXe siècle citadin apparaît comme une parenthèse obscure'; Knibiehler, 'L'éducation sexuelle', p. 11.

24 This is illustrated, for example, in a cultural history of sex education in 20th-century Europe in which France is missing; Sauerteig and Davidson, *Shaping Sexual Knowledge*. Nevertheless, see Pavard, 'Contraception et avortement'; Blanchard et al., *Les jeunes et la sexualité*; Hagemeyer, 'Sexualerziehung in Frankreich'.

if revolt is more brutal in France this is undoubtedly due to the fact that [France] has lived for 37 years under the restrictive law of 1920. Sex education, as contraception, has been admitted only under the premise and condition that it does not interfere with fecundity and even less with the family.<sup>25</sup>

The May 1968 student revolt demonstrated that part of the youth population had forged its own opinion: As a chanson by Antoine poetically put it, 'when the pill would be sold in supermarkets the sexual act could be clearly dissociated from reproduction and procreation'.<sup>26</sup> In 1968, France thus awoke to the fact that sex education needed to be adapted to the 'social realities' of sexuality of the time.

### Sex Education on TV before Official Sex Education in France (1960s)

Audiovisual spaces and technologies changed profoundly over the 20th century.<sup>27</sup> The middle of the century is often described as the age of television. With its popular appeal and national characteristics, it pushed on mass media and mass culture.<sup>28</sup> The keen investment in state television by Gaullist France after 1945 seems to be a national specificity that played a key role in sex information television in the period between 1960 and 1975. Pioneered in the interwar period, use and distribution of television extended after the Second World War. In February 1949, Radiodiffusion-télévision française (RTF) was created; initially limited to Paris, it was expanded to other regions in the early 1950s. RTF began collaborating with the BBC in 1952. By 1954, 1 per cent of households were equipped with a television set; by 1960, it was 13 per cent. As television sets were a household fixture, the audience addressed was the family circle.<sup>29</sup> By 1964, a second TV channel went into operation and

25 'Si la révolte est plus brutale en France, c'est sans doute que nous payons d'avoir vécu pendant 37 ans sous le régime de la loi de 1920. Sa suppression a dû triompher de multiples résistances, et reste assortie de mesures restrictives. Comme pour l'éducation sexuelle, les adultes n'ont admis la contraception qu'à la condition qu'elle ne toucherait pas à la fécondité et encore moins à la famille.'; Natanson, 'Education sexuelle', p. 16.

26 Natanson, 'Education sexuelle', p. 16, referring to a line of the 'Les Elucubrations' sung by Antoine: 'Mettez la pilule en vente dans les Monoprix'.

27 Boon, 'Medical Films and Television'; Reagan et al., *Medicine's Moving Pictures*.

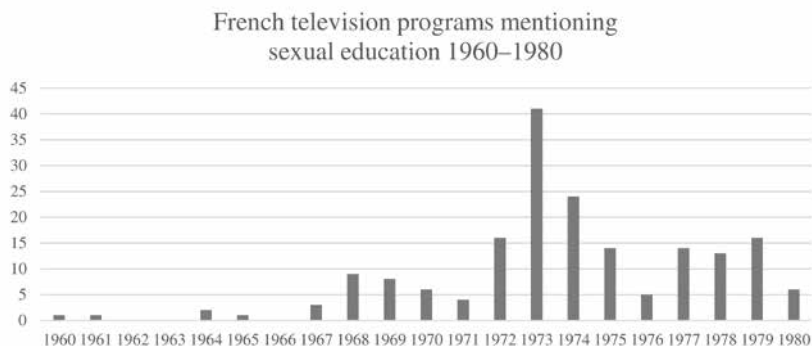
28 Poels, *Les trente glorieuses*.

29 Poels, *Les trente glorieuses*; Lévy, 'Les représentations sociales'; Lévy, 'Famille et télévision'.

the RTF became the Office de radiodiffusion television française (ORTF), gaining in autonomy as control by the Ministry of Information decreased and competition increased between channels.<sup>30</sup> This leads us to consider the various formats tested out by TV broadcasts to capture the increasingly turbulent years known as the sexual revolution.

The 1960s were also a period of new forms of cinematic expression and creativity, with the ascent of the *Nouvelle vague* and direct cinema (*Cinéma direct*) and the democratization of film-making, both of the militant and home-movie sorts, that came with the advent of lighter amateur cameras. The chapter seeks to hit upon all these different media by first studying sex education in early television and its links to cinema direct, and then by looking at school television and amateur videos in France, questioning how these multiple screens addressed different ways of informing or educating about sexuality.<sup>31</sup>

An inventory of the French television broadcasts between 1950 and 1980 mentioning sex education amounts to 186 programmes (Figure 3.2).<sup>32</sup>



### 3.2. French TV broadcasts mentioning sex education between 1950–1980.

30 Sauvage and Veyrat-Masson, *Télévision française*, p. 83; Bourdon, *Télévision sous de Gaulle*, pp. 61–75.

31 Delavaud and Maréchal, *Télévision*.

32 Based on a full-text keyword research of 'éducation sexuelle' and 'information sexuelle' between 1950 and 1980 on the Institut national de l'audiovisuel (INA) databank INAMediaPro. For a 1987 inventory of French television broadcasts identifying 105 programmes related to family issues between 1956 and 1986, see: Lévy, *Regards*. Figure 3.2 is based on a full-description keyword search in the INA database (INAMediaPro and Hyperbase) between 1950 and 1980. The search yielded no entries before 1960. Keyword searches in full-text descriptions yielded 186 entries for 'éducation sexuelle' and 125 for 'information sexuelle'. Cross-matching establishes 235 broadcasts. The histogram for 'information sexuelle' is similar to the one displayed in Figure 3.2. Genre variations for 'information sexuelle' search yielded a higher percentage of magazines

Roughly one third concerned TV news (*journal télévisé*, JT), another third TV shows (*magazines*), and the last third comprised 20 reports, 15 talk shows, 15 debates, 5 sketches, and 6 documentaries. Chronologically, they trace sporadic treatment of the topic until 1967, when there was an increase of coverage of the subject just before the May 1968 student revolt in 1968 and 1969, and an especially rapid rise before and during national debates about the law prescribing sex education courses in public schools in 1972 and 1973. A selection of 12 programmes (see Table 3.1, Appendix) will serve here to establish general trends, while allowing a more detailed analysis of some of the programmes, especially the TV documentaries.

