

# "Face the music!" The *Daily Sun's* representation of adolescent sex in the Jules High sex scandal

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## abstract

Rather than being merely a physiological stage, adolescence is variously constructed through social institutions. The media plays a significant role in such constructions, including that of adolescent sexuality. In the recent past there have been several cases of sexual acts involving adolescents that have received prominent media coverage as they have been considered shocking. The Jules High School sex scandal related to acts between a single adolescent girl and two adolescent boys. It was recorded on mobile phones by their peers and circulated on their mobile networks, or 'went viral' as the media continuously noted. The press coverage surrounding this incident and the legal process that ensued is the focus of this Article which undertakes a critical textual analysis of the coverage in the popular tabloid, the *Daily Sun*, in order to make explicit the contesting sets of discourses around adolescence and sexuality that were articulated in this popular public sphere. The Article uses a Foucauldian framework in order to probe the discourses of sexuality that are articulated and contested in this space. As the most widely read newspaper in South Africa it serves as a powerful site of definition of teen sexuality. The analysis suggests that, rather than allowing for teen sexuality to be disavowed by villainising teen sex and responsibility for such 'deviance' is directed to various adult and social adult actors.

## keywords

Gender, teen sexuality, masculinity, violence, tabloid, critical discourse analysis

Huge anxiety about teen sexuality has erupted in South Africa in recent years and has informed numerous reports and public debates on the topic. The case of the Jules High sex scandal, in which an adolescent girl was reported to have been raped by two adolescent boys on the premises of the Jules High School, Johannesburg, received prominent media coverage as it was considered shocking. The incident was recorded on mobile phones by their peers and then circulated on mobile networks. That the incident 'went viral' as the media continuously noted indicates the voyeuristic

interest the incident evoked. The news coverage and pronouncements surrounding this incident raises important questions about teen sexuality and about what counts as sexual normality or deviance.

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