



## Children's Television

considered as separate programs for the purposes of Table 3. For example, 'Lois & Clark' started off in a Saturday time-slot and then switched to a Monday. The ratings for the two different time-slots are reported separately.

While there was some commonality across markets in terms of the top rating programs, there was also considerable variation. Some of this variation reflects the different sporting interests in different states with the AFL Grand Final rating at the top of the list in Melbourne, and the three State of Origin Rugby League matches rating in the top ten in Brisbane. The variation also reflects the apparent difference in popularity of movies across markets.

Some movies, however, rated well across all markets and four made it into the top ten for the five market average - *Ferngully* rating at the top of the list. The other six programs in the top ten were regular programs, mainly American comedy and drama series. 'Lois & Clark' was included twice in the top ten, reflecting the fact that it rated well in both time-slots that it was broadcast. Only one Australian program, 'Just Kidding', made it to the top ten for the five market average.

Further details will be contained in the ABA's forthcoming Trends and Issues publication which will consist of a detailed review of television and radio ratings data for 1993 and 1994. This publication will update the ABA's first Trends and Issues paper *Audiences & Programs in 1992*. □

From 'Full House', courtesy Channel 7



Research into community attitudes to program matters is one of the primary functions of the ABA. In this article, **Linda Sheldon**, Manager, Research section, discusses recent ABA research which focuses on children.

## Children and television

The ABA\* utilises accepted social research methodologies in its attitudinal research. These comprise exploratory qualitative methodologies such as focus groups and in-depth interviews, followed by a representative, national survey of the Australian community in a quantitative stage. Research results inform policy making in relation to implementation and monitoring of codes of practise and the development of standards and conditions of licence. This information is augmented by ratings data, Australian and overseas literature and information from the extensive consultation process with the industry and community groups.

The following discussion of published and in-progress research, focuses on results which relate to children's viewing.

### Published research

#### **Kidz TV (1991)**

As part of the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal's\* inquiry into children's television standards which commenced in 1988 a study of child viewing was undertaken. Qualitative and quantitative research was conducted in primary schools in two states of Australia with 4055 children. The study examined C and P programs, viewing levels, the best time of day to broadcast children's programs and reactions to different genres. The results were published in *Kidz TV* in 1991, and showed age and other leisure options to have a marked effect on

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viewing of programs specifically designed for children.

#### **What We Want from Our TVs (1992)**

The 1624 adults surveyed in 1991 were asked about the role of television in society. They were questioned about their support for children's programs on television and what types of program they thought were good viewing. There was overwhelming support for children's programs to be an integral part of broadcast television. Most respondents listed educational, information type programs or documentaries as 'good' viewing for primary school aged children, whereas ratings data for 1991 showed children mainly watched comedies, cartoons and 'soapies'.

The results of the survey are contained in *What We Want From Our TVs*.

#### **Classification Issues. Film, Video and Television (1993)**

The ABA conducted research into community attitudes to classification

\* *The Australian Broadcasting Authority, established in October 1992, was formerly known as the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal.*



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issues (sex, violence and offensive language) in 1992. Children's viewing patterns were researched. Peak family television viewing times and the placement of AO programs were

controls in homes with only teenagers than homes with only pre-school, only primary or those with composite age groups of children.

were more likely to use classification or rating symbols advice to decide whether children should watch a program rather than use such advice for themselves. Parents with children under 16 years were more likely to recall classification symbols and to have noticed changes in the way classification advice is now given than parents of older children or non-parents.<sup>1</sup>

## research

investigated as they related to children's viewing. Adults were more concerned about the portrayal of sex, violence and offensive language on television if children were present. This survey of more than 1000 participants is reported in *Classification Issues; Film, Video and Television*.

### **R Classified Programs on Pay TV (1994)**

The Broadcasting Services Act requires both houses of Parliament to approve the broadcast of R-rated material before it can be broadcast on subscription television. The ABA was required to conduct research into community standards of taste and decency in relation to classifications for pay TV. The study of 2440 adults was conducted in December 1993. The findings were published as *R Classified Programs on Pay TV* and reported on community attitudes to the broadcast of R classified material on pay TV.

Parents in the survey were also asked about the controls they exercised over their children's viewing. Almost 90 per cent of parents in the sample said they used rules in the home to restrict their children's viewing. There were fewer

### **'Cool' or 'Gross'. Children's attitudes to Violence, Kissing and Swearing on Television (1994)**

As part one of a study on children and television, the ABA has conducted research with children on what concerns or upsets them about what they view on television. and rules and routines that regulate television viewing at home. The survey is reported in *'Cool' or 'Gross': Children's attitudes to Violence, Kissing and Swearing on Television*. A total of 54 schools in New South Wales participated in this research, involving 1602 primary school children in grades three to six (eight to 12 years). A follow up stage, with 517 parents of children, was conducted after the child study.

Results indicated that most households had rules about children's television viewing. Violent and real-life depictions concerned children more than kissing, nudity and swearing. Many children exercised self-censorship by switching channels or leaving the room when something was depicted that upset or concerned them.

### **Research completed but unpublished**

#### **Codes, Classifications, Concerns and Complaints Study (1995)**

This study examined the attitudes of 1225 adults in July 1994 to changes in the classification system for television, the complaints process and the changes brought about by the introduction of the commercial industry code. Results indicate that respondents

### **Current children's research in progress**

#### **Children and Television Study (Part 2) (1995)**

This second part of the children and television project will examine programs children like to watch on television and why they like to watch them. Stage one of this project is complete. It involved consultation with writers, producers, directors, programmers, child development experts, the ABC and commercial network executives responsible for children's programs, representatives of community groups with a child focus, and schools. Stages two and three will consist of qualitative and quantitative research respectively.

#### **Family and Electronic Entertainment Study (1995)**

This project is being conducted jointly with the Office of Film and Literature Classification, the government agency that classifies films, videos and computer games. The project is exploring the early impact of technology on family life. It aims to determine how families use various forms of electronic entertainment and the ways parents monitor and regulate their children's access to and use of electronic entertainment (including television, video and computer and video games). The qualitative stage has been completed and an Australia-wide survey will start in March. Both children and parents will be interviewed and a diary of leisure activities will be collected. ☐



From 'Hangin' with Mr Cooper' a television program popular with children, courtesy Channel 7

<sup>1</sup> The results of this research will be available in a soon to be released ABA publication.