

# End of Year Review: BSC and ITC Research 2003

compiled by Leila Agyeman





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In the final year of the BSC and ITC's operational life, research has continued to be important in the work of the two organisations. The continuing impact of technological, economic and social developments on the communications environment, and the evolution of audience attitudes and behaviour have been tracked, and Ofcom will take over a portfolio of comprehensive and current research.

This document outlines the projects undertaken in 2003. As before, the research programme was divided into thematic sections, although some projects may span more than one theme. These sections are:

1. Developing Policy: Projects looking to Ofcom, which address key policy issues or debates in broadcasting.
2. Media Literacy: Projects considering issues around media literacy in the UK.
3. Programme Standards: Projects that look at standards or privacy issues within the current broadcasting environment.

All the projects reported on in this document have been published at the time of this review. In addition, the BSC and ITC have supported research which will contribute to Ofcom's forthcoming review of Public Service Broadcasting. The ITC is also conducting a comprehensive survey of audience attitudes to impartiality in television news.

Finally the BSC and ITC would like to thank all those who have contributed to each of the projects conducted over the years – colleagues and suppliers alike. It has been a challenging and exhilarating period.

*Andrea Millwood Hargrave*  
*Director, Joint Research Programme*



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# Developing future policy

## Broadcasting Standards Regulation

### Background and Range

The Broadcasting Standards Commission, the Independent Television Commission and the Radio Authority consulted with viewers and listeners to explore the relevance of the way in which the regulatory codes governing broadcast content currently operate and to explore particular elements of the codes relating specifically to content and editorial impartiality.

### Key Findings

■ **Desire for regulation** - Participants were in favour of regulation. They thought it necessary to ensure that content standards on television and radio are acceptable to the majority of the audience and that children are protected from exposure to offensive or harmful material.

■ **Does current regulation work?** - Most participants were in favour of the television watershed. It was seen as an unspoken contract between parents (or other adults) and broadcasters, with parents depending on the broadcasters to fulfil their part of the bargain for it to work for them. However, that contract was not always thought to be working as well as it should. Many participants felt there were instances of the watershed being flouted by broadcasters.

■ **Editorial integrity, fairness, impartiality and accuracy** - This area of questioning was very much news-

focused. It was clear from the research that, when asked to define the concepts of impartiality and accuracy, most thought of them as the same thing, meaning 'a lack of bias'. Accuracy was a synonym for factual, or factually correct. News consumers wanted opinion clearly distinguishable from facts. While some participants felt more tolerance for opinionated news on local radio, they did not feel the same way about national radio.

■ **Advertising, teleshopping and sponsorship** - There was little concern expressed about advertising content, which appeared to be far less top-of-mind than programming. When prompted, participants talked exclusively about television advertising, and had few concerns about radio advertising. The chief issues for the minority who did have concerns were the use of sexual content or innuendo to sell unrelated products, and advertising on daytime television thought to target the elderly or vulnerable e.g. financial advertisements.

■ When asked, most participants could not see any arguments for allowing teleshopping more latitude than spot advertising, and many thought it should be even stricter.

■ Participants were asked to consider how sponsorship might impact editorial integrity, outside news programming. Few expressed real concerns about the current level of sponsorship on

television or radio, although most argued against there being any dramatic expansion of sponsored programming, particularly in terrestrial broadcasting.

■ **Should all television channels and radio stations be treated the same?** -

At first, most participants said they expected all channels to conform to the same regulations. However, over the course of the forums, most shifted from this position to one in which they could conceive of a multi-layered approach to regulating channels. This approach was one which would equate the basic tier or most popular Sky channels, such as Sky One, with terrestrial channels, and then make a distinction for some of the smaller, niche channels.

■ **Arguments against regulation** -

While the majority argued strongly in favour of regulation, there was a significant minority who spoke out against regulation of broadcast content, basing their arguments on perceived societal changes.

■ **Other regulatory possibilities** -

Besides the watershed, ideas put forward by participants to modify or complement the current regulatory system included pre-transmission warnings or other on-screen warnings about programme content. These devices were generally perceived to help people make an informed opinion about programme content.

**Methodology and Sample**

Three one-day participative forums were held, each consisting of 20 participants, and led by The Fuse Group. Two of the forums were held in England, the third in Scotland in July and August 2003.

**Available From**

A copy of the report (ISBN 0 9544055-4-4) can be obtained by either contacting the Broadcasting Standards Commission on 020 7808 1000 or the ITC Viewer Relations Unit on 020 7255 3000 or downloaded from the BSC website [www.bsc.org.uk](http://www.bsc.org.uk) or the ITC website at [www.itc.org.uk](http://www.itc.org.uk)

Date of publication November 2003

## The Watershed: Providing a Safe Viewing Zone

### Background and Range

The Independent Television Commission (ITC), Broadcasting Standards Commission (BSC) and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) have previously commissioned a series of studies on issues relating to the watershed. It was considered timely to further explore the expectations of viewers surrounding the watershed and to attempt to assess its importance in the current media environment. To distinguish this study from previous reports, it explored the views of a wider viewing public than those directly concerned with caring for children.