In the 1950s, discussions on the subject of sex and sexuality were absent from French television screens. When marital life was portrayed, it appeared in the context of TV magazines and reports about women either as domestic housewives or as domestic organizers in rural farms. A documentary series produced by Jacques Krier in 1957–1958, *A la découverte des Français* ('Discovering the French'), presented social portraits of families from different backgrounds, ranging from rural farmers to industrial workers. The series often focussed on economic hardships and praised the virtues of the traditional family order. The forms of social engagement depicted are limited to everyday practices, and the people depicted never talk or express themselves.<sup>33</sup>

An exceptional documentary report was 'Le contrôle des naissances' ('Birth control') (1960), an episode of the series *Faire Face* produced by Etienne Lalou and Igor Barrère, conceived as a live show that allowed viewers to call in and ask questions. Using a split screen, the questions were selected by an operator, who relayed them to the host (Etienne Lalou), who then presented them to four guest experts in the TV studio and to the audience. The experts included representatives of the medical profession, the Church, and the National Institute for Demography (INED). Intertwined with the question-response sequences are field reports that harp on the financial and moral hardships brought on by undesired maternity and the health problems caused by multiple pregnancies. There is uneasiness

mentioning 'information sexuelle' (50%), news programs treated 'information sexuelle' less frequently than for 'éducation sexuelle'. For genres reportages, debates and interviews percentages are equivalent.

<sup>33</sup> Marital relationships surface in youth and women's programmes only when questions about the desired number of children are asked. This surreptitiously allows space for mentioning birth control. Sometimes reports on large family awards are coupled with interviews expressing hardship and sacrifices endured by women, thereby pleading indirectly and undercover for birth control measures.

and the unspoken hovering over a consensus-based, controlled expert discourse until the complex programme strategy finally pays off when a female spectator openly enquires about the pill. The host, Etienne Lalou, hardly disguises his excitement as the TV debate tips over. Connecting to a second outside TV studio with a Swiss physician, Dr. Devedville, he was allowed to discuss the progressive Swiss legislation on contraceptives, a fact contrary to existing French TV regulations and censorship. A priest, Father De Lestapie, expressed Catholic opposition to all 'mechanical or automatic means' of contraception. A French physician, a woman who, albeit not officially identified by her name, was none other than the pro-MFP gynaecologist Marie-Andrée Lagroua Weill-Hallé (mentioned above) oddly does not mention the movement for family planning, but willingly acknowledges the medical profession's considerable opposition to contraception and the pill. Even under the watch of state control, the technically challenging, sometimes chaotic format and the ingenious framing of the programme allow the producers to make television into a public space of debate over the abrogation of the repressive 1920 laws prohibiting abortion and the promotion of contraception. The call-ins and the live responses to viewers' questions made it possible for a taboo topic—contraception—to be discussed on television. The presence of the liberal Swiss physician is telling of the outcome that the producers anticipated. On the surface, the talk show addressed reproduction from the perspective of demography and population politics. However, it surreptitiously explored and mobilized techniques used by family social documentaries produced before in order to '*discover the French*'.<sup>34</sup> By interviewing ordinary citizens, the talk show narrows the gap between conventional discourse and social realities, which are translated by television as public opinion. A second episode in November 1961 reported more overtly and directly on the opening of the first centre for family planning in Grenoble. The episode features an interview with a man lamenting the marital problems caused by avoiding pregnancy by abstinence, discussions at the workplace, and a piece on how a Catholic woman reconciled her use of birth control with her religious conscience. As a whole, the episode casts contraception as a social necessity and an urgent social and humanitarian question. The breach was not further exploited before the mid 1960s.

With the transformations brought about by French public television opening a second channel and gaining in autonomy in 1964, surveys and

34 *La découverte des Français*, documentary TV series by Jean-Claude Bergeret and Jacques Krier, 1957–1960.

enquiries about French society became more present in TV documentaries, reports, and news magazines, especially on the still less-frequented but more liberal second channel. Programmes targeting specific audiences—especially young people—multiplied, as exemplified by *Seize millions de jeunes* ('Sixteen million teenagers'). Beginning in April 1964, the series, produced by Alain de Sédouy and André Harris, explored the social malaise of youth in depth.<sup>35</sup> Whispered secrets and private and intimate matters and feelings are exposed in the series' films, which portray individual histories that neither victimize nor glorify.<sup>36</sup> If this series suggests changes, it was the talk show *Zoom*, also produced by Sédouy and Harris, which targeted a general public, that most substantially benefitted from liberal Jacques Thibau's nomination as second director of ORTF and his incentive to create 'TV magazines that escape central television news control'.<sup>37</sup> With the hiring of directors and producers from outside the ORTF sphere, it became possible to screen broadcasts that scrutinized France's social problems (including strikes, racism, social movements, and juvenile marginality) and critically questioned society and its responsibilities. Thus, it is not surprising that a February 1968 broadcast devoted to sex education openly stated and summarized what had only been hinted at in previous documentaries on the topic of contraception. Enquiries and surveys about ordinary everyday life of the late 1950s were enriched by private words explaining personal choices and the individual conceptions of the human condition. The one-hour programme shifts between six filmed interviews and a discussion on the studio set with Dr. Dalsace and Dr. Verdoux, president and secretary of the family-planning movement, respectively; Dr. Kahn-Nathan, a gynaecologist from the Paris medical faculty; and Dr. Berge, a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst who directed a centre for sexual and affective education (Figures 3.3a–3.3e). The only people not from the field of medicine who are featured are a school principal and teacher and a rural Catholic priest. André Harris, who hosted the show alongside journalist Michelle Bailly, introduces the programme with a serious, dramatic tone, directly addressing the viewers: 'We will talk about the sexual problems of the French tonight.'<sup>38</sup> To ascertain the degree to which ignorance had led

35 Lévy, 'Les représentations sociales', p. 211.

36 For similar productions with emotion-laden content in the GDR, see the contribution by Anja Laukötter in this volume.

37 'qui échappent au contrôle des services de l'actualité télévisée'; Lévy, 'Les représentations sociales', p. 211.

