Literature review on sexual content in television programmes with particular regard to children

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This report was compiled by

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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>AAP</td>
<td>The American Academy of Paediatrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACMA</td>
<td>The Australian Communications and Media Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTF</td>
<td>The Australian Children’s Television Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMA</td>
<td>The American Medical Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>APA</td>
<td>The American Psychological Association</td>
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<td>BBC</td>
<td>The British Broadcasting Corporation</td>
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<td>BSA</td>
<td>The Broadcasting Standards Authority</td>
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<td>BSC</td>
<td>The Broadcasting Standards Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAQDAS</td>
<td>Computer aided qualitative data analysis software</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DVD</td>
<td>Digital video data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICTs</td>
<td>Information and communication technologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITC</td>
<td>The Independent Television Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KWIC</td>
<td>Keywords in context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NVivo9</td>
<td>A particular type of CAQDAS, developed by QSR Pty. Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ</td>
<td>The country of New Zealand –the locus for this research</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ofcom</td>
<td>The office of the UK communications regulator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTA</td>
<td>The Parent and Teachers’ Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ</td>
<td>Research question</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>The United Kingdom</td>
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<td>USA</td>
<td>The United States of America</td>
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction: This review addresses issues of significance for children as an audience of television content in New Zealand. Within the contemporary media environment, children have access to a multitude of platforms from which they learn, and which influence their interactions and socialisation. At the same time that the New Zealand Department of Social Development is developing a Green Paper on how children are valued, nurtured and protected (New Zealand Government, 2011), the Broadcasting Standards Authority (BSA) commissioned this review. Their initiative acknowledges the significance of television content, particularly with regard to children, and especially in connection to free-to-air television at prime-time.

Aims: This review’s aims are two-fold: to identify the results and findings of previous studies with respect to sexual content on television with specific reference to children’s television in New Zealand; and, to identify methodologies that have been previously utilised in order to inform a future empirical study with respect to the significance for children of sexual content on television in New Zealand.

Sexual content: Sexual content is a term which, when defined or conceptually explained, expanded or analysed, has variable meanings which often reflect the ideological and theoretical positioning of the research or the researcher. For instance, Kunkel, Eyal, Finnerty, Biely and Donnerstein (2005) authoritatively define sexual content as “any depiction of sexual activity, sexually suggestive behaviour, or talk about sexuality or sexual activity” (p. 14). Kunkel et al. proceed to deconstruct and code sexual content with statistical confidence, while others, including Buckingham, Willett, Bragg and Russell (2010) with similar authority, exhibit doubt concerning that which sexual content is, apart from a concept that is culturally-defined, suggesting that “the domain of the sexual is socially, culturally and historically defined in many ways” (p. 6). Though this review does not identify a complete dichotomy of views on sexual content, as the argument is far more complex, it does identify two over-arching ways in which research approaches sexual content.

The requirement to provide some form of answer to the question, ‘What is sexual content?’ in order to support ongoing discussion between academics, the media industry, regulatory authorities, parents and children may be best met, not by seeking a definition, but by defining contextualised boundaries for sexual content. The categorisation of sexual content
Organisation of the review: This review was influenced by the restricted amount of qualifying literature that specifically focused on the intersection of prime-time, free-to-air, sexual content on television and the targeted group of children. Little research in New Zealand has directly focused on the combination of these concepts. The aims were therefore qualified and extended in Chapter 1. This was achieved by elaborating the relationship between the television medium and its audience of children in Chapter 2 and then examining literature that concerns itself with children and sexual content from historical (Chapter 3) and geo-cultural (Chapter 4) perspectives. At the same time, this involved a consideration of previous methodologies used in the research studies, explored in Chapter 5, which resulted in the recommendation (Chapter 6) of a design for possible future research on sexual content on television and New Zealand children, and thereby addressed the second aim of the literature review.

Findings: The findings of this review are influenced by an identified divergence of media research between a European position, which is more interpretive, holistic and takes a macro perspective and a USA position that is empirical and takes a micro perspective (Sinclair, 2002). Research on the media in the USA can be considered as originating in communications studies, whereas that of the UK is based more on sociological and cultural strands (Merrin, 2005). These geographic and cultural differences in research approaches to the significance for children of sexual content on television were examined separately by this review, for the USA, the Republic of Ireland, the UK, Australia and New Zealand, and, in doing so, also advanced a brief historical account to the present time.

Findings from a cross-section of these previous studies include:

- There is no consistent finding with respect to sexual content on television, both in terms of its definition, meaning, influence or effect. Sexual content on television
is evidenced in the literature as both increasing (Kunkel et al., 2005) and decreasing (Hetsroni, 2007).

- In the USA, Kunkel et al. (2005) identified that television was a strong influence in changing the sexual attitudes and behaviour of children and that the effect was gradual and cumulative. This was observed in longitudinal studies from 1999 to 2005, though it is to be noted that these studies have not been repeated since 2005.

- Collins, Elliot, Berry, Kanouse and Hunter (2003) in the USA, Papadopolous (2010) in the UK and Rutherford and Bittman (2007) in Australia, found that television can work in conjunction with parents to improve sexual knowledge.

- Brown (2009) reported on the changing perspectives of what sort of sexual content is deemed inappropriate.

- Livingstone and Bovill (1999) suggested that UK children’s lives in the 21st Century would increasingly be influenced by a diverse range of media. Television would move from the foreground to the background; from the centre of family life to a balance between family and individual uses; and from family entertainment to 24-hour availability and use.

- MacKeogh (2004) recommended that television should be viewed as a source of information about the sexual character of society and provide the means for young people to discuss media messages about sexuality, especially those who are reliant on the media as their main source of information.

- In the UK, Millwood Hargrave and Livingstone (2006) assert that the television is a positive medium, which places significant responsibilities on free-to-air television channels. They also found that television influences behaviour and attitudes by playing a part in subtle, long-term, reality-defining effects, such as stereotyping, but it remained unclear what other contributory influences exist and what the comparative importance of sexual content on television is, with respect to these effects. Their research confirmed the importance of context (including gender, age and family settings) in mediating any potential effect of sexual content on television.

- Rush and La Nauze (2006) in their Australian study, identified the high degree of sexual innuendo in television and asserted that the proliferation of sexualised media texts may encourage sexual intitiation before children have a full understanding of the consequences.
The dominant Australian research position is that television media texts are influential, but that this influence can be seen as both positive and negative and that television is a source of information on sex and sexual health (Rutherford & Bittman, 2007).

New Zealand research by Walters and Zwaga (2001) concluded that New Zealand children exhibit autonomy, independence, control and self-selection regarding their television habits and rely on warnings and classifications 86 per cent of the time.

In New Zealand, Jackson, Low, Gee and Butler (2007) emphasise the importance of avoiding assumptions about the significance of media for children and propose that a range of inter-related factors relating to the child, the content and the context, influence children’s responses to the media. They conclude that children are self-regulatory with regard to television content.

Lealand and Zanker (2003, 2008) have conducted research in New Zealand in which sample design is compromised by constrained resources. Despite being restricted to regional and convenience samples, Lealand and Zanker (2003) have replicated their research longitudinally to “accurately capture the shifting, volatile nature of children and their media use in contemporary society” (p. 1). Lealand and Zanker have incorporated some of the richest of data collections methods, including interpretive drawings, to assert the importance of conducting child-centred research that recognises children’s voice as an integral part of the research process. This challenges “traditional understandings of audience” (Zanker & Lealand, 2010, p. 32).

With the exception of academics, including Lealand and Zanker, much of the New Zealand research into children’s relationship to the television media is commissioned by organisations, such as the Broadcasting Standards Authority, which are funded by government. This is also the case in Australia and UK, but the funding for media research in the USA is more complex, with government funding being supplemented by national professional bodies such as the APA, private trusts such as the Kaiser Family Foundation and politicised pressure groups such as the Parents Television Council.

**Recommendations:** The interaction between children and sexual content on television during free-to-air (prime-time) in New Zealand warrants further investigation. Studies in the
UK (Livingstone & Bovill, 1999; Philo, 1999; Buckingham, 1993; Buckingham et al., 2010), Australia (Palmer, 1986; Rutherford & Bittman, 2007) and the sole study in New Zealand (Watson & Lambourne, 1992) identify that there is insufficient empirical evidence to establish a consensus on how sexual content on television affects children. The USA studies by Kunkel et al. (1999, 2001, 2003, 2005), Bleakley, Hennessey, Fishbein and Jordan (2008). Collins et al. (2004), Pardun, L’Engle and Brown (2005) and Somers and Tynan (2006) are more conclusive due to their confidence that sexual content on television can be defined with sufficient accuracy to justify the assertion of statistical relevance to their findings.