### Key Findings

- Awareness of the watershed was high, with most participants in the workshops describing it as a fixed point in the evening (9pm) between what was suitable viewing for children and what was not.
- There was strong support for the watershed from participants, and most were in favour of maintaining the watershed at 9pm. Of adult respondents who had heard of the watershed (82%), 95% thought there should be a watershed to protect young people and 77% agreed that it was a must. Seventy-two percent of children who had heard of the watershed thought that it was a good idea.
- The main issue for participants was that broadcasters should adhere more

closely to a gradual progression in content from suitable material for children earlier in the evening to less suitable material later in the evening.

- Very few adult participants claimed to use the watershed as a guide for their own viewing. They used it to guide viewing when watching with other generations to avoid embarrassment and, of course, parents used it as a tool for regulating children's viewing.
- Participants considered that children aged between eight and twelve were at their most impressionable and vulnerable to influence from television content. Those aged under eight were thought to be less at risk, either because they were not available to view later than about 7.30pm, or because offensive or explicit material was thought to 'go over their heads'. By the time children reached their teens 'they knew it all already' and it was time to stop protecting them too much.
- In terms of the watershed's effectiveness, some participants did consider that some programming such as soap operas and dramas were 'pushing the boundaries' in the pre-watershed period. This underlined the importance of the convention.
- Participants were asked to describe their expectations regarding the type of content such as nudity and sexual content, violence and language leading up to the watershed. While violence was the type of content which caused the

most concern, adults were most likely to nominate programmes with sex and swearing as those they did not want their children to watch.

■ It was thought appropriate to regulate television more than other media, even though other media like radio or the internet do not have the same level of restriction applied to them. In general both adults and children were more likely to identify rules or controls over children's television viewing than for most other activities.

### **Methodology and Sample**

A combination of methodologies was used in this project:

1. A series of 18 viewer workshops was conducted by The Fuse Group. The groups were held in five locations: Glasgow, Cardiff, Manchester, London and Southampton. A total of 109 participants took part.
2. Questions were placed on the IPSOS Quest adult panel and the Young View panel. The adult panel is a continuous nationally representative panel of 4000 adults (16+). The Young View panel is a continuous panel of 1500 children aged between 4-15 years.
3. An analysis of Broadcaster's Audience Research Board (BARB) audience data to explore children's viewing patterns and their incidence of viewing television alone or with other people.

### **Available From**

A copy of the report (ISBN: 0 9544055 2 8) can be obtained by either contacting the Broadcasting Standards Commission on 020 7808 1000 or the ITC Viewer Relations Unit on 020 7255 3000 or downloaded from the BSC website [www.bsc.org.uk](http://www.bsc.org.uk) or the ITC website at [www.itc.org.uk](http://www.itc.org.uk)

Date of publication October 2003

## What Children Watch

### Background and Range

This research was divided into two sections. The quantitative section of the report updated a previous survey conducted for the BSC in 1997 and analysed children's programming provision between 1996-2001. The second section consisted of qualitative research amongst children and parents to ascertain their views on children's programming.

### Key Findings

- Children in multichannel homes watch overall significantly more television per day than their terrestrial only counterparts, an average of 35 minutes more per day at 2 hours and 27 minutes. However, the amount of time spent viewing 'children's programmes' is comparable to children in terrestrial only homes.
- There has been a dramatic rise in the amount of children's programming on analogue terrestrial and other television services over the past five years.
- Despite this growth in provision, the range being offered to children, as a proportion of the time devoted to children's programming, is variable on different services. In this context analogue terrestrial channels offer the most diverse line-up with regard to balance of different types of programming.
- The mainstay of the analogue terrestrial channels is still animation, as it is on the dedicated children's channels.

- Children in analogue terrestrial only homes have more awareness of the times their favourite programmes are on and what channel they are on, simply because they follow a linear programme schedule and there is a limited choice of channels.

- Those with access to the dedicated channels tend to know which channels their favourite programmes are on, but otherwise have less awareness of which channel they are watching and flick around more often.

- Parents, especially those in analogue terrestrial only homes, are particularly keen that UK originated programming should be available for their children to watch. They feel it is more authentic and culturally relevant and some felt that it had more of an educational value.

- Parents felt it was important to retain children's programme provision on the analogue terrestrial channels, despite the alternative sources available on cable and satellite channels. They considered it essential that terrestrial broadcasters catered for the child audience.

### Methodology and Sample

There were two main stages to the project:

1. Quantitative section. - This section of the research was based on statistics from the BARB industry panel. The analysis is based on genre classifications defined by BARB for children's programmes.