38 'Nous allons parler ce soir des problèmes de la sexualité des Français'; 'A propos de l'éducation sexuelle', *Zoom Magazine*, 13 February 1968, 01:38.



3.3. 'A propos de l'éducation sexuelle', *Zoom Magazine*, 13 February 1968, ORTF, at a: 01:28; b: 06:09; c: 09:20; d: 10:41; e: 16:47.

to an estimated 300,000 abortions annually in France, the show depicts anonymous testimony from a young single mother. Her interview is filmed as a Chinese shadow in order to protect her privacy and visual identity. Close-up framing underlines the calm and intimate sensitivity of the young woman's inexperience and naivety (Figures 3.3b–3.3c). The interview, visually reminiscent of a confession scene filmed from the side, juxtaposes the moral incrimination (implied by her being filmed in silhouette) with her innocence and lack of education.

A second interview, again filmed close-up and relating 'truths about adolescence', shows a female Catholic gynaecologist and a teenager discussing premarital sex in the doctor's office. The morally rigid doctor gives the young woman a lesson in morality from off set, while the camera scrutinizes the young woman's facial reactions (Figure 3.3e). Some reverse angle shots from below serve to distort the doctor and her authority slightly, which underscore the programme's indictment of the insensitive, reactionary profession. The studio discussion with the secretary of the family-planning movement bluntly picks the sequence apart, concluding that 'the young woman who has not waited for the doctor's advice to have sex should benefit from adequate advice about contraception'.<sup>39</sup> Continuing to debunk stereotypes and received ideas, the magazine/show discusses the question with school

39 'de donner à cette jeune fille qui n'a pas attendu des conseils du médecin pour avoir des rapports sexuelles de lui donner des moyens de contraception'; 'A propos de l'éducation sexuelle', *Zoom Magazine*, 13 February 1968, 20:41.

teachers and a country priest. The discussions focus on two points: On the one hand, they uncover the prevailing ignorance of the discussants, and, on the other, they make clear the ways in which teachers slip sex education into life sciences classes and the fact that the liberal Catholic priest seeks to help parents with sex education. The priest acknowledges on camera that he deals with the subject in catechism straightforwardly. The message is clear: If the Catholic Church had contributed to moralizing and making talking about sex taboo in the past, its servants' attitudes were changing. The final interview sequences counterpose two parental situations: a father, filmed against light hiding his face, admitting failure as his children had never dared to ask him questions about sex education; and a mother with an eight-year-old boy, dialoguing freely with him about menstruation and how children are conceived, developed, and delivered. To conclude the programme and return to the invited expert speakers, André Harris asks them if they think that they themselves had been successful in resolving the problems of sex education with their own children. The centrality of the interviews in the broadcast reverses the hierarchy between field reports and expert comments. Audiovisual intensity and authority resides with the former. Experts are still present, but they only add to the interviewees' testimonies. In contrast to German Democratic Republic (GDR) educational film productions of the same time, Sédouy and Harris were less interested in psychologizing adolescents' love and sexual relationships than in investigating the social causes and consequences of insufficient sex education.<sup>40</sup>

*Zoom* provided, in February 1968, a meticulous and scrupulous exploration of a social and political question that was on the minds of the entire nation. With classical fixed-camera studio techniques, the programme went a long way not only to capture intimate testimonies of ordinary citizens, but to use them to give direction to the studio discussions. In contrast to prior programmes, Sédouy and Harris's broadcast stirred up a major debate in the written press; in this sense, the television show succeeded in revealing and amplifying latent questions.<sup>41</sup> The show was innovative in that it used intimate and seemingly unstaged testimonies (evidently, they were indeed staged) and juxtaposed them to mutually reinforce a set of individual statements. These technical decisions allowed the programme to visualize and condense changes and demands that, were at the time, still latent. During his presentation, Harris himself stresses the nonconformist point of view of the magazine/show, its intention to end the silence around

40 See the contribution by Anja Laukötter in this volume.

41 Lévy, 'Les représentations sociales', p. 212.



a taboo subject, and the producers' desire to inspire a youth emancipation movement.<sup>42</sup> Beyond simply giving voice to a social issue, *Zoom* opened a new form of enquiry into the ordinary social realities of sexuality in France. It achieved this not through camera techniques, but through the quality and degree of intimacy obtained in the interviews. *Zoom* was more concerned with finding out and broadcasting what citizens—and thereby potential TV viewers—thought rather than telling them what to think. Instead of teasing spectators with erotic, attractive bodies, Sédouy and Harris reveal ordinary peoples' perspectives in a confession-like emotional atmosphere, where bodies are not extras, but are there to convey presence through speech. These socially engaged, documentary-based sequences about ordinary people's experiences produced effects that were rearranged and exploited 20 years later when televisual elements like ordinary, confessional, and intimacy-exposing *cinéma vérité* shots were turned around and exploited for commercial TV reality-show productions.