Specifying a possible future study: With regard to a future study in New Zealand, analysis of the studies for this review identify that it would be appropriate to include the following components:

- A multi-method (or mixed methods) approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods.
- A multi-disciplinary approach that would benefit from research contributions from experts in diverse fields.
- A multi-phase research design, including an exploratory phase, a testing or pilot phase, an assessment phase and a final, integrating phase.
- A longitudinal or repetitive aspect which replicates the research every three or four years.

Conclusion: This review concludes that television continues to be the pre-eminent source of media text in children’s lives, but its use, and children’s responses to that use, is becoming increasingly difficult to research without accounting for television’s integration into the increasingly complex multi-media environment. There is insufficient evidence to assert that sexual content on television is harmful to New Zealand children, or that it is possible to specifically associate changes in behaviour and attitudes with sexual content on television. Nevertheless, sexual content on television is concluded to have significant influence in the sexual socialisation of children. This may take the form of positive influence, as in the use of television for information on sex and sexual health, or of negative influence, such as in gender stereotyping.

Academic approaches to understanding sexual content on television, with particular regard to children, comprise an area of social research that is important at a societal, government, group, family and individual level. The lack of empirical evidence to illuminate
this important academic and social domain has been addressed in a small way by this review, but the need for further research is evident.
CHAPTER 1: OVERALL DESCRIPTION AND AIMS OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW PROJECT

1.1 Introduction

Accelerating developments in technology are creating a changed media environment in which
the television is no longer a stand-alone entity. Nabi and Oliver (2009) recently claimed that
the speed of such change has outpaced the development of theories applied within media
research, thus much media research becomes quickly out of date.

This review recognises the increasing challenge of this changing media environment,
for as television has been partially subsumed by it, it is no longer straightforward to identify
either the significance or the effects of television content on specific audiences in isolation
from other media. In addition, the importance of cultural context cannot be under-estimated;
findings in other international locations may inform this review, while not being directly
applicable to the New Zealand context.

It is a positive sign that there has been a greater emphasis in recent research in New
Zealand that focuses on media and children (for example, Broadcasting Standards Authority
[BSA], 2008, 2010; Jackson, Low, Gee,& Butler, 2007; Lealand, 2004; Lealand & Zanker,
2003; Walters & Zwaga, 2001; Wylie, 2001). This research has grown out of the increasing
responsiveness to the influence of the media and its relationship with younger people. While
international research has informed many of these studies, the significance of the New
Zealand research is that it informs our understandings in a culturally specific way. As these
New Zealand studies build upon each other, they are incrementally addressing issues that are
being identified as significant for our children. While some previous studies have focused on
the media’s negative impact (such as the content analysis used in Television violence in New
Zealand, King et al., 2003), most New Zealand studies have also identified more positive
relationships between media and children.

Media research in New Zealand is observed to be similar to that of the UK and
Australia rather than that of USA. New Zealand evidences a particular research approach
which incorporates many of the following characteristics: employs a mixed or multi-methods
approach; is multi-stage; uses nationally representative sampling; is longitudinal; and involves
data that are rich. We recognise the increasing New Zealand-specific research to date and
conclude that any future empirical research on the relationship of particular television content and children needs to be contextually and culturally designed.

Since its establishment in 1989, the BSA in New Zealand has funded research that has iteratively contributed to a body of knowledge to inform its evidence-based policy and decisions. “For the BSA, no research is more important than that which helps us to understand media issues in relation to children” (BSA, 2008, p. 1).

1.2 Aims and parameters for the review

1.2.1 Aims

1. Identify the results and findings of previous studies with respect to sexual content on television, with specific reference to children’s television in New Zealand.

2. Identify methodologies that have been previously utilised in order to inform a future empirical study with respect to the significance for children of sexual content on television in New Zealand.

1.2.2 Parameters

1. International comparisons are to be provided, particularly with Australia, the United Kingdom (UK), the United States of America (USA), Ireland and possibly Canada and Scandinavia.

2. The literature review will focus on ‘free-to-air’ television in New Zealand at ‘prime-time’.

3. The age group of interest is 5 to 14 years; of special interest is the age group from 9 to 11 years.

4. The free-to-air television code of broadcasting practice (BSA, 2009) informs the specification for the review. Appendix 1 includes a complete list of the standards and associated guidelines, but, for this review, standard 9 is central, and states: “During children’s normally accepted viewing times […], broadcasters should consider the interests of child viewers” (p. 6).

The areas of research interest for this review are progressively focused by the above specification. The following research referenced the specification of this review to some degree. A comprehensive study, Television sex, by Watson and Lambourne (1992) focused on sexual content on New Zealand television. Jackson et al. (2007) incorporated a restricted
reference to sexual content in research that considered children’s use of all prevailing media platforms. In *Seen and heard: Children’s media use, exposure and response* (BSA, 2008) detailed reference was made to children’s exposure to “challenging media content” by assessing their reaction to “rude things, sex, naked people/pornography, kissing” (p. 52) and a more concentrated attempt was made to elaborate children’s reaction to sexuality and nudity on television in *Watching the watchers* (BSA, 2010). It is noted, and relevant, that each of these four studies was commissioned and published by the BSA. The restricted research base described both accentuates the value of this literature review and justifies the review process moving outside of the particular constraints of the specification, in the following ways.

1.2.3 *The literature review is expanded beyond the declared aims*

1. Though significant research on sexual content on television has been completed, it is necessary for this review to expand the television media platform to incorporate research into multiple media platforms (e.g. *Media studies in Aotearoa New Zealand*, Goode & Zuberi, 2010).

2. Media research employing innovative methodologies is reviewed to inform the design of future research protocols, even when the subject of the research is not sexual content on television (e.g. *Media analysis techniques*, Berger, 2005).

1.2.4 *The literature review parameters are re-defined*

1. Geographical loci for research are focused on the United States of America (USA), the Republic of Ireland, England and Scotland (sometimes addressed together in this research as the United Kingdom), Australia and New Zealand. The importance of culture and sub-culture to research on sexual content on television (Buckingham, Willett, Bragg, & Russell, 2010; Lemish, 2007; Pecora, Murray, & Wartella, 2007), places greater emphasis on research from cultures similar to New Zealand.

2. Much research that is relevant to this review does not restrict itself to ‘free-to-air’ television or to ‘prime-time’ (e.g. *Sex on TV 4*, Kunkel, Eyal, Finnerty, Biely, & Donnerstein, 2005), but has nevertheless been included where it informs this review.

3. The age group parameter of 5 to 14 years, is consistent with the BSA free-to-air television programme classifications (see Appendix 2), which are not necessarily compatible with those of other countries of interest (e.g. *Media and communications in Australian families*, Rutherford & Bittman, 2007).
1.3 Methods and protocols used to conduct the literature review project

In order to access an initial number of references that responded to the above adjusted specification, a search was initiated, using a search algorithm, through various databases and search engines (as detailed in Appendix 3). This search produced an initial list of 110 journal articles, books and book chapters and 14 theses and dissertations. Abstracts for each of these 124 references were read and coded to determine their compatibility with the specification. Thirty-three key references were thus selected. Reading of these 33 references resulted in additional references being added, which were then also studied. This resulted in the review following a process metaphorically similar to a circular path of decreasing diameter, wherein each new set of references selected, yielded fewer additional relevant references and progressively repeated more of the references already identified, iteratively focusing the review. In this way a degree of saturation (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007) of extant literature was evidenced, in that each further reference studied included in its reference list many of the key references already selected and few additional relevant references.

Toward the end of this circular process, it was evident that few of the selected references concerned the New Zealand context. Hence, a specific attempt was made to examine publications from each of the authors who contributed to the book Media studies in Aotearoa New Zealand 2, edited by Goode and Zuberi (2010), together with other authors identified on the BSA web-site, including Barwick, Butler, Gee, Jackson, Lambourne, Low, Walters, Watson, Wylie and Zwaga.

1.4 Reference to recent and resonant research

The media environment has been subject to extraordinarily rapid changes, particularly over the last 20 years (Nabi & Oliver, 2009), as has the notion of childhood, the target group for this review (Livingstone, 2002). Thus, this review affords greater prominence to more recent texts. Texts prior to 1995 are only referred to if considered seminal or relevant to the historical or geographical and cultural variations described in Chapters 4 and 5, respectively. Government enquiries, reviews and reports that have been produced by groups of academics and experienced practitioners in the first decade of the twenty-first century have been referenced in detail. These publications often contain a literature review as part of their methodology, and detailed referencing of these studies avoids ‘reinventing the wheel’, by re-
reviewing work that has already been commissioned, completed, published and peer-reviewed, while ensuring that the context of prime-time, free-to-air television in New Zealand remains the focus for this review.