2. Qualitative section - This section of the research was conducted by Rosenblatt Research. It involved children's groups, mini groups (trios), and family observations with a range of children aged between 6 and 12 years old. In addition a number of parent groups were held. These took place in London, Birmingham, Manchester and Edinburgh and included those who had access to multichannel television and those with just the five terrestrial channels.

**Available From**

A copy of the report can be obtained by either contacting the ITC Viewer Relations Unit on 020 7255 3000 or the Broadcasting Standards Commission on 020 7808 1000 (ISBN: 1 872521 54 1) or downloaded from the ITC website at [www.itc.org.uk](http://www.itc.org.uk) or the BSC website [www.bsc.org.uk](http://www.bsc.org.uk)

Date of publication June 2003

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# Media literacy

## Assessing the Media Literacy of UK Adults

### Background and Range

The Communications Act promises to promote media literacy among the population of the UK. In order to establish the present level of media literacy among the UK population, and in order to set a benchmark against which any future initiatives or interventions can be assessed, this review of the academic literature sought to find out how media literate the adult population in the UK is. The report first examined the question of access, as this is a prerequisite to developing media literacy skills, and then examined research on media literacy in three areas: Technical competencies, Critical reception practices and Content production. Within each area, literacy in the audio-visual media and information and communication technologies were separated.

### Key Findings

#### Access

- Domestic access to information and communication technologies is growing rapidly, enhancing informal learning opportunities.
- There are clear indications that the public is highly motivated to acquire media literacy skills, however at present formal provision is lagging behind demand.

### Technical competencies

■ **Audio-visual media:** As innovations reach the mass market, audience skills are acquired incrementally. Little research has focused yet on the latest innovations and of public confidence in its understanding of the skills required.

■ **Information and communication technologies:** At present, adults may either gain media literacy informally, through direct use of the media at home or work, or formally through education programmes. Levels of actual skill vary widely across the population, with many anxious about failing to get to grips with the technology, and many making use of only a small proportion of the contents and services available online.

### Critical reception practices

■ **Audio-visual media:** A large body of research paints an uneven picture, suggesting that the public is well able to select and account for their media choices, showing a complex understanding of television genres, of the fact/fiction distinction and of the place of commercial messages.

■ **Information and communication technologies:** Most research so far has centred on categories of use, and technical skills, so that little is known of adults' critical response to, and use

of, computer and online content. It seems unlikely that without specific interventions, many will continue to under-use, and to misunderstand or misuse internet content.

### **Content production**

■ **Audio-visual media:** Although experience of production may provide an effective means of improving media literacy, little research has explored this, and it is unlikely that many adults have had experience of content production.

■ **Information and communication technologies:** Little research has explored what proportion of the population actually possesses the skills to create content, although it seems that many are unaware that such production is even possible.

### **Methodology and Sample**

This review primarily focused on recent academic research conducted in the UK, referring only to older or international literature when such research proved to be particularly influential or informative for the UK situation. A thorough search of online and offline academic resources and publications was conducted at the British Library of the Political and Economic Sciences at LSE during April 2002. This research was conducted by Sonia Livingstone, with Nancy Thumim, and funded by the BSC, ITC and NIACE.

### **Available From**

A copy of the report can be obtained by either contacting the ITC Viewer Relations Unit on 020 7255 3000 or the Broadcasting Standards Commission on 020 7808 1000 (ISBN: 1 872521 53 3) or downloaded from the ITC website at [www.itc.org.uk](http://www.itc.org.uk) or the BSC website [www.bsc.org.uk](http://www.bsc.org.uk)

Date of publication March 2003

## Mapping Media Literacy

### Background and Range

This report set out to map where media education takes place in UK schools and other informal settings such as city learning centres, study support projects and the youth service for children within the age range 11-16. It drew together evidence from up-to-date research and inspection. Its aim was to explore the rationale for teaching media education, how much takes place, where it happens and who has access to such opportunities. The report aims to give a balanced picture of the current situation, to identify good practice and offer some advice on further research and activity.

### Key Findings

- There is no clear and commonly agreed definition of 'media literacy'.
- The evidence of this review suggests that media education, policy-making, planning and provision are fragmentary. As a result the levels of media literacy among young people are unpredictable and inconsistent, but overall are likely to be low.
- The arrival of new digital technology has changed media education radically. The capacity of the new software and hardware currently exceeds the skills and knowledge of most teachers in how to get the most out of them. Technology is developing faster than the capacity to train education professionals.

- Within the formal school sector, there is some contribution being made to media literacy, largely through English, for all young people aged 11-16.

- The school curriculum is full. In order to give young people increased access to practical media work, opportunities for learning outside the traditional school day have to be maximised.

- Media education in the informal sector has the ability to engage young people who are disaffected with school and/or are at risk of criminal activity.

- There is no forum to bring together practitioners in all types of education to explore, share and disseminate good practice. The planned increase in the number of specialist secondary schools makes the establishment of such a forum timely.