A distinctive feature of the late 1960s was the advent of questions about how parents should address their children's questions about sexuality. Programmes did not always take the route of provocative nonconformism. In 1969, the ORTF broadcasted another innovative, 14-minute documentary, *Mysteries of Birth* (1969, FR), produced by Marie Claire Patris. Addressing parents, the documentary treats the dreaded question 'Mom, where do babies come from?' Rather than resorting to the staging of a liberal mother and her eight-year-old boy deep in conversation, as *Zoom* had done (and was heavily criticized for) or to the classic didactic approach of adapting an illustrated book, Marie Claire Patris films with discretion the discovery of such a book by two little girls, Ariane and Eve, sitting on their bed. Showing them giggling, reading, and commenting aloud, while, at the same time, interspersing some of the book's images depicting the reproduction of flowers, animals, and humans, the documentary captures well the girls' reception of the book's message. The film also illustrates the girls' state of knowledge before reading the book, which is stranded somewhere between magic and snatches of catechism vaguely associating the Virgin Mary and baby Jesus. This approach used the subjective social observation of what children really knew and thought as a strategy to inform and instruct parents on how to tackle sex education. Again, the camera was turned into a tool for social observation, recording their real presence and real-life spoken exchange. Presenting ordinary individuals and their direct speech became a filmic device deployed to frame and report about the transmission of

42 'A propos de l'éducation sexuelle', *Zoom Magazine*, 13 February 1968, 00:39.

sexual knowledge. Even if this happened on the second channel, which was still limited in terms of viewer numbers, written press—or, for *Helga*, TV news—contributed to amplify messages of such marginal or confidential audiovisuals on a national level.

### Counter-Archives 1. Not for the Classroom: The Aborted 1970 Attempt to Include Sex Education in School Television

Paula Amad has recently suggested that the 183,000 metres of film footage gathered by the French-Alsatian banker Albert Kahn between 1908 and 1931 under the name *Les Archives de la Planète* can be used as a counter-archive. They are useful for the manufacture of the product called history in order to provide dissenting views to official, state-generated, and political events centred accounts based on official written and visual archives.<sup>43</sup> Transposing the concept of the counter-archive to the 1960s mediascape implies looking for contemporary visual sources of a private, ordinary, unceremonious nature capable of challenging traditional descriptions of historical events. The counter-archival operation can be understood on two levels. One is related to film's inherent properties as a mechanical device capable of capturing considerable detail, inciting unmanageable and unpredictable curiosities, and suspending common modes of memory and perception, which usually overlook or suppress background information. The other is more concerned with unofficial, vernacular culture and perspectives on ordinary life documented by private, amateur, home, and utility films and audiovisuals. I have chosen three examples of such counter-archival approaches: an extract from the *Canopé School Television Archives*, an experimental TV programme produced by the ORTF research service, and a militant video from amateur-film archives from the Simone de Beauvoir audiovisual centre.

Even before the creation of the RTF, its predecessor *Radiodiffusion française*, established an experimental department for educational television in 1947 that drew on popular education films of the interwar period. Based on the principles of republican and non-confessional popular education, the service was incorporated into the reorganized RTF in 1949. Early on, it established connections to the Ministry of Education (Education nationale), which led to the creation of the independent School Radio and Television Service (Radio Television Scolaire, RTS) in 1963. By early 1960, RTS was

43 Amad, *Counter-Archive*, pp. 1–24 and 164–194, here p. 18.

producing four hours of programming a day; by 1964, it had reached ten. Its productions were for primary, secondary, and professional schools, and it also published the periodicals *Bulletin de la RTS* between 1964 and 1969, and *Media* beginning in 1969. The *Bulletin* only mentions the question of sex education very sporadically in the 1960s. RTS productions followed two formulas: documentaries directed at pupils to complement traditional teaching activities, and productions directed at teachers for their in-service training. Programme coordination and film production was headed by a programme committee composed of education inspectors, researchers, and peer teachers, who all formed work groups organized by school level and discipline. Film production usually took 18 months and films were generally 35mm films reformatted for TV use.

In 1969, the RTS programme committee was confronted by a group of natural science teachers and researchers who complained about the fact that teachers were required to reduce discussions of sex to matters of biology.<sup>44</sup> The programme committee elaborated a project for a broadcast on sex education that was based on a year-long experimental research group of teachers, physicians, psychologists, and specialized educators and addressed four major themes: (1) the body and genital organs, (2) flirting and couples, (3) fecundity and birth, including contraception, and (4) child development from birth to adolescence. The general philosophy of the RTS on the subject consisted of including approaches from psychology and the social sciences in the school curriculum, arguing that moral education should be taught at home. *Information sexuelle* ('Sexual information', RTS, 1970), the first in what was to be a series of five films on sex education called *Entrer dans la vie* ('Entering life'), was produced under the direction of Guy Prébois and with the guidance counsellor Paul Geron. The 28-minute pilot film starts with a classic reference to François Truffaut's first short film, *Les mistons* ('The mischief makers', *Les films du carrosse*, 1957), showing schoolboys sneaking up on an adolescent girl stopping her bicycle and running to a river to rinse her underpants during menstruation. Replacing Truffaut's original commentary, a voice-over explains that 'today [1970], whereas sexual information seems to be more freely available in the press, film and publicity, youth are not any better informed as the information does not

44 The following account and analysis are based on an interview conducted on 7 May 2018 with Annette Bon, professor at the École normale d'institutrices d'Amiens, who joined RTS in 1966 and became a director of RTS in 1969. She worked until 2004 with RTS' successors, including Office français des techniques modernes d'éducation (Ofrateme), Centre national de documentation pédagogique (CNDP), and Institut national de recherche pédagogique (INRP).



3.4. *Information sexuelle* (1970), a: the Truffaut opening scene; b: the TV studio set discussion; c: rock music accompanied by photographic intertitles; d: close-up of one of the students hesitantly contributing to the discussion.

correspond to what they would like to know'. A nod to mainstream cinema, the stated objective of the film was to enquire into young people's desire for knowledge, which would enable film-makers to decide how to respond. With these comments, the setting changes and the viewer sees a group of adolescents between 15 and 17 years of age participating in the project in a TV studio (Figures 3.4a–d).