1.5 Problems of definition

The significance of sexual content on television has been approached from a wide number of theoretical positions, from those that identify a particular process to those which almost entail a theory of society. In any event, theories of the significance of media influence abound (Millwood Hargrave & Livingstone, 2006). Much of the research has been commissioned by entities that are linked to government and in doing so the nature of key concepts is often assumed, as opposed to defined. Concepts and terms that are considered specific to the areas of scientific enquiry covered by this literature review, are discussed, elaborated and defined in Appendix 4. Some understanding of the central and controversial concept of sexual content is considered an essential precursor to subsequent argument and is therefore examined in some detail below.

1.6 Sexual content

This literature review has identified a significant issue in the examination of sexual content on television, with particular regard to children. In much of the prior research examined, the question ‘What is sexual content?’ is often assumed, left unstated or not approached. The question therefore becomes, metaphorically, the elephant-in-the-room. The elephant metaphor could perhaps be further extended to the mammoth-in-the-room, since the elephant represented by the evident lack of consistent meaning for sexual content can be considered both large and ‘woolly’.

The need to comprehensively address the question ‘What is sexual content?’ is large in terms of its significance to research, be it empirical or theoretical, positivist or interpretivist in its approach, for any study benefits from either defining or placing boundaries of meaning and understanding around such a central concept. It is ‘woolly’ because many studies refer to sexual content, predict the effects of sexual content and describe the contexts in which sexual content operates, without providing either definition, or even boundaries, to what is, and therefore what is not, sexual content on television.
The difficulty in offering a direct and succinct answer to the question, ‘What is sexual content?’ is partially explained by recognising that there are different ways in which sexual content is perceived. One is the more positivist and empiricist approach which seeks to define and identify sexual content in order to predict its effects on target populations, such as children. Another is the more interpretivist approach that seeks to understand the meaning of sexual content on television and how this sexual content may influence audiences, but does not offer definition for sexual content, which is held to be a relative term that is culturally, sub-culturally and even individualised in its meaning. These distinctly different approaches to the question are now examined.

In order to develop criteria for a study’s inclusion into his longitudinal meta-analysis of sexual content on prime-time network programming in the USA from 1975 to 2004, Hetsroni (2007) categorised sexual content as normative, socially illegitimate, illegal, and risks and responsibilities. To facilitate his meta-analysis, Hetsroni detailed the four categories:

- **Normative sexual content** refers to the standards by which sexual content is determined to be appropriate, or inappropriate, and included heterosexual kissing, touching and petting, implied intercourse, explicit intercourse, overall intercourse and talk about sex.

- **Socially illegitimate sexual content** was determined to be unmarried intercourse and homosexuality.

- **Illegal sexual content** included aggressive sexual acts and prostitution.

- **Risks and responsibilities** identifies sexual content that emphasises the risks attached to certain sexual behaviours and the responsibilities attending those behaviours.

Hetsroni provides specific examples of sexual content on television for each of the above 11 sub-categories. In completing this categorisation of sexual content, Hestroni provides some boundaries for sexual content, but recognises that his study fails to account for the programme context in which the sexual content is situated. Contextual factors may include whether the sexual content is “humorous or serious, detached or involved” (p. 342).

In assessing sexual content on USA television biennially from 1999 to 2005, Kunkel et al. (2005) sampled the entire television landscape and asserted that their methodology was consistent over each of their four studies. Kunkel et al. defined sexual content as “any depiction of sexual activity, sexually suggestive behaviour, or talk about sexuality or sexual activity” (p. 14). This relatively wide definition closely follows an earlier one by Harris (1999) that views sexual content as any representation that portrays or implies sexual behaviour, interest or motivation. For Kunkel et al., decisions about that which qualifies as
sexual content, on the basis of the above definition, is made at the scene and programme level of analysis. The scene level of analysis was further classified into talk about sex, sexual behaviour and risks and responsibilities. The programme unit of analysis considers the collective theme or pattern of messages that a programme conveys. In this way it identifies and codes sexual content with some appreciation of the programme context that Hetsroni (2007) considers important. Using a team of trained coders, Kunkel et al. (2005) apply variable scaling information to their coding assessments. For example, explicitness is measured on a scale of 0 to 4, with 0 indicating no explicitness, 1 indicating suggestive or provocative dress, 2 indicating disrobing, 3 reflecting discreet nudity, and 4 indicating nudity. Kunkel et al.’s sexual content coding is consistent, thorough and complex and applies definite boundaries and qualified decision-making criteria to that which is sexual content, while also assessing the intensity of that sexual content.

Though the more empirical and positivist approach to sexual content analysis described by Hetsroni (2007) and used by Kunkel et al. (2005) has been utilised outside the USA by researchers including MacKeogh (2004), Millwood Hargrave (1999) and Cumberpatch, Gauntlett and Littlejohns (2003), these researchers promote the critical requirement to contextualise any such sexual content analysis. Researchers, such as Buckingham and Bragg (2004) and Lemish (2007) consider that an understanding of sexual content, independent of context, is futile. This requirement to place sexual content in context is a pre-requisite to approaching an understanding of sexual content, but is considered central more to interpretivists than positivists, and requires elaboration of the context from the programme, audience and societal perspectives.

The programme context seeks to place the identified sexual content within the context of a programme to determine the extent to which it is part of the story-line and the extent to which the storyline mediates that sexual content. For instance, to Hetsroni (2007), an elderly married couple kissing and embracing during a family Christmas party may be classified as sexual content in the same way as are two officeworkers, unknown to each other, kissing and embracing in a lift. Many would question that the former is sexual content at all.

The audience context is determined by viewer-centred factors, such as the degree of attention and active understanding applied to viewing the sexual content, the developmental age and focus of the viewer, and domestic-centred factors, such as whether the viewing takes place with, or without, parental or older-sibling involvement and whether it takes place in the family space of the lounge or the private space of the bedroom. The societal context is
determined by the social mores of different cultures and sub-cultures in relation to the sexual content.

The programme and viewing contexts are recognised as important mediating factors in assessing what is, and is not, sexual content (Livingstone, 2002), but the social context is central to consideration of sexual content on television (Lemish, 2007). A determination of that which is considered sexual content will be very different between societies, between ethnicities, between religions, between media producers, advertisers and statutory media regulators, between organisations such as Family First New Zealand and the New Zealand Prostitutes Collective and between parents and children. To provide one definition of what is, and what is not, sexual content is unlikely to illuminate the argument. Applying the definition by Kunkel et al. (2005) to sexual content on television in New Zealand, “any depiction of sexual activity, sexually suggestive behaviour, or talk about sexuality or sexual activity” (p. 14), may leave more, rather than less uncertainty. Such a definition is so broad and dependent on judgement that it is argued that its usefulness is proportional to the specificity with which the context in which it is used is elaborated. By itself, the definition does little to remove the wool from the mammoth or reduce the size of the elephant.

In the New Zealand context several studies have discussed sexual content on television, though it has been the primary objective in only one. Watson and Lambourne (1992), to qualify their sexual content analysis of New Zealand television programmes, were prepared to define sexual content in *Television sex* as, “any action or image of a sexual nature including activity; nudity and sexual language” (p. 5). Watson and Lambourne’s sexual content coding was guided by this definition, qualified by sexual content that would cause public offense. Walters and Zwaga (2001) in *The younger audience* considered the use of television rather than its contents, but observed that parents expressed sexual content as “pornography and kinky sex scenes” (p. 35). Jackson et al. (2007), in reviewing literature for *Children’s media use and responses*, stated that it “was important to consider how sexual content is defined” (p. 38), but provided argument that would not yield a definition. The Broadcasting Standards Authority, who also commissioned the three studies referred to above, published, in 2008, *Seen and heard: Children’s media use, exposure and response* which examined sexual content on television as one minor aspect of this study and found that children feel that sex/pornography, rude things, naked people and kissing are inappropriate for children. *Watching the watchers* (BSA, 2010) may have been expected to develop a definition or some boundaries for the meaning of sexual content on television, as it was expected to answer the question “Did ‘sex’ mean kissing, hugging, nudity, something else?” (p. 5). This qualitative
study identified that perceptions of inappropriate sexual content are highly subjective, but that “parents and children agree that programmes containing … sexual references are inappropriate” (p. 7). In the New Zealand context, the elephant retains both wool and size.