### Methodology and Sample

Information for this report was drawn together by Tony Kirwan, James Learmonth, Mollie Sayer and Roger Williams from a range of printed sources: Research and inspection findings, resources and guidance available to teachers and other trainers. Discussions were also held, face-to-face, by phone and by email with a range of people who have knowledge and expertise in the field. This research was conducted in partnership with the British Film Institute (BFI).

**Available From**

A copy of the report can be obtained by either contacting the Broadcasting Standards Commission on 020 7808 1000 or the ITC Viewer Relations Unit on 020 7255 3000 (ISBN: 1 872521 52 5) or downloaded from the BSC website [www.bsc.org.uk](http://www.bsc.org.uk) or the ITC website at [www.itc.org.uk](http://www.itc.org.uk)

Date of publication March 2003

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# Programme standards

## Representations of Ethnicity and Disability on Television: A Content Analysis - Briefing Update No 12

### Background and Range

The Broadcasting Standards Commission has been taking regular snapshots of the representation of ethnicity and disability on television since 1993. This update is part of an ongoing programme of research examining the frequency and nature of minority group representation. The data presented here consider results from 1997, when Five first began transmission.

### Key Findings

- Ethnic minority representation has increased consistently in each of the last three years. The proportion of programmes with such representation has increased from 41% to 53% since 1999.
- However, this increase is almost entirely due to a rise in the proportion of incidental participants who were ethnic minorities (an increase of 51% from 1999 to 2002).
- UK productions showed an ethnic minority representation of only 7.4% of the television population – half that of US productions (14.6%).
- The proportion of ethnic minority participants used to highlight issues of stereotyping or discrimination has remained stable at 7%-9% of portrayals.
- People with disabilities appear less frequently, with little change over the years.
- In 2002 they were identified in just over one in ten (11%) of programmes

and contributed less than one percent (0.8%) of the television population.

- Disabilities portrayed were heavily clustered among the easily recognised forms such as difficulties with walking or vision.
- More than four in ten (42%) appearances were considered to highlight issues of prejudice, stereotyping or discrimination, thus disability was less often portrayed as an everyday, incidental phenomenon.

### Methodology and Sample

The analysis was conducted by the Communications Research Group. The sample comprised two composite weeks, that is, 14 individual days of output from 1730 hours to midnight from each terrestrial channel. All programmes were examined but advertising and programme trails were excluded. The measures included numbers of scenes, the duration as well as the content and context. This research was conducted in partnership with the BBC.

### Available From

A copy of the report can be obtained by either contacting the Broadcasting Standards Commission on 020 7808 1000 or the ITC Viewer Relations Unit on 020 7255 3000 or downloaded from the BSC website [www.bsc.org.uk](http://www.bsc.org.uk) or the ITC website at [www.itc.org.uk](http://www.itc.org.uk)

Date of publication November 2003

## Young People, Media and Personal Relationships

### Background and Range

The advent of new media technologies including the internet has made it increasingly difficult to prevent young people from gaining access to sexually explicit material. The aim of this report was to explore children's responses to sexual innuendo and depictions of sexual activity in programmes aimed at, or watched by, them. This report was jointly funded by the Advertising Standards Association, British Board of Film Classification, British Broadcasting Corporation, Broadcasting Standards Commission and the Independent Television Commission.

### Key Findings

- Children frequently encounter sexual material in the media whether they choose to or not. Such material is not just encountered in 'adult' television programming, but also in children's programmes, movies, advertising, pop music videos, magazines, newspapers and on the internet. Although relatively little of this material contained 'explicit' representations of sexual activity.
- The material children do encounter is quite diverse in terms of the 'messages' it is seen to contain. Children sometimes found it difficult to identify the 'messages' about sex and relationships that were contained in this material; and the messages they did identify were by no means uniform or

always straightforward. The modern media offer mixed messages, and often require consumers to make up their own minds about sexual issues.

- Children value the media as a source of information relative to other sources, such as parents or the school. The children were generally critical of the sex education they received in school, and many also found it embarrassing to be taught about such matters by their parents. They preferred media such as teenage magazines on the grounds that they were often more informative, less embarrassing and more attuned to their needs and concerns.

- Children do not necessarily trust what they find in the media: they are 'literate', and often highly critical consumers. They use a range of critical skills and perspectives when interpreting sexual content; and this develops both with age and their experiences of media.

- The influence of the media depends heavily upon the contexts of use, particularly in the family. Children use the media to rehearse gendered identities for example; and different styles of parenting also result in different responses to sexual material, and different ways of coming to terms with it. The media do not have the autonomous ability either to sexually corrupt children or to sexually liberate them.

### **Methodology and Sample**

The project was conducted between June 2001 and July 2003 by David Buckingham and Sara Bragg. It entailed a comprehensive review of the research literature (published separately by the BSC); an extensive qualitative study, involving interviews and other fieldwork activities with children and parents; and a questionnaire survey.

**1. Qualitative study** – Over 100 interviews with a total of 120 young people aged between 9-17 were conducted, also approximately 70 interviews with parents. The sample was gathered from state schools in different locations.