Even if momentary guidance is provided by a young teacher, their informal discussion takes up a large part of the remaining 26 minutes.<sup>45</sup> Dialogue is hesitant, with long silences and embarrassed laughter, as the teens are nervous about sharing their questions and revealing their ignorance. The intimacy created on the studio set is surprising and owes much to the lengthy preparation of the film with the group. Three cameras in the RTS studio in Bizet allow close-ups and frequent changes of perspective whenever the centre of interest changes. Five one-minute sequences using photographs and pictures suggesting the usual visual (erotic) environment of the adolescents, accompanied by pop and rock music, announce four major themes in this exploratory film. Again, it is the real presence of the pupils with their real bodies, their real words, and their history that brings about pragmatic and far-from-commonplace questions: Can a virgin use a tampon? What is masturbation? Do girls masturbate? Are there consequences? Is virginity important to you? The pill? While the initial instalment offers responses to the questions raised during the group discussion in the form of four further instalments to be used in schools, the project stopped there and further production was cancelled.

Returning to this period, Annette Bon, an RTS director at the time, recalls that, after the first episodes had been produced, the project was stopped on the grounds that 'on these social subjects, things had gone a bit too far in the precise examples mobilized and that that was not necessary for high school

45 For a comparison with Germany, see Verheyen, 'Der ausdiskutierte Orgasmus'; Verheyen, 'Eifrige Diskutanten'.

education'.<sup>46</sup> The cancellation was an exceptional event in the history of the RTS and hints to the strong opposition that the Ministry of Education had with interfering in what many thought should remain a private family affair. So, while the second television channel had opened up new possibilities, developing programming specifically for pupils was still difficult, which clearly held even when the students shown in the film were far from being wild libertines and still valued their virginity.

It is remarkable that the clearly educational film begins not with the message to be transmitted, but rather with a survey of what adolescents want to know. Even if the conception of the programme seems rather basic—simply bringing a group together to discuss a difficult subject in front of the camera—the amount of time devoted to discuss and prepare with the pupils and to construct the subject (one year) as well as the reproduction of a classroom setting were strategic elements used to facilitate the sharing of knowledge, questions, and experiences, which worked, to a certain degree. The rather provocative still images that frame the discussion sequences aim to situate the discussions in their everyday visual environment and testify to the gap between social realities and conventional discourse about sexuality and reproduction. Displaying this gap allows the producers to capture the 'real' state of pupils' knowledge and the questions that concern them. School television adapted to the screen what the Kinsey Report had produced in written form 20 years earlier: an enquiry about beliefs, knowledge, and practices of human sexual behaviour. A Kinsey-like enquiry with and for adolescents on the screen, however, still caused shock and outrage in France, just as the initial Kinsey Report had challenged conventional beliefs and norms.

## **Counter-Archives 2. Experimental and Militant Film-Making: Direct Cinema, Street Interviews, and Simply Talking about Sexuality**

The public and school television broadcasts discussed here have in common their honest intention to sound out citizens' attitudes and opinions about

46 'Sur ces sujets sociaux, les choses sont allées un peu trop loin dans les exemples précis mobilisés et qui n'étaient pas nécessaire pour l'éducation scolaire.' For context, see 'Grand témoin de la radio-télévision scolaire: Annette Bon', 28 November 2012, *Canal U*, [https://www.canal-u.tv/video/universite\\_paris\\_diderot/grand\\_temoin\\_de\\_la\\_radio\\_television\\_scolaire\\_annette\\_bon.11356](https://www.canal-u.tv/video/universite_paris_diderot/grand_temoin_de_la_radio_television_scolaire_annette_bon.11356), accessed 9 August 2018.

sexuality. This came at the end of a decade in which oral contraception had become a social reality and birth control a widely, if not openly, addressed topic. Less and less a purely official voice or a complacent mirror for middle-class spectators,<sup>47</sup> France's experiments in television<sup>48</sup> were extended by a movement that became known as the 'revolution' of direct cinema.<sup>49</sup> 'Direct' meant that the relationship between the film-maker and the filmed subject was to be closer than customary in conventional film production. Camera teams were reduced from tens of technicians to two (camera and sound), as cameras became lighter and could be held by one person on their shoulder. In principle, they filmed anyone, anywhere, anytime. Most important of all, they filmed outside of the studio settings so prominent in what we have analysed thus far. And direct sound gave ordinary people, who previously had only a figurative presence in socially critical films, a voice embodying real words on the screen.

The technical development of the Éclair 16 camera in the early 1960s opened the path for many of the interviews conducted by Sédouy and Harris. But the aesthetic and political movement of *direct cinema* preceded technology and was more than just that. Robert Drew and Richard Leacock filmed *Primary*, covering the election of John F. Kennedy in 1960; Edgar Morin and Jean Rouch produced *Chronique d'un été* in 1961; and, in 1962, Chris Marker produced *Le joli mai*, in which he interviewed Parisians about how they live. These films invented direct cinema before the major technical inventions that pushed the movement further. They also invented man-on-the-street interviews (*micro-trottoire*), deploying them as a political and aesthetic act that could more accurately represent humans as living, talking, social beings.<sup>50</sup> In 1962, Mario Ruspoli produced a film for the research service of RTF, which introduced many studio technicians to direct cinema, ultimately giving rise to what might be called the 'French school of TV documentary'.<sup>51</sup> The direct-cinema movement broke through when Super/Single 8mm cameras came out in 1965. This technology democratized film-making and popularized private, amateur, and home movies, as well as militant cinema. These all transformed visual spaces and often ran counter to established visual, film, and television production, while, at the same time, influencing them.<sup>52</sup>

47 Poels, *Les trente glorieuses*, pp. 43–53.

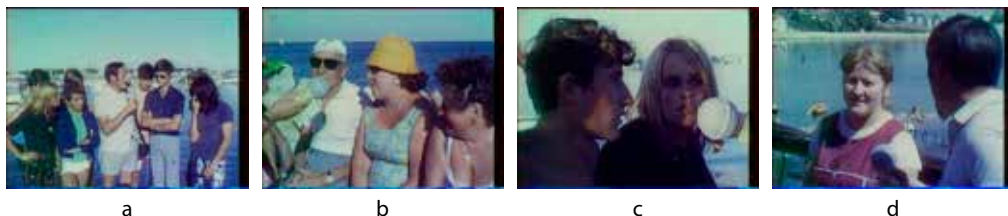
48 Delavaud and Maréchal, *Télévision*.