There may be, however, some utility in starting with Hetsroni’s (2007) categorisation of sexual content into normative, socially illegitimate, illegal, and risks and responsibilities. These four types of sexual content could be extended, defined, detailed and illustrated for the New Zealand context. This would involve collecting and analysing data that assess the boundaries that key stakeholders ascribe to them. These stakeholders would include children, parents, educationalists, television media industry representatives, regulators, politicians, specialist psychologists and lobby groups. In this way guidelines or boundaries for sexual content on New Zealand television could be developed. This process may be used to inform codes of broadcasting practice, decisions of the BSA and programme classification, while also providing support for the decision-making processes required of television producers, advertisers, parents and children.

Providing these suggested boundaries would provide the most comprehensive answer to the question “What is sexual content on New Zealand television?” It would be a complex and difficult process, but could provide a pathway forward for identifying the meaning of sexual content on New Zealand television.

1.7 Ethical considerations

Research on the significance of sexual content on children between 5 and 14 years poses significant ethical problems for researchers and ethical considerations relating to children are complex (Jackson, 2010). If the research involves exposing children to sexual images or asking them questions about that which may be considered to be sexually aberrant behavior, the very process may harm them. This is a greater hurdle to ethical research if previous research is assessed as demonstrating causality between exposure to sexual content and changes in children’s behavior (Kunkel et al., 2005).

Ethical considerations may be the most significant factor in the dearth of literature relating specifically to the 5 to 14 age group. Far more research, particularly from the USA, is based on adolescence, which is taken to cover children from 12 to 17 years. Even for this group of older children, there is difficulty in either surveying or interviewing in order to collect data that informs research questions that involve assessment of sexual content. Most quantitative research in this area uses surveys (Wright, 2009), some self-reported and others
reported by children’s parents. There is a reticence to interview or survey children when there is no certainty that they have reached a developmental age when they can both understand and respond to questions in surveys or interviews. It is also controversial as to the effect on authenticity of research if parents provide responses on a child’s behalf (Jackson et al., 2007; Livingstone, 2002).

Buckingham et al. (2010) observe that much research has responded to the difficulty in accessing and ethically collecting data from children by focusing on accessible groups, particularly college students. This identified difficulty is elaborated by these researchers with more than a hint of sarcasm:

…the effects of the media on white, middle-class students following communication courses at mid-Western American Universities must surely be one of the most closely scrutinised of all aspects of contemporary life. (p. 12)

Though the above opinion is observed to be extreme it does emphasise the difficulty, due to ethical and practical access, of collecting data from the target group for this literature review.

1.8 Outline of the review

In order to address the identified dearth of literature, the aims and parameters that comprise the specification for the review are qualified in Chapter 2. This includes an analysis of the relationship between the television media and the audience in Chapter 3, an elaboration of historical variations to sexual content, childhood and media research in Chapter 4, and geographical, and cultural variations in Chapter 5.

The inclusion of these historical, geo-cultural perspectives is necessitated partially as a response to the lack of academic and practitioner consensus that is brought to the meaning of ‘sexual content’ and ‘children’, and partially a response to the recognition with respect to sexual content that “the domain of the sexual is socially, culturally and historically defined in many ways” (Buckingham et al., 2010, p. 6) and that similarly, the concept of ‘child’, ‘childhood’ and ‘children’ is also held, defined and elaborated in diverse ways. Walters and Zwaga (2001) consider that children “comprise a disparate group with diverse cultures and styles that must be examined from within” (p. 11).

In Chapter 5, a preferred methodology for a future research study is scoped. This consideration does not examine every theoretical position taken by researchers on the media,
nor does it assess each theory that has been offered to explain media and media effects, but selectively discusses methodological issues of relevance to the aims of this literature review. Greater detail concerning the debates surrounding methodology and theory can be accessed by reference to the contemporary research that is considered seminal to this literature review and which is listed in Appendix 5. In order to make this review more accessible, Chapters 2 through 5 incorporate a Summary of the Chapter at its beginning. This review is concluded, in Chapter 6, by discussing the reviews limitations, and offering recommendations regarding directions for future research that specifically refer to the two separate aims of this literature review.
CHAPTER 2: TELEVISION AND ITS AUDIENCE OF CHILDREN

2.1 Summary

The nature of television has changed significantly since its introduction to New Zealand in 1960. This is true of the move from analog to digital signals, from terrestrial to satellite and cable transmission and from one channel to over 80. The television has also changed from being a social focus for family viewing in the lounge to multiple viewing within the same household and from free-to-air television with a close-down time to a combination of free-to-air and subscription service, 24-hours-a-day and seven-days-a-week. The television as an electronic device has developed from a small box in the corner of the room to a wide-screen, multi-media device that is part of a user’s complex multi-media world.

While maintaining its pre-eminent importance among the many media platforms available to children, television is becoming a smaller part of a child’s interactive, user-generated and multi-tasking, multi-media environment. Consequently, it is becoming increasingly difficult, in terms of conversation, and in terms of academic research, to cleanly and completely separate the single medium of television from the new media environment in which it exists.

If television is being partially subsumed into the complex media environment, then the audience of children between the ages of 5 and 14 is similarly difficult to identify and characterise. In its earlier development in the middle and latter stages of the 20th century, the television was viewed as a mass medium, reaching a mass audience that could be easily described with reference to demographic principles. In the latter part of the 20th and the first part of the 21st century, it has become increasingly difficult to describe target audiences as a single category; they are progressively fragmenting, and this is observed to be the case for children between 5 and 14 years.

The relationship between television and children is changing rapidly. Children are accessing and employing increasing power over their media, partly due to the technological advancements that deliver it to them and partially due to their own agency. The control of television media texts is progressively becoming a matter for the audience, as well as the producer or broadcaster of those texts.

It is also recognised, particularly in research in the UK, Australia and New Zealand that the context in which the television is situated, and the social and personal circumstances
in which it is being ‘watched’ are major mediating factors of the meaning given to television media texts.

2.2 Introduction

Television was introduced into New Zealand in 1960 (Jackson et al., 2011), four years after Australia (Flew, 2002; Perry, 2010), and remains a significant medium in New Zealand households, with 99.5 percent of children’s homes containing at least one television (BSA, 2008). This statistic confirms the ubiquity of the television, but does not explain what a television is. Such an explanation may not have been required 25 years ago, but television has changed with the arrival of digital television in 1998 (Goode & Littlewood, 2004) and the development of information communication technologies (ICTs), such as personal computers, iPads and mobile telephones. It is now necessary to define and differentiate the boundaries of this particular medium, though Horrocks and Perry (2004) go as far as to suggest that the future of television as a medium is now in question, in a similar way to the medium of the printed book.

The television broadcast was directed at particular audiences, though these audiences are framed by free-to-air classifications (see Appendix 2) as well as commercial imperatives. It is problematic to consider children from 0 to 5 years as an audience. Viswanath, Flynt Wallington and Blake (2009) conclude that children less than two may be in the same room while a television is transmitting, but cannot be considered as watching. Just in case they are, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that they do not spend any time watching the television (Mares, 2009). Whether infants from 0 to 5 years learn from television content is a current debate of some importance (Mares, 2009), but falls outside the purview of this study.

The audience of 5 to 14-year-old children, however, is no longer seen as a passive and homogenous group; in fact Zanker and Lealand (2010) even question the use of the term ‘audience’ as an inadequate expression to describe the range of childrens’ engagements with media, considering that “…audience, so embedded in television, may have reached its use-by date” (p. 30). Livingstone (2002) supports this view in recognising that the term ‘audience’ does not adequately reflect the range of activities encouraged by the diversification of media platforms and Buckingham and Bragg (2004) consider the case for some researchers who prefer the term ‘user’. The historical use of the term ‘audience’ enabled differentiation of involvement between different media, whereas contemporary audiences may be involved
simultaneously with different media and different non-media activities, thus becoming a user, consumer and owner, or even “prosumer” (Zanker & Lealand, 2010, p. 31), rather than the more restrictive meaning associated with audience.

It is important to contextualise this literature review with the changing form of television and the equally evolving meaning of audience and those audience characteristics that are relevant to this review’s aims.

2.3 The television medium

In previous decades the word ‘television’ was associated with a stand-alone, square-shaped device that converted a signal, transmitted as radio waves, into a visible image and sound. Up until 1975, when a second television channel was introduced to New Zealand (Horrocks, 2004), all viewers received the same media text whenever the television was switched on. This relatively simplistic view of television, from which is derived the colloquial term ‘the box’ (Perry, 2010), is becoming progressively restrictive.