**2. Quantitative study** – A survey was conducted in the schools in which the qualitative study had been conducted. The survey was completed by all the students in the year groups from which interviewees were selected except the oldest group; that is, by students aged 9-10, 11-12 and 13-14. A total of 800 surveys were sent out and 778 were returned.

### **Available From**

A copy of the report (ISBN:) can be obtained by either contacting the Broadcasting Standards Commission on 020 7808 1000 or the ITC Viewer Relations Unit on 020 7255 3000 or downloaded from the BSC website [www.bsc.org.uk](http://www.bsc.org.uk) or the ITC website at [www.itc.org.uk](http://www.itc.org.uk)

Date of publication November 2003

## Conflict Around the Clock: Audience Reactions to Media Coverage of the 2003 Iraq War

### Background and Range

This report explored audiences' responses to the way in which the war on Iraq was covered by the media and how the immediacy of the reporting affected viewers and listeners. Did audiences feel that they were receiving a valuable service or did they have reservations about the credibility and accuracy of the various news sources? The report also looks at news consumption and how this changed once the war broke out.

### Key Findings

■ **Amount of coverage**- approaching 37% of viewers thought the amount of coverage was 'about right', while around a third (34%) felt that there was a bit too much and 27% considered there was far too much.

#### ■ **Level of interest**

- Despite the fact that many felt there was too much television coverage, most viewers claimed to be interested in it (77%)

- News viewing in analogue terrestrial homes (across all terrestrial channels) rose by 84% from 171 minutes per week to 315 minutes per week after the war broke out.

#### ■ **Favoured news services**

- Overall, BBC1's Ten o'clock news was more popular than ITV1's rescheduled main evening news at 9pm, averaging a monthly audience of 6.2m

viewers for March and April, compared with ITV1's 4.6m for the same period.

- ITV1 succeeded in pulling in the single largest audience on 24th March 2003 of 9.4m viewers to its 9pm programme.

- The rolling news services came into their own as the war became a 24-hour news event. Sky News outstripped the competition from the other dedicated news channels, achieving a 29% share of all news viewing at the expense of the key public service broadcasters, BBC1 and ITV1.

■ **Impartiality** – Fifty two percent considered that the television coverage was balanced; 24% disagreed and 24% were unsure. Those who considered there was too much television coverage were less likely to regard it as balanced (39%), whereas 74% of those who thought the amount was 'about right' considered it fair to all sides.

■ **Style and content of coverage** – There was concern over the ability of reporters travelling with troops to remain impartial. Just over half (52%) of viewers felt that 'embedded' reporters were able to remain fair and objective in their reporting, with many unsure (33%) about their impartiality, and 15% disagreeing that they could remain impartial. To some extent 'embedded' reporters appear to have undermined audiences' confidence in the accuracy and honesty of news reports.

### **Methodology and Sample**

A self-completion postal survey was conducted during the week beginning 7 April 2003 using Quest, an industry panel of 4000+ viewers (16+) operated by Ipsos-RSL. The panel are recruited to be representative of the UK population.

### **Available From**

A copy of the report (ISBN: 0 9544055 3 6) can be obtained by contacting the ITC Viewer Relations Unit on 020 7255 3000 or downloaded from the ITC website at [www.itc.org.uk](http://www.itc.org.uk)

Date of publication October 2003

## How Children Interpret Screen Violence

### Background and Range

This piece of research commissioned by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Broadcasting Standards Commission (BSC), British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) and the Independent Television Commission (ITC) aimed to investigate what elements within an image make a scene seem violent to young people.

### Key Findings

- Children are able to distinguish between fictional violence and violence that is 'real'. They also make clear judgements about the justified use of violence, this in turn affects how 'violent' an image is perceived to be.
- Children see a variety of violent images either through film or television, and build up a 'library' of such images over time. Their reactions to such images are influenced by their age, gender, maturity and personal circumstances.
- Children talk of the visual representations of violence as being the most violent, however, on probing, it is often the consequences of violence that increases the violence loading.
- Scenes which contain fantastical violence are considered less violent than scenes which contain violence which is recognisable as something which could occur.

- If the violence is considered as unjust or unfair, then the scene is considered more violent. The relationship between the protagonist and victim should be considered.
- There is an implicit understanding of the watershed and the way in which television and cinema films are regulated. Children are able to talk about the conventions, and boundaries applied to the pre-watershed material as well as film classifications. These ensure, they say, that the images portrayed will not overstep certain parameters.
- There are some key differences in the way in which children's reactions differ from those of adults. For example, for an adult to describe a sequence as 'violent', the action actually needs to be seen. For children, the seen consequences of a violent action can be enough for them to deem it 'violent'.