49 Comolli and Sorrel, *Cinéma*, pp. 142–152.

50 Comolli and Sorrel, *Cinéma*, p. 146.

51 Comolli and Sorrel, *Cinéma*, p. 147.

52 Odin, *Le Film de famille*; Zimmermann, *Reel Families*.



3.5. *A propos de la contraception*, Service Recherche ORTF, 1 January 1968, a: the amateur film team and their teacher; b–d: the microphone in hand conducting interviews on Antibes Street and the beach with randomly chosen vacationers on perceptions and opinions of contraception.

In 1967, the research department of the general Radio-Television Française ORTF produced, and broadcast on 1 January 1968, the direct-cinema film *A propos de la contraception* ('Concerning contraception', 1968). In the film, adolescents were not the subject of an experimental television set-up that was designed to educate them, but were instead the producers of an amateur film made during an internship at a film studio. In the introduction to their 32-minute film, they declare that the choice of subject was theirs. The title suggests the shift in perspective: from the above-mentioned 'concerning sexual education', we move to the adolescents' preoccupations with 'concerning contraception'. The group, guided by their cinema teacher, travels along the harbour and beaches of Antibes, filming with a highly mobile Super 8 colour camera. They ask members of the older generation about their sexual liberation and about contraception with the pill. The editing juxtaposes interviews with elderly people, parents, and a group of teenagers, which highlights the points of agreement and disagreement between the generations and individuals (Figure 3.5). But divergences are not as evident as stereotypes might suggest. Nevertheless, the older generation strongly disagrees that a sixteen-year-old girl should go camping with her boyfriend. Contraception is generally viewed with scepticism, which ranges from rumours about birth defects caused by the pill to concerns about its efficacy. Ignorance is widespread. All sides are concerned about the risk of undesired pregnancy, a concern that garners some shocking answers, such as when a young man says that, if a girl he sleeps with becomes pregnant, that's her problem.

Seeking to avoid a biased perspective, the film's objective is to report and to explore individual French citizens' opinions about a widely discussed, yet difficult subject. As young people become the authors of a film that searches for answers to their questions, the cinema internship becomes an experimental setting in itself, portraying society as much as it enquires into contraception. In broadcasting the film, television implicates to a certain degree those who usually are only its spectators or its voiceless subjects at best. In the interns' film, reproduction is not

framed as a biological issue, but as a social question and as a question of the younger generation to their forefathers. The young film-makers take advantage of the possibility to film anybody anywhere in order to capture their relationship to the older generation, thus creating an image of social authenticity.

Another blind spot is revealed with our last counter-archival visual source. In 1971, militant amateur film-maker and member of the French women's liberation movement (Mouvement pour la liberation de la femme, MLF) Carole Roussopoulos produced early militant videos with the first portable analogue video system, Sony's Portapak. After filming the first women's demonstration in Paris on 20 November 1971, the video artist produced a visual counter-archive with the title *Y'a qu'à pas baiser* ('Just don't screw') in 1973, in the midst of debates about decriminalizing abortion in France.<sup>53</sup> The 17-minute video is a collage of screenshots from the ORTF second channel INF2 news report from 6 February 1973, which featured an interview with Professor Jérôme Lejeune, a supporter of the anti-abortion movement 'Let them live', who became a leader of anti-abortion physicians in France; he had multiple TV appearances in 1972 and 1973. Roussopoulos, in the fight for the liberalization of abortion, contrasts Lejeune's stigmatizing 'the common market of abortion and the abortionists in white, while the blood of the mother and the foetus are red' with the street demonstration, where she interviews passive bystanders.<sup>54</sup> The title is a quote from an elderly woman who says 'Just don't screw'. The filmed street atmosphere oscillates between scenes of passive support in responses like 'why don't you march with us? I am too old' and scenes like that of a frightened saleswoman and a pharmacist in their boutique hastily blocking the doors. The statement 'just don't screw' is a verbal slap in the face (it is followed by the enunciation 'and paf') reminiscent of the above-described *Helga* scene with a real slap in the interviewer's face. It is a woman interviewing a woman here (Figure 3.6).

There is little in the sex education broadcasts that have been discussed thus far that links the issue to the French movement for women's liberation, even if the key topics of contraception and abortion were prominent undertones. But the major blind spot Roussopoulos's video shines light

53 *Y'a qu'à pas baiser*, directed by Carole Roussopoulos, France 1971 (17 minutes), Béta SP, Black and White, sound, <http://base.centre-simone-de-beauvoir.com/DIAZ-Y-a-qu-a-pas-baiser-510-652-0-1.html?ref=f8a666b0fd993c937c910f29adab34da>, accessed 9 August 2018.

54 'Le marché commun de l'avortement et des avorteurs en blanc, alors que le sang de la mère et du foetus sont rouges.' *Interview Lejeune Champetier*, INF2, ORTF, 6 February 1973, 00:01:49, INA MediaPro database identification number CAF96080016.