The expression ‘the box’ reinforced the separation of different media platforms for much of the twentieth century, but these clear divisions are now blurred and fused (Jackson et al., 2007) in that traditional broadcast media can be accessed in a number of ways. This process, referred to as convergence (Cunningham & Turner, 2002; Rutherford & Bittman, 2007), describes the overlapping functions of a number of electronic receiving and transmitting devices. The notion of convergence, particularly between the television and the internet (Brown, 2009; Montgomery, 2001), has converted the ‘box’ into a multimedia electronic interface used to display media texts, both visually and audibly. These media texts are converted from analog or digital signals; they are downloaded from pen-drives, hard-drives and DVDs. The ‘box’ can now double as a computer monitor and a games console. Care must therefore be taken to restrict our view of the television in this research to the process of television broadcasting and the media text that is being broadcast, and not the television as an object.

The television broadcast is viewed as a particular transmission to a number of different conversion devices, since television broadcasts can now be streamed through the internet and we can now watch breaking news from free-to-air television or our favourite prime-time television programme on a personal computer or a mobile phone (Millwood Hargrave, Lealand, Norris, & Stirling, 2006).
The television landscape has changed a great deal since the last year of single channel television in 1974. The Crown-Owned Company, Television New Zealand (TVNZ) broadcasts free-to-air television nationally, including TV One and TV2, but is 90 percent reliant on commercial income (Jackson et al., 2011; Lealand, 2004). The commercial free-to-air national channels, including Prime TV and FOUR, the free-to-air regional channels, including CTV8 (Canterbury Television), and the free-to-air digital channels, including TV7 and TVNZ U add to the free-to-air broadcasting component in New Zealand of over 30 channels.

Sky Television Network now reaches 46 percent of New Zealand homes (Jackson et al., 2011) and offers its customers more than 80 channels, including some of the national and regional ‘free-to-air’ channels mentioned above. Not surprisingly in a population of just under 4.4 million people (Department of Statistics, 2011), this results in a highly competitive television media market and one in which the free-to-air presence is becoming diluted (Lealand, 2004).

The nature of the television broadcast is rapidly changing from the restricted analog signal broadcast on a free-to-air basis through a handful of television channels (Millwood Hargrave et al., 2006) to the digital signal broadcast to an increasing number of free-to-air and subscription television channels. In 2011, television also competes for its audience’s attention with a wide range of ICTs that deliver a complex array of visual and audible media texts, some of which are both interactive and user-generated. The very concept of television channels, which are “discrete, unitary entities carrying a single, continuous, and linear broadcasting stream” (Goode & Littlewood, 2004, p. 311) is being challenged by individualised and interactive access to a wide range of television media at individually specified times, where more than one channel can be accessed simultaneously. The first such examples for New Zealand television include MySky™ and TiVo™.

Though television continues to be a dominant media platform for children in most developed countries (Montgomery, 2001), and in New Zealand (Millwood Hargrave et al., 2006), it is becoming more difficult to discern the access boundaries for free-to-air television and to separate it from other television and ICT media, in order to conduct research on its discrete and separate existence. The control of television content, in terms of its delivery, access and how it is chosen, is progressively becoming a matter for the audience or user, as well as the broadcaster or producer (Millwood Hargrave et al., 2006) and this includes the content of free-to-air television at prime time.
2.4 Message received; will the audience please sit still?

Initially, television audiences were described in purely quantitative terms (McQuail, 2005), the mass media were seen to reach a mass audience in which quantitative differences were reflected as target audiences. Much of this view of the audience was driven by the media industry and resulted in a sample audience representing an imagined audience that is mostly defined by commercial imperatives (Zanker & Lealand, 2010). In certain ways mass media audiences do not therefore exist, but are imagined in order that their responses can be predicted and media content produced accordingly (Turnbull, 2002). The basis of what is taken to be the television audience is also being diluted and fractionalised (Livingstone, 2002; Viswanath et al., 2009) or fragmented (Cunningham & Turner, 2002; Herd, 2008; Millwood Hargrave et al., 2006) by the development of different delivery routes and reception devices for the television media text.

Academic approaches to ‘audience’ may also reflect methodological variations that will be elaborated in Chapter 5. Rutherford and Bittman (2007) are prepared to use the term “polarized” (p. 234) when referring to the two dominant historical conceptions of audience in academic research: powerful media and correspondingly powerless or passive audience at one pole; and powerful and active audiences with correspondingly less powerful media at the other. This review observes that researchers approach audience on a continuum between these two extremes and that the exact position on the continuum adopted by a researcher is dependent on, among other things, theoretical and methodological assumptions. This reflects the way in which research is progressively changing to accommodate the view that understanding children as a heterogeneous audience is crucial to understanding the influence of media on children (Wilson & Drogos, 2009).

Children in a growing number of media studies in the USA are now being viewed as an active audience and this is representative of an emerging body of literature that recognises children’s competencies and criticality as media consumers and producers (Jackson, 2010). The change in the understanding of the audience from passive and powerless to active and empowered is partly a response to the rapid changes in the media environment (Livingstone, 2002), and a recognition that children as audience are able to interpret what they see and bring their own experience and critical faculties to bear, to evaluate, interpret and understand media texts (Buckingham & Bragg, 2004; Livingstone, 2002; Philo, 1999; Zanker & Lealand, 2010).

The more culturally-initiated research in Europe, UK and Australia (Livingstone, 2002; Merrin, 2005), has more consistently reflected this latter view in which an audience of children does not form one simple homogenous social category (Walters & Zwaga, 2001), but is
heterogeneous, exhibiting differences based on a variety of social metrics, including developmental age. The audience of children is also active in the way in which they relate to the television, as opposed to being passive recipients of television media texts. The position of researchers in New Zealand is representative more of a culturally defined audience, as involved and capable, than one that is defined by mass communication theory, as receptive and passive.

When considering the audience of children, consideration should be given to the viewing context (Livingstone, 2002; Millwood Hargraves & Livingstone, 2006). The description of a child’s viewing context can be described by answering questions similar to the following:

- Is the child watching the television or is the television incidental?
- Is the child multi-tasking while watching television?
- Is the child’s viewing participation willing, unwilling or is their viewing accidental (Zanker & Lealand, 2010)?
- Is the child’s attention incidental or is the child engaging with the television with sustained and energetic attention (Livingstone, 2002)?
- Is the television being watched alone, or in the company of peers or family?
- Is the television being watched in the lounge, or in the bedroom?

All of these questions enrich and describe the context in which children are described as audience and each extends the heterogeneous nature of children as audience.
3.1 Summary

During periods of rapid change it is difficult to explain the present and even more difficult to predict the future, but it is possible to illuminate the present and link the future to the present by considering the past. A brief examination of the history of media and television, and of the concept of ‘child’ provides this link.

The consideration of the influence of media predates the use of the word itself. The Greeks recognised the potential for oratory to corrupt youth and the controversial nature of sexual content in media texts can be traced at least as far back as Aristophanes and Lysistrata. Perhaps the first example of the potential influence of mass media can be traced to the printing presses in Germany and China and the extreme steps taken subsequently by powerful interests, including Pope Paul IV and King Henry VIII, to suppress or destroy printed media texts that did not conform to their consideration of truth. These instances may be the first ‘moral panics’ associated with media texts.

Scientific study of media is thought to have accelerated as a response to the perceived effectiveness of military propaganda in World War I and the developing recognition of the ability of propaganda, using radio and film media texts, to influence public opinion. Lippmann’s Public opinion, published in 1922, was cited by Bryant and Zillmann (2009), as framing the perceived power of mass media in the USA, a position that is still held firmly by groups of academics and practitioners. Relatively soon after the introduction of television in the USA in 1941, the medium was recognised as having the potential to affect society in a number of ways and governments were quick to commission inquiries into its place in, and affect on, society. Similarly, in the UK, Himmelweit, Oppenheim and Vince (1958) produced a seminal publication Television and the child that influenced children’s television for several decades in the UK and beyond.

The period from 1961 to 1995 was considered to be a golden age of media effects research in the USA as the perceived harmful effects of television were placed under well-funded academic microscopes.

The historical development of media research, and particularly television media research, appears to have followed different developmental paths in the USA, and in the UK and Australasia. The development of media research in the USA was considered to have developed from communications studies, whereas research in the UK followed a more cultural tradition and did not assume the harmful effects of television. This was evident in the
work of Buckingham (1993) in the UK, which resonated with Palmer’s (1986) research in Australia. These paths are observed to be more convergent in the 21st century as the media research culture in the USA appears to be influenced by the research culture in the rest of the English-speaking world. The converse influence is not observed to be as significant.