### Methodology and Sample

The sample comprised 10 two-hour extended group discussions among children aged between nine and 13 years, with a total of 83 children surveyed. The sample was segmented by age and gender. As far as possible, region and location were also taken into consideration. All children took part in a pre-group task, and a questionnaire on film and television programmes was included as part of the task. Research

was conducted between 3-17 March 2003 by Goldstone Perl Research and Schlesenger Research.

### **Available From**

A copy of the report (ISBN: 1 872521 56 8) can be obtained by either contacting the Broadcasting Standards Commission on 020 7808 1000 or the ITC Viewer Relations Unit on 020 7255 3000 or downloaded from the BSC website [www.bsc.org.uk](http://www.bsc.org.uk) or the ITC website at [www.itc.org.uk](http://www.itc.org.uk)

Date of publication September 2003

## Depictions of Sexual Activity and Nudity on Television: A Content Analysis - Briefing Update No 11

### Background and Range

#### The Broadcasting Standards

Commission has been taking regular snapshots of the depictions of sexual activity and nudity on television since 1993. This update is part of an ongoing programme of research, tracking trends in taste and decency issues on terrestrial television. The data presented here consider results from 1997, when Five first began transmission.

### Key Findings

- Twenty one percent of the programmes sampled (166 in a total sample of 802 programmes) depicted some form of sexual activity. However, such scenes were infrequent, having a total duration of 0.4% of all broadcast time sampled.
- Most sex scenes are mild: in 2002 six in ten involved kissing. However, there has been an increase in scenes depicting the sex act, almost all of them (97.5%) occurred after the watershed and included programmes which took sex as their theme.
- Over one-third of scenes of sexual activity (34%) were deemed to be central or relevant to the narrative, while a further one in three (28%) provided contextual detail or information about the characters involved.
- Scenes of significant/adult nudity in the period surveyed showed an increase in 2002, compared with the analysis of the last sample in 1999. However, three factual programmes (all shown at 10pm or later) accounted for much of the increase, containing 47% of all scenes

of nudity. The portrayal of nudity before the watershed was lower than in previous studies.

- Female nudity increased to eight in ten (81%) of depictions in 2002.
- The analysis showed that, in 2002, Channel 4 and Five between them accounted for 63% of the depictions of sexual activity, and 85% of depictions of the sex act. These occurred mainly within factual programming, which took sex as their theme, and in films.

### Methodology and Sample

The analysis was conducted by the Communications Research Group. The sample comprised two composite weeks, that is, 14 individual days of output from 1730 hours to midnight from each terrestrial channel. All programmes were examined but advertising and programme trails were excluded. In 2002 a total of 802 programmes were monitored, with a combined duration of 23,815 minutes. The measures included numbers of scenes, the duration as well as the content and context. This research was conducted in partnership with the BBC.

### Available From

A copy of the report can be obtained by either contacting the Broadcasting Standards Commission on 020 7808 1000 or the ITC Viewer Relations Unit on 020 7255 3000 or downloaded from the BSC website [www.bsc.org.uk](http://www.bsc.org.uk) or the ITC website at [www.itc.org.uk](http://www.itc.org.uk)

Date of publication July 2003

## Dramatic Licence

### Background and Range

This research was commissioned to establish a framework of current thought and opinion that would ensure that the Broadcasting Standards Commission's (BSC) decisions on standards, and adjudications on fairness and privacy issues are a fair and accurate reflection of the expectations and sensitivities of both the general public and of professions that are represented in dramas. In a previous piece of research published by the BSC on viewers' attitudes to British soap operas, a key finding was the way in which audiences used storylines to learn about and discuss issues, many of which were often quite sensitive. To further develop this finding, this research was designed to look at the way in which drama series might act as a vehicle for social comment and public information and whether audiences expect that such material should be factually accurate.

### Key Findings

- Drama as a genre has evolved into many different forms. It is perceived as incorporating four main categories:  
*Quasi soap operas* – long running drama serials  
*Popular drama* – predominantly crime dramas  
*Docu-drama* – a new form of drama  
*Reality TV* – viewed as 'the drama of everyday life'
- The primary function of drama is

entertainment. The majority of the audience wish to enjoy a well written, well acted story. Audiences do not wish to have established expectations of drama challenged because this may be to the detriment of the escapism element of their entertainment.

- Although entertainment is the most important factor for viewers, they still expect the story or situation in a dilemma to be based upon fact. They expect a realistic portrayal with an element of factual accuracy, but viewers also accept that, for drama's sake, exaggeration of a situation or concentration on one possible outcome is needed to entertain.
- The soap opera has raised its own audience's expectations to fill the gap that drama seems to have left in terms of social importance and therefore has taken over the role of providing social discussion.
- Viewers believe that broadcasters have a responsibility to vulnerable sections of the community. They were primarily concerned that members of the public might be adversely influenced by misleading information or a storyline within a drama, and that broadcasters must show the information to be wrong or must counter it with an alternative view.
- Viewers also think that helplines should be offered at the end of programmes to provide support to members of the public who may have been affected by the storyline.