3.6. *Y'a qu'à pas baiser*, Carole Roussopoulos, France, 1971 (17 minutes), Béta SP, black and white, sound, a–b: Professor Lejeune's news appearance; c: the demonstration; d: the elderly interviewee.

on is the way in which it thematizes television not as a neutral media, but as an active stakeholder in the debates about sex education. It makes the militant claim that TV serves the interests of a powerful few. Roussopoulos's montage makes clear that it is Professor Lejeune and the 'Let them live' movement who appear on the public screen. A comparison between the official ORTF news reports of 20 November 1971 and the MLF video has a similar effect: both show the same demonstration, but, while ORTF statically films the demonstration from outside, Roussopoulos films it while marching, her swaying camera intimating her participation in the protest.<sup>55</sup> While she steps out to interview bystanders about their opinions on contraception or abortion, the ORTF report closes with the images of 300 protesters interrupting a marriage service in a church, thus suggesting that MLF posed a threat to fundamental French family values and institutions.

## Conclusion

The article has sought to demonstrate that, while mainstream French TV was not entirely silent on the subject of sex education, it was discreet. Yet, even 'confidential' individual productions could put issues on the public stage. As the 1968 *Zoom* broadcast shows, media-to-media amplification, significant spokespersons, and stakeholders in public debates all served to give even individual television productions influence. Although ORTF generally sided with traditional conservatism, surreptitiously criticized the movement for sexual liberation as threatening the family (INF2, February 1973), and even staged a TV trial against the 'invasion of sexuality in everyday life',

55 *Manifestation MLF à Paris*, JT 20H, ORTF, 20 November 1971, 00:01:38, INA MediaPro database identification number I15246536; *Manifestation de femmes à Paris*, JT 20h, ORTF, 20 November 1971, 00:01:40, INA MediaPro database identification number CAF90010438.

television around 1968 was no longer run by a single group of producers and nonconformism was possible.<sup>56</sup>

A systematic analysis of ORTF broadcasts that touched on the topic of sex education between 1950 and 1980 shows two peaks, one around 1968 and a second five years later. Our analysis here has centred on the audiovisual mediascape between 1968 and 1971. Research should be conducted on the second peak of the systematic INA database analysis, but it is beyond the scope of this chapter.

To write history through audiovisuals, our analytical framing has engaged with the archival and counter-archival mediascape of the time. Different framings by different actors and stakeholders provide for a variety of points of view. Mainstream ORTF news, shows, and magazines lambasted the movement for sexual liberation that threatened the institution of the family as the binding force of the nation. At the same time, the new second channel broadcast nonconformist shows that reported on the consequences of the lack of adequate sex education in France, honing in on the barriers that stood in the way, such as parents' difficulties with the subject, a lack of societal acceptance for it, and a lack of professional preparedness for dealing with it. These broadcasts framed the problem in terms of social inequalities rather than in terms of sexuality and its psychology *per se*.<sup>57</sup> When TV engages seriously with what ordinary people or pupils think and do—be this in school television or mainstream TV—it is more pragmatism than politics and ideology that surface, relegating excess and revolt to the sidelines. MLF's activism for women's liberation and equality invested in birth control, contraception, and abortion as causes to be defended and as levers for change. The representations of sexuality in this corpus are not limited to images of biological reproduction. Rather, they are a collection of social representations that depict the complexity of sexuality and its various aspects: as an affair of honour and success, an act of pleasure, a duty, and, finally, as something that needs to be talked about. Many of the films portray a society in which new forms of discussion were coming into being and show that the democratic movements of 1968 exerted a strong effect on the media landscape, thus establishing a link to *cinéma vérité*.

Concluding, it might be of interest to point out some of the links between the man-on-the-street style investigations of ordinary peoples'

56 'L'invasion de la sexualité dans la vie quotidienne', *Série Procès*, ORTF, 25 January 1971, 01:02:07, INA MediaPro database identification number CAF93024168.

57 See the contribution by Anja Laukötter in this volume.

views on sexuality and the wider history of cinema and documentary film. As films move from figuration without words in the late 1950s to direct interviewing in the 1960s, one might ask how interviews and other forms of focussing on individuals' speech in film were more in line with the spirit of May 1968 and its critique of conventional, consensus-based, commonplace ideas. It is tempting here to draw on Pier Paolo Pasolini's film *Comizi d'amore* ('Love meetings') from 1963. In this 89-minute documentary, Pasolini himself conducts interviews with Italians from different social classes, asking them questions about the subject of sex. The first Italian *cinéma vérité* film, it turns out, happened to address the subject of social views on sexuality. Starting with the question that also kicked off one of the French sex education films—'Where do babies come from?'—Pasolini travels as a 'salesman' throughout Italy, from the beaches close to Rome to industrial Milan, from a stadium in Viareggio to peasants in Bologna and Modane. The outcome of part one is disappointing. Answering a set of general questions about sexuality, the interviewed Italians reproduce conventional stereotypes. Part two of the documentary then changes strategy and asks a blunt question: What about homosexuality? The strategy paid off and answers became more incisive, as people expressed disgust and pity at the supposed limits of 'normality'. Parts three and four of the documentary deal with questions about infidelity, divorce, and the closure of brothels. What Pasolini's film hints at in the context of this contribution is the fact that *cinéma vérité* was about more than just interviewing and that documentation requires reflexivity, construction, and strategy to succeed at capturing its subject. Some of the documentaries discussed above pay tribute to this, in addition to their link to *cinéma vérité*. Last but not least, what *Comizi d'amore* and many of the programmes discussed above have in common is that, when searching for what people think and say about reproduction and sexuality, these documentaries represent portraits of individuals in a society in which people prefer to remain ignorant about factual knowledge about sexuality, even if educational norms were changing. In contrast to educational optimism and belief portrayed in the films analysed above, Pasolini's *Comizi d'amore* is profoundly pessimistic: It portrays workers as more interested in aspiring to become participating members of consumer culture rather than finding love for love's sake, and young couples reproducing the pitfalls of the kind of marriage that their parents were trapped in. Maybe capturing such dissonances is precisely what *cinéma vérité* is about. Technological changes made conducting interviews much easier, but Pasolini's pessimism was joined