The notion of childhood is older than that of the television media, and is considered to have developed in the 16th century to reflect the concerns of the aristocracy for the morally vulnerable stage between infancy and adulthood. The development of the notion was not rapid; Buckingham et al. (2010) evidence this slower evolutionary change by observing that the age of sexual consent was not increased from 12 to 16 years until the late 19th century and that child prostitutes were common in London at that time. Childhood is viewed as a social construction in which a group is defined in such a way that another group seeks to protect them and, in doing so, to control and regulate their existence. The recognition that childhood is a socially constructed concept emphasises that what is meant by childhood has changed, is changing, and will continue to change as the social mores that determine its meaning change.

3.2 Introduction
In Chapter 3, this literature review confirms that children’s television media landscape is changing rapidly, within a total-media landscape that is arguably changing even faster as ICTs are integrated into children’s multi-media world. As the nature of the broadcast and received television media text changes in terms of delivery, access and reception, so is children’s relationship to it. In periods of rapid change it is difficult to explain the present and forecast the future with great accuracy, but it is possible to link the future with the past.

3.3 Sexual content up to 1960
Buckingham et al. (2010) recall that the age of consent for heterosexual sex in Great Britain was raised from 12 to 16 years in the late 1800s and that child prostitutes as young as 8 or 9 years were common in London at about the same time. As the sexuality of children has a history, so does the concern for child purity, innocence (Walters & Zwaga, 2001) and vulnerability (Valkenburg, 2004). Egan and Hawkes (2008) argued that there are considerable continuities between historical campaigns concerning children’s sexuality and contemporary concerns. The depiction of children’s purity and innocence has resulted in a concomitant need to regulate to sustain that purity and innocence and protect children from anything that may adversely affect this view (Buckingham et al., 2010; Walters & Zwaga, 2001).
Addressing the significance of sexual content on television is informed by the history of research into childhood sexuality. The mores that condition our judgements as to what is sexual content and, moreso, what is appropriate or inappropriate sexual content, do not exist consistently throughout time, but have changed (Brown, 2009). It is likely that, if they can be shown to have changed historically, then there exists some justification to assert that they are always changing and will continue to change.

The consideration of media and its effect is evidenced prior to the use of the word ‘media’. Bryant and Zillmann (2009) consider that the powerful influence of media texts has been recognised from the time that Socrates was criticised for corrupting youth through the power of speech and Plato sought to ban poets in order to free citizens from the power of oral recitation. This historical consideration of media texts includes references to sexual content in that Harris (1999) considered that the Greek comedies, such as Aristophanes and Lysistrata, contained sexual content that would be interpreted as explicit by some current researchers of media effects.

The influence of both spoken and written media texts was accelerated by the first attempt at mass media, which may have been the rapid duplication of the written word by the printing presses of China and Germany (McQuail, 2005). The development of progressively more rapid and cost-effective means of printing led to several instances of what is now referred to as ‘moral panic’ (Shuker, Openshaw, & Soler, 1990) in the concern by religious and political leaders, including Pope Paul IV and King Henry VIII to suppress or destroy any printed media that did not conform to their consideration of truth (Bryant & Zillmann, 2009).

Scientific study of media effects is thought to have started in World War I as a response to concerns about military propaganda (Bryant & Zillmann, 2009) and developed in the 1930s as a reflection of mass society theory and theories of propaganda and public opinion (Merrin, 2005; Valkenburg, 2004). Merrin (2005) asserts that the early scientific research into media was based on communication studies in the USA, but on cultural studies in the UK and it is this different genesis that has led to “different conceptions of acceptable knowledge, different methodologies, different empirical and theoretical biases and different interpretive models” (p. 2).

Some of the earlier, and now identified as seminal, research that recognised the significance to children of the television medium was initiated toward the end of this historical period. Himmelweit et al. (1958) in *Television and the child* added to a research base in which “almost nothing was known” (Livingstone, 2002, p. 24) about the impact of television on children. In so doing Himmelweit et al. framed much of the initial research on
media and media effects in the UK. It was the research by Himmelweit et al. that was in some ways built on by Livingstone and Bovill, about 40 years later, in the *Young people new media* project. Certainly the Himmelweit et al. study found that television media effects were few and did not view them as negative or harmful effects.

Paik (2001) places the first commercial telecasting in the USA as 1941 and states that children were regularly watching television throughout the day in the early 1950s. Television ownership expanded rapidly in the 1950s, such that, by 1955, nearly 70 percent of households in the USA had a television and that this grew to nearly 90 percent by 1960, the year that television was introduced to New Zealand. Academic research on the television media was preceded by research on the effect of news media. Bryant and Zillmann (2009) consider that it was Lippmann’s *Public opinion* (published in 1922) that framed future research in communications and the idea of powerful media effects. This powerful effects model that still exists in contemporary research in the USA was debated by a number of researchers in the 1940s and 1950s. In reviewing hundreds of media effects studies, Klapper (1960), in *The effects of mass communication*, asserted a more limited effects model that viewed media as a sustainer of effects, as opposed to the initiating role afforded by the powerful effects model.

### 3.4 Sexual content on television from 1961 to 1995

From 1960, media research thrived, particularly in the USA (Bryant & Zillmann, 2009), where McLuhan’s 1964 study, *Understanding media*, provided further academic weight to the powerful effects model and generated significant press and public interest. This in turn, generated funding, both private and public for a wide range of media effects research. Bryant and Zillmann consider that, “This may well have been the Golden Age of media effects research, in which our scholarly journals bulged with increasingly more sophisticated and relatively uniform approaches to theory construction…” (p. 13).

Much of this research was based on the assumption, held by significant government bodies, such as the US Surgeon General’s office, and academic organisations, such as the American Psychology Association and the American Association of Pediatrics, that media and media content have significant and substantial effects. Research in the UK and in Australia made no move toward a powerful effects model in this period, or to the sophisticated correlational analysis that was common in the more quantitative empirical approach taken in the USA. In identifying the child as an active interpreter who seeks to give meaning to media texts, Palmer (1986) influenced the future research position in Australian
media effects, by employing ethnographic studies. This approach is similar to that taken by
the Glasgow Research Group from 1993 to 1998 (Philo, 1999), who collected data from over
250 focus groups, and that of Buckingham (1993) who is consistently critical of the approach
taken to media effects research in the USA. Buckingham (1993) was a leading critic of the
psychological – which he referred to as even pathological – approach to children’s television
in the USA, where the assumption is made that some degree of harm can be evidenced as a
direct cause of watching television.
CHAPTER 4: GEOGRAPHICAL AND CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

4.1 Summary

Research that informs sexual content on television with particular regard to children is seen through the lenses of the research cultures in the USA, the Republic of Ireland, the UK, Australia and New Zealand. These related lenses are chosen to reflect the substantial differences in research approaches that were observed in the divergent developmental paths referred to in Chapter 3. Merrin (2005) observed that media research in the USA was initiated by communication studies, whereas that of the UK was initiated more by sociological studies, and Sinclair (2002) noted that the media effects models followed in the USA are a reflection of an empirical and micro-perspective, as opposed to the interpretive and holistic perspective in Europe.

Research in the USA has been substantially funded through government agencies such as the Surgeon-General’s office, national organisations such as the American Association of Pediatrics and private organisations such as the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. This family foundation funded the most comprehensive analysis of sexual content on USA television by Kunkel and his colleagues in 1999, 2001, 2003 and 2005. The findings of this research was supported by many studies, which encouraged Kunkel et al. (2005) to conclude that there are significant impacts of sexual content on television for children.

There are dissenting voices in the USA to this negative effects model and these voices have been growing in strength during the first decade of the 21st century. Wright (2009) critiques the sampling methods in many of the sexual content studies and doubts the causal associations. Manganello et al. (2010), in comparing three different systems for coding sexual content on television, questioned if researchers who coded for sexual content had the same understandings as the targeted television audience. Nabi and Oliver (2009) consider that media effects research in the USA is at a cross-road and that more attention should be given to the processes involved in accessing and responding to media texts, rather than focusing on the effects themselves.

A significant proportion of research on television in the UK is funded by organisations connected to government, including the BSA, Ofcom (the government communications regulator in the UK) and the Department of Education. The approach to media research in the UK is frequently qualitative or employs both qualitative and quantitative methods.
Experienced researchers in the UK are critical of the research approach prevalent in the USA. Buckingham and Bragg (2004) conclude that research findings that support the negative effects models in the USA are equivocal, and even contradictory. Livingstone (1996, 2002) is critical of many of the sampling designs and the lack of emphasis given to the viewing context and other mediating influences, such as parental involvement. Research in the UK can be identified as more child-centred than in the USA and is focused on a search for meaning, more than an identification of media effects.