### **Methodology and Sample**

There were two main stages to the project:

1. Discussion groups conducted by NOP. This involved 14 group discussions, of which 10 were conducted among the general public (recruited to specific criteria) and 4 group discussions were conducted among professionals, namely police officers, teachers, nurses and emergency service workers. The discussions were conducted across 7 locations: Slough, Bristol, Manchester, Edinburgh, Birmingham, London and Northampton.
2. A quantitative survey of UK adults conducted by NOP, based upon NOP's Random Location Omnibus survey. All interviews were conducted face-to-face in respondents' homes using CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing). A total of 2007 interviews were conducted with adults aged 15+ throughout the United Kingdom.

### **Available From**

A copy of the report can be obtained by contacting the Broadcasting Standards Commission on 020 7808 1000 (ISBN: 1 872521 55 X) or downloaded from the BSC website [www.bsc.org.uk](http://www.bsc.org.uk)

Date of publication July 2003

## Disabling Prejudice

### Background and Range

The main broadcasters and other stakeholders have recently renewed their commitment to greater representation of disabled people on screen through more portrayals, and by increasing the number of disabled people working within the industry. To assist broadcasters and programme makers in achieving their long-term aims, the Independent Television Commission (ITC), Broadcasting Standards Commission (BSC) and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) jointly commissioned this piece of research. This new study sought to examine attitudes towards disability and the representation of disability on television by both disabled and non-disabled viewers, and by broadcasting industry professionals. It offers indicators to programme makers in making judgements about material to ensure that, as far as possible, it does not cross the offence boundary.

### Key Findings

- Accuracy in portrayals is extremely important to disabled viewers.
- Provision of aspiring role models for young disabled people are vital.
- Barriers to acceptance exist for some non-disabled viewers. These need to be reduced in order to facilitate acceptance.
- The industry recognises that disability, as a political concern, is not yet as advanced as other issues e.g.

ethnicity or gender equality and that senior management must be at the helm of any initiative to effect change.

- Progressive thinking broadcast professionals consider it crucial that disabled people need to be at the heart of the creative process to move things forward.

### Methodology and Sample

The research consisted of three phases:

**1. Interviews (Qualitative)** – This involved focus groups, mini groups, paired depths and individual interviews with members of the public, mainly disabled people, but including some non-disabled participants as well as non-disabled carers. The sample of 96 participants was segmented into different categories according to their attitudes towards disability, and taking account also of their opinion of the role of television. These categories were used throughout the various stages of the project. Define Solutions Ltd conducted this phase and fieldwork took place in January and February 2003.

**2. Self completion postal survey (Quantitative)** – This was sent to a panel of over 4,000 people recruited to be representative of the UK population in terms of age, sex, socio-economic class, and working status. Disability was not a recruitment criteria, however, so the sample is not necessarily representative of the true prevalence of disabled people in society. Ipsos-RSL undertook this phase.

**3. Interviews with Broadcasting Professionals (Qualitative)** – This involved executive interviews with a selection of professionals working in the broadcasting industry. Professionals were selected to ensure a mix by job function, channels and experience of the issues. Opinion Leader Research was commissioned to conduct 23 in-depth interviews during March/April 2003.

**Available From**

A copy of the report can be obtained by either contacting the Broadcasting Standards Commission on 020 7808 1000 or the ITC Viewer Relations Unit on 020 7255 3000 priced £5.00 (ISBN: 0 9544055 1 X) or downloaded from the BSC website [www.bsc.org.uk](http://www.bsc.org.uk) or the ITC website at [www.itc.org.uk](http://www.itc.org.uk)

Date of publication June 2003

## The Public's View 2002

### Background and Range

This was the 32nd in a series of comprehensive annual surveys, providing an invaluable picture of trends in ownership of in-home entertainment and attitudes towards broadcasting over the last three decades.

### Key Findings

- Access to a whole range of communications and home entertainment technologies continued to grow strongly: items notable for their growth were personal computers now available to 46% of respondents, internet access (43%) and WAP mobile phones (19%).
- DVD players have shown a significant increase with over a quarter of respondents (27%) saying they owned one compared with 17% in 2001. For viewing pre-recorded material, the DVD is being used as much as the VCR. In 2002, of the 27% people who had a DVD player, 33% said they used it at least once a week.
- Digital television growth slowed slightly, but multichannel television was now available at home to 51% of people and digital services to 41%.
- The interactive services available on digital television are still seeking a wider market. Of those with such services, 66% said they never used them (62% in 2001), while just 15% said they used them at least once a week (19% in 2001).

- Nearly half of all respondents (47%) said that programmes had got worse, while those saying that programmes had remained the same was lower at 40%.
- Television was still considered by the majority to be the most important source of world news (79%). The number of people saying that television provided their main source of local news reached an all-time high (48%).
- The proportion of people who said that they had personally seen or heard things on television which they had found offensive (42%) was in line with the findings over many years. In comparison, only 13% of respondents had been offended by something they had heard on the radio.
- internet access had increased in 2002 to 52% of respondents from 47% in 2001, with 44% accessing it at home and 16 % at work.