by TV producers' disenchantment with what, in the rising age of viewer measurements, was considered attractive for mass audiences. Measuring and marketing posed new challenges for TV production. Erotic capital, absent from the TV broadcasts discussed above, became more and more attractive in the rising age of commercial TV and broadcasting intimate confidences, situated on the fence between exploring and exploiting, became another trope of television in the 1980s.<sup>58</sup> Direct cinema's attempts to capture truth and reality influenced TV productions of the future. But *cinéma vérité* required a reflexive stance on decency and dignity when the 'direct' fostered self-exhibition. To abolish distance and, at the same time, to maintain it became part of the right cinematic gesture. In the following decade, it also became a dividing line between TV entertainment and artistic cinema. Commercial TV of the early 1980s generalized erotic capital investment at the same time that intimate, ordinary, and 'real' self-exhibition became a basic feature of reality shows. The body's erotic attractiveness, as well as its reality effect, became two essential resources for commercial television. Interestingly, though, the groundwork for both was laid by the introduction of sex education issues on TV. The irony of our analysis is that, while critically opposing the commodification of (female) bodies on the TV screen, some of the socially engaged, innovative, early French TV productions that explored social inequalities ultimately participated in paving the way for TV's exploitation of confession-like self-exhibition. In the end, the element captured by reality shows that produced real capital was not necessarily the aesthetic attractiveness of the body, but its intimate, ordinary, 'real' presence.

58 Poels, *Les trente glorieuse*, Chapter '1964–1984 histoire d'une déception', pp. 48–61; Laukötter, 'Politik im Kino', Chapter 'Vermessung und Vermarktung', pp. 405–413.

## Appendix

English translation of title & original title	Series	Date & duration	Producer	Director	Information
<b>Birth control</b> Le contrôle des naissances	Faire Face Magazine	13 October 1960 01:04:04	RTF Etienne Lalou, Igor Barrère	Igor Barrère	Anchorman: Jacques Sallebert; participants: Alfred Sauvy and Marie Andrée Lagroua-Weill-Halle (physician)
<b>The Grenoble experience (Family planning)</b> L'expérience de Grenoble (planning familial)	Cinq colonnes à la une Magazine	3 November 1961 15:00	RTF	Actualité	Report on the first French family planning centre established in 1961 in Grenoble, informing the public about married life, sexual problems, and birth control
<b>Concerning sexual education</b> A propos de l'éducation sexuelle	Zoom Magazine	13 February 1968 59:52	ORTF Alain Sedouy, André Harris 2 <sup>nd</sup> channel	Jean-Paul Thomas	Report with filmed interviews and TV studio debates on single motherhood, premarital sex, sex education in school, from clergy's point of view
<b>Concerning contraception</b> A propos de la contraception	Film internship	1 August 1968 32:52	Service de la Recherche ORTF cinéastes amateurs	Georges Flament, Jean Paul Alphen	The TV research service organized, in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth, an internship with Super 8 cameras doing street interviews in Antibes
<b>First Fair on sexual education</b> Première exposition sur l'éducation sexuelle	JT Evening News	16 December 1969 02:40	ORTF	Journalist: Daniel Cazal	Visit to the first sex education fair
<b>Mysteries of Birth: Tell me Mom, how are children born</b> Les mystères de la naissance: Dis maman comment naissent les enfants	Régie 4	28 October 1969 14:13 28 October 1970 19:17	ORTF	Marie Claire Patris	Rather than make an educational documentary the director discreetly follows two little girls, Ariane and Eve, leaving through a sex education book commenting on what they see and discover

English translation of title & original title	Series	Date & duration	Producer	Director	Information
<b>Jean Richard 'The Kinsey Report'</b> Jean Richard 'Le rapport Kinsey'	La joie de vivre	2 February 1970 05:10	ORTF	Jean Pignol	The comedian Jean Ricard (wearing a doctor's cap) mimics 'The Kinsey Report'
<b>The General States of women, Versailles</b> Les Etats généraux de la femme à Versailles	JT 20H News	20 November 1970 03:53	ORTF	Journalist: Guy Sarthoulet	Report from the first General States of Women organized by the magazine <i>Elle</i> and Radio France Inter, Participant: Prime minister Jacques Chaban Delmas (TV reformist)
<b>Chancellor Gauthier: Sexual education</b> Recteur Gauthier: éducation sexuelle	JT 13H News	4 January 1973 03:06	ORTF	Journalist: Dominique Laury	Studio set interview by the journalist Dominique Laury with the chancellor Henri Gauthier in connection with the announced passage of the Fontanet Act, on obligatory sexual information in schools in life science classes. Maintenance of a strict separation between sexual information and education.
<b>A sex education class</b> Cours d'éducation sexuelle	JT Evening News	19 January 1973 02:50	ORTF	Journalist: Rosie Maurel	Short news report on a mixed school class sex information hour following an explanation of embryogenesis by a slideshow
<b>Sexual information in school</b> Information sexuelle à l'école	JT 13H News	18 December 1973 02:05	ORTF	Journalist: Jean Pierre Férey	Pupils leaving school, then the chancellor Henri Gauthier comments on a studio set on the implementation of sex information in school but outside of official school hours.
<b>Jacques Martin: Sexual education on television</b> Jacques Martin: L'éducation sexuelle à la Télévision	Taratata	24 January 1974 02:30	ORTF Jacques Martin	Roger Benamou	The comedian Jacques Martin performs a sketch on the impossibility of sex education on television and ends up doing so in a dark studio under the table

Table 3.1. Overview of the selection of 12 of the 186 TV broadcasts mentioning sexual education between 1950 and 1980 that are analysed in more detail in the text.

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