As New Zealand’s closest neighbour, geographically and culturally, Australia is identified as conducting media research that follows the UK approach more than that of the USA. Again, substantial studies have been initiated by organisations connected to government, including the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) and several Senate Committees of Enquiry. In recent research that focused on 8 to 17 year-olds, Rutherford and Bittman (2007) found that television content has significant influence, but that children actively interpret and evaluate media texts as part of the process of identity formation and establishing relationships. The position taken by Rutherford and Bittman (2007) supports the UK position of Buckingham and Bragg (2004), Livingstone (2002) and Millwood Hargrave and Livingstone (2006).

A dearth of empirical research on media effects and influences has been identified by Australian researchers. This restricted research base was emphasised to the 2008 Senate inquiry into the effects of premature sexualisation on child development. Empirical research of a longitudinal nature was one of the recommendations by the Senate committee’s inquiry that was accepted by the Australian federal government in their 2009 response to the committee’s report.

Research in New Zealand is observed to be similar to that of the UK and Australia. Common characteristics include:

- employing mixed methods (Millwood Hargrave and Livingstone, 2006);
- designing multi-stage or multi-phase studies (Livingstone, 2002);
- accessing nationally representative samples (Livingstone & Bovill, 1999);
- adopting a longitudinal perspective (Australian Government, 2009); and
- involving data that are rich (Livingstone, 2002).

A significant amount television media research in New Zealand is funded by organisations connected to government, pre-eminently the BSA.

Dr. Ruth Zanker and Associate Professor Geoff Lealand are two of a small number of New Zealand researchers whose research follows most of the characteristics above, but who
restrict the size and nature of their samples. This restriction is necessitated largely by the funding constraints that apply to empirical research that is completed within an academic’s professional contribution.

4.2 Introduction

Previous reference was made to an observation by Merrin (2005), that initial research into media occurred through communication studies in the USA and through cultural studies in the UK. Though it would be over-simplistic to divide research into the media into a US approach and a non-US approach, it is evident to this review that research on media in the USA has been dominated by media effects research and that the effects that have been sought to be identified are negative in nature – these are sometimes referred to as ‘harmful effects’ (Rutherford & Bittman, 2007).

Initial and subsequent research in the UK and Europe did not respond to the assumption of harmful effects and was more predicated on investigating the media processes and their significance to society. Incorporating qualitative fieldwork into a research design is observed as more common in Australia, the UK and Europe than in the USA (Rutherford & Bittman, 2007). Sinclair (2002) comments on the identified division of media research, referred to above, but explains this division as a European position that is interpretive, holistic and takes a macro perspective, in comparison to a USA position that is empirical, positivist and takes a micro perspective.

In this chapter seminal research is described from the USA, the Republic of Ireland, the UK (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), Australia and New Zealand. The order chosen is deliberate in that New Zealand research is not evidenced to closely follow the approaches prevalent in the USA, but appears to be more similar to research conducted in the Republic of Ireland, England, Scotland, and Australia in its theoretical assumptions and research methodologies. As much New Zealand research acknowledges cultural factors as central to the significance of the media, it is likely that those geographical areas with cultural characteristics that resonate with those of New Zealand will inform New Zealand research to a greater extent.
4.3 Research in the United States of America

In her 2001 review of the 10 previous years of research on the impact of media on children, Villani argued, among observations relating to other media, that “the primary effects of media exposure are…accelerated onset of sexual activity” (p. 392). She noted that the 1991 review by Dietz and Strasburger – that itself reviewed research for the 20 years prior to her review – demonstrated the effect of television on adolescent cognition and behaviour, including sexual activity. She argues that the year of Dietz and Strasburger’s findings, 1991, can be viewed as the start of a period in which research became oriented toward content analysis and viewing patterns, “with the widely accepted premise that children gain knowledge, learn behaviors, and have their value systems significantly shaped by exposure to media” (p. 393).

Villani’s (2001) review cites five well-researched policy statements by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and three “scientifically oriented” (p.393) books that were noteworthy:

- **Big world, small screen: The role of television in American society** by Huston, Donnerstein and Fairchild et al. (1992);
- **Media, children and the family: Social scientific, psychodynamic, and clinical perspectives** by Zillman, Bryant and Huston (1994); and
- **Media effects: Advances in theory and research** by Bryant and Zillman (1994), and recommends the chapters on the effects of sexual content on television. With particular reference to television, she notes that sexually violent material has increased in the last decade (1990 to 1999) and cites what may be referred to as SOTV1 (Sex on TV, part 1), the first part of a longitudinal study by Kunkel et al. (1999) revealing that “76% of teenagers indicate that one reason young people have sex is because the television shows and movies make it seem more normal for teenagers” (Villani, 2001, p. 395). Villani concludes that further studies are needed that “look at how the harmful effects of media can be prevented” (p. 399).

The introduction by Villani (2001) of research by Kunkel et al. (1999) references possibly the most extensive, longitudinal series of studies on the sexual content of television in contemporary research in the USA. Subsequent to a working conference, held in December 1997, involving “leading media effectsscholars” (Kunkel et al., 2005, p. 5), a report was published that suggested that the media was a strong influence in changing the sexual attitudes and behaviours of children and adolescents. The report, authored by Huston, Wartella and Donnerstein, (1998) argued that there were good theoretical reasons to believe that television plays an important role in educating children about sexuality and recommended further empirical work to substantiate this claim.
Kunkel et al. (2005) analysed sexual content on television in 1997–1998, 1999–2000, and 2001–2002, and applied the identical content analysis for programming in 2004–2005. These four comprehensive reports analyse 4,742 television programmes from all types of channels and are specifically boosted by a “prime-time over-sample” (p. 12). Kunkel et al. (2005) adopt a detailed approach to coding of sexual content that defines sexual content as “any depiction of sexual activity, sexually suggestive behaviour, or talk about sexuality or sexual activity” (p. 14). Decisions about that which qualified as sexual content, on the basis of the above definition, were made at the scene and programme level of analysis. The scene level of analysis was further classified into talk about sex, sexual behavior, and risks and responsibilities. The latter classification refers to sexual content which emphasises the risks attached to certain sexual behaviours and the responsibilities attending those behaviours. The levels of sexual behaviour and the level of sexual talk were further classified on the basis of the intensity of the presence of the units of analysis. The coding scheme is relatively complex and requires a significant degree of training and interpretation to maintain relatively high levels of inter-coder reliability. This method of sexual content analysis has been employed by many researchers in the USA, prompting Escobar-Chaves et al. (2005) to comment that the ‘Kunkel’ method was used by “the majority of recent studies” (p. 307), but has been more sparingly used outside of the USA (MacKeogh, 2004).

Kunkel et al. (2005) found that more than 70 percent of television programmes exhibited talk about sex and/or sexual behaviour, and that the intensity of that sexual content, over 3283 scenes was 2.7 on a 4-point scale. This indicated to Kunkel et al. that sexual content within scenes is not isolated. In an additional sample of prime-time television programmes, Kunkel et al. found that 77 percent of programmes exhibited sexual content at the same level of intensity (2.7) found in all programmes. They also found that sexual content coded to the risks and responsibilities classification on prime-time television was slightly lower, at 10 percent, than general programmes, at 11 percent.

Kunkel et al. (2005) cite what they describe as key studies (Aubrey, Harrison, Kramer,& Yellin, 2003; Collins, Elliot, Berry, Kanouse,& Hunter, 2003; Eyal & Kunkel, 2005; Farrer, 2001; Kennedy et al. 2005; Pardun, L’Engle,& Brown, 2005;Taylor, 2005) that encourage them to conclude that:

…there is currently a sharply accelerating curve in the growth of scientific knowledge about the effects of sexual media content. The studies that comprise this new wave of
evidence consistently demonstrate significant impacts on viewers, particularly among teens and adults. (p. 7)

Kunkel et al. (2005) consider that television’s influence tends to occur by a gradual, cumulative process. As the SOTV studies sample the whole gamut of available television, are longitudinal and have replicated the identical sexual content analysis methods to determine the sexual content of television programmes over four biennial surveys, Kunkel et al. assert that the SOTV studies overcome the identified weaknesses exhibited by many other studies of television effects. These weaknesses are assessed by Kunkel et al. to include incorporating only one part of the television landscape in research and adopting an inconsistent approach to content analysis.

Research in the USA continues to identify significant effects of sexual content on television. Collins et al. (2004) completed a national longitudinal survey of 1,792 adolescents in the USA, as recognition of the rarity and inadequacy of empirical data for “addressing the issue of causal effects” (p. 280). Their outcome measures included initiation of intercourse and advancement of non-coital sexual activity over a one-year period and found that watching sexual content on television predicts, and may hasten, sexual initiation. They concluded that reducing the amount of sexual content on television may delay the initiation of coital and non-coital sexual activity.