### Methodology and Sample

For this survey 1,191 interviews were conducted among individuals aged 16+ by BMRB International. The sample was weighted to reflect the actual composition of the United Kingdom population as determined by the Broadcaster's Audience Research Board (BARB). All the fieldwork was conducted in the home, using CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing) equipment.

**Available From**

A copy of the report can be obtained by either contacting the ITC Viewer Relations Unit on 020 7255 3000 or the Broadcasting Standards Commission on 020 7808 1000 priced £7.50 (ISBN: 0 9544055 0 1) or downloaded from the ITC website at [www.itc.org.uk](http://www.itc.org.uk) or the BSC website [www.bsc.org.uk](http://www.bsc.org.uk)

Date of publication March 2003

## Reaching the Ethnic Consumer: A Challenge for Marketers

### Background and Range

Increasing ethnic and cultural diversity, like other forms of societal change, represents both a threat and an opportunity to marketers. New consumer segments can provide fresh sources of top-line growth with focused new product development. However, diversity can also mean audience fragmentation, making mass appeal products and mass communication less viable. Marketers are typically unaware of whether or how their own behaviour needs to change to meet the challenge of diversity. To help address this MediaLab, together with the Broadcasting Standards Commission, Channel 4 and News International, put together this report. It provides a qualitative overview of how cultural differences within the larger minority ethnic communities affect their consumer behaviour, use of media and response to marketing communications. The study concentrates on Asian audiences and reports Afro-Caribbean variation by exception. This report includes an analysis of the diversity within television and print advertising.

### Key Findings

- Minority ethnic audiences represent a significant opportunity for brands
  - Many major purchases are subject to strong family-based decision making.
- Some advertising fails to connect
  - Non-literal communications are least likely to connect, particularly with

Asians. Part of this stems from advertising per se not being adopted as a positive aspect of British culture.

- Using minority ethnic characters is a double-edged sword
  - Use of minority ethnic actors in settings draws strong, resonant attention to the creative execution, but tends to polarise the community between those who see the individual representation as positive and those that see it as tokenistic or stereotypical.
- The impact of mainstream culture on minority ethnic culture
  - The family home provides a cultural 'earthing point' which protects the traditional culture and ensures that this is passed on from generation to generation.
  - Western influences affect different aspects of life, notably out of home, whether in the workplace, at study or leisure. This changes dominant values and with it, behaviour in consumer marketplaces.
- There is a demand for culturally-relevant marketing
  - Communities see an opportunity for brands to augment existing, mainstream campaigns with more focussed targeting, sympathetic to the culture.
- Media consumption habits reflect a composite of mainstream British media and cultural specific consumption
  - Most households are multichannel, to provide access to specialist channels.
  - BBC and Channel 4 are seen as ethnically sensitive broadcasters.

### **Methodology and Sample**

The research consisted of four stages:

1. A quantitative analysis of diversity within advertising: For television, this was conducted by The Communications Research Group: Print and poster diversity was analysed by a post-graduate team at Leeds University Business School.
2. A series of individual interviews conducted in the home with all members of the household, among Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, African and Caribbean homes. A total of 45 homes were researched by Marketing Synergie International Ltd (MSI). This stage primarily focused on understanding culture and consumer behaviour, with some exploration of advertising.
3. Four group discussions (three Asian, one Afro-Caribbean) further explored relationships with brands and advertising.
4. A workshop conducted with Asian consumers to reflect back some of the findings and explore relevant strategies for brand owners to adopt.

The research and fieldwork was carried out during September and October 2002.

### **Available From**

A copy of the report can be obtained by contacting the Broadcasting Standards Commission on 020 7808 1000 or downloaded from the BSC website [www.bsc.org.uk](http://www.bsc.org.uk)

## **Projects to be Published in Early 2004**

### **1. The Public's View 2003**

#### **Background and Range**

The 33rd in a series of annual surveys mapping trends in ownership of technology and attitudes towards broadcasting. Attitudes towards regulation and key areas such as the provision of news are discussed, as are the views about the way in which programmes are thought to have changed over the years. This project was jointly funded by the BSC, ITC and The Radio Authority.

### **2. Quality Subtitling - Subtitling Speeds**

#### **Background and Range**

The aim of this piece of research was to evaluate deaf people's experiences of subtitling looking specifically at how comprehension and enjoyment of different types of programmes are affected by the speed of the words on screen. This project was jointly funded by the ITC, BSC, Channel 4, Five, Intelfax Limited and RNID.

### **3. The influence of alcohol advertising on young people**

#### **Background and Range**

The overall objective of this piece of research was to learn more about the effects of alcohol advertising on people who are too young to buy alcohol legally and to help inform decisions about alcohol advertising that would be seen by young people. This project was co-funded by the ITC, BBFC and ASA.



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