Pardun, L’Engle and Brown (2005) conducted a media-use survey of early adolescents from three public school districts in the Southeastern United States. They then interviewed a sub-sample (n=1,074) about their sexual attitudes and behaviours. Pardun et al. concluded that 11 percent of media used by respondents contained sexual content. In order to assess the amount of sexual content to which their respondents were exposed, they initiated an index called the Sexual Media Diet (SMD). Pardun et al. found that there existed “strong positive associations” between exposure to sexual content in media and sexual activity and future intentions to be sexually active.

Somers and Tynan (2006) surveyed 473 adolescents, randomly selected from two schools, to assess the television programmes that they watched and their sexual attitudes. They then used 114 undergraduates to rate television shows for sexual dialogue (SD) and explicit sexual content (SC). This then enabled them to assess, for any adolescent in their initial sample, a rating for SD and SC, based on the programmes that they watched and the rating given to those programmes by the undergraduates. They then sought to associate the differential SD and SC ratings with the sexual attitude assessments of the adolescents. Somers
and Tynan concluded that their method of calculating the SD and SC of television programmes added to the methods for assessing the sexual content of television and asserted that “exposure to SD and SC on television was related to adolescents’ sexual outcomes” (p. 35).

Bleakey, Hennessy, Fishbein and Jordan (2008) extended the research by Collins et al. (2004), by conducting a web-based survey on a quota sample of 14 to 16 year olds in the Philadelphia area of the USA. They found that sexually active adolescents are more likely to expose themselves to sexual content in the media and that those adolescents exposed to more sexual content were more likely to progress in their sexual activity. They concluded that their findings demonstrated a causal effect of exposure to sexual content and sexual behaviour.

Despite the impetus given to sexual content analysis on television by the SOTV studies and the funding made available through the US government as a response to the US Surgeon General’s (2001) Call for Action, there are some researchers from the USA who provide a critical examination of the sexual content analyses used. Wright (2009) considers that, though valuable, much of the sexual content analysis research is cross-sectional, while yet other research is carried out with convenience or regional samples. He also qualifies the findings of this research by observing that content analyses inform the message environment of the media platform concerned, but do not provide information about the effects of that content.

Manganello et al. (2010) comprise one research group in the USA to seriously question some of the basic assumptions of the use of sexual content analysis. They express concern that quantitative approaches to sexual content analysis, such as that of Kunkel et al. (2005), rely on researchers determining what constitutes sexual content and rely on trained coders to code the content accordingly. They assert that as broad a topic as sexual content can be defined and coded in a number of ways and that the content categories developed to facilitate coding dictate the information that is elicited from the media. They consider that the data collected may therefore be “tied to the outcomes of interest” (p. 365).

Manganello et al. (2010) compared three different sexual content coding systems – initiated by Kunkel et al. (1999, 2001, 2003, 2005), Ward (1995) and Fishbein (2000) – to code three different television scenes that had already been coded for sexual content. Their sample was a convenience sample of 89 adolescents, “between the ages of 14 and 19” (Manganello et al., 2010, p. 369). They sought to answer three research questions (RQ):

RQ1. Do adolescents view sexual media content on television the same way as researchers?
RQ2. Are differences between researchers and adolescents increased or attenuated depending on the type of content categories used?

RQ3. Are there age, race, and sex differences among adolescents in their perception of sexual messages on television? (p. 366)

While their sample was limited to a convenience sample of regionally-located adolescents, and they accept limitations relating to their test methodology, it is their research questions which are considered critical to assess the validity of the types of sexual content analysis used in the USA to support media effects claims.

The conclusions that Manganello et al. (2010) drew were that, with respect to research question one (RQ1), there was evidence that the type of sexual content was important in determining if researchers and adolescents viewed sexual content in the same way. With respect to research question two (RQ2), they concluded that the type of content category, especially the complexity of the category being coded, also contributed to observed differences between coding systems and between researchers and adolescent participants. They also found, as a response to research question three (RQ3), that age, race and sex were important in contributing to differences of category definition and coding decisions.

Manganello et al. (2010) recommended using qualitative research methods to better understand how a particular audience, such as the children to which this literature review is targeted, perceives sexual messages and to develop and to pilot test a codebook formed on the basis of that study. They also recommended using coders from the target audience, but this would need to be carefully assessed when targeting children who may not have the developmental knowledge to perform this function.

Though media effects research has been the dominant mode of inquiry into children and television in the USA (Rutherford, 2000) and has tended to focus on demonstrating the harmful effects of television on children and adolescents’ sexual attitudes and behaviours, there has been some research that asserts the opportunity for television to contribute positively to sexual socialisation.

Jensen and Jensen (2007) used the SOTV sexual content analysis coding scheme in order to compare sexual content in the Sex and the city television series with other television programmes. By using the same coding scheme Jensen and Jensen suggested that they would satisfy the criticism of Kunkel et al. (2005) concerning the idiosyncratic nature of some coding schemes. The coders were trained and intercoder reliability assessed. Jensen and Jensen stated three hypotheses and their data analysis enabled them to conclude that...
Sex and the city started out in 1998 with a higher sexual content per hour than television in general, depicting 38 scenes per hour – which was 35 scenes more per hour than the three scenes across all television programmes in the SOTV1 study (Kunkel et al., 1999) – this excess had reduced to 19 scenes per hour by 2002, with Sex and the city depicting 24 scenes per hour in comparison to the four scenes in the general television sample in SOTV2 (Kunkel et al., 2003). The trend in this result was repeated for sexual talk per hour and sexual behaviour per hour. These results need to be carefully weighed by the more recent critique, by Manganello et al. (2010), of sexual content analysis.

The third of three research questions, also posed by Jensen and Jensen (2007), related to that which Kunkel et al. (2005) categorise as risks and responsibilities and allowed them to conclude that Sex and the city is more likely than television in general to promote “healthy sex” (Jensen & Jensen, 2007, p. 275). This possibility of television’s positive effect on sexual attitudes and behaviours is also referenced by research into the television programme Friends by Collins, Elliot, Berry, Kanouse and Hunter (2003), who found that television can work in conjunction with parents to improve sexual knowledge.

The Sage handbook of media effects and processes, edited by Nabi and Oliver (2009), includes contributions by many of the USA scholars already referred to in this section, and in other parts of this literature review. Nabi and Oliver consider that the study of media effects (in the USA) has reached a cross-roads and express concern that scholars are “chasing effects” (p. 1), rather than examining the processes that underlie those effects, hence the purposeful extension of their book title to “…Media effects and processes to highlight the increasing emphasis and interest …on the processes of effects resulting from media exposure” (p. 4). Nabi and Oliver also observe that methods used to evaluate media effects, such as sexual content analysis, are coming under increased scrutiny and criticism and that theoretical frameworks and critical examination is not evident in much of the media effects research.

There is now recognition that though sexual content is increasing on television “content that might have shocked a 15-year-old in the 1960s might not even earn a second glance from a contemporary teenager” (Brown, 2009, p. 413). This concept of the contextual nature of sexual content over time, asks further questions of the consistent coding for sexual content used by Kunkel et al. (2005). Brown (2009) recommends that more effort is directed at examining the intervening mechanisms between exposure and effects and in ameliorating the negative and enhancing the positive effects that television may have on sexual beliefs, attitudes and behaviours.
Bryant and Zillmann (2009) observe that in the last two decades of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century, there has been a shift in the USA from the prevalent strong media effects models that take a negative view of the effect of media on behaviour and of which one objective is to demonstrate causal relationships, to one in which social constraints and audience interpretations are recognised to mediate media effects. There has also been a shift toward examining cognitive, affective and psychological effects, as opposed to behavioural effects. Several models of media effects, such as the cultivation model, have promoted the iterative and progressive characteristic of media effects that are more effectively researched using longitudinal research designs. Bryant and Zillmann also reinforce the position of Nabi and Oliver (2009) in recognising that the process of media effects has been neglected, perhaps due to the tendency for researchers to focus on the effects themselves.

Many of the organisations that authorise, publish or fund research in media effects in the USA (AMA, APA, AAP and PTA) still adopt a “moderate-to-powerful” (Bryant & Zillmann, 2009, p. 15) negative effects model. Nevertheless, the changes in research approaches and theoretical assumptions are being accelerated by technological changes that have reduced the importance of mass media and increased the importance of interactivity, personalisation and mobility. These technological changes are generating a research imperative to recognise user agency and user-generated text as central to any effect or effect process that media has.

Contemporary researchers in the USA are now recognising the value of some of the media effects research completed in Europe and Australia (Bryant & Zillmann, 2009), often in the form of critical or cultural approaches to media effects. It is likely that negative media effects research will continue to be extensively supported in the USA, partly due to the political pressure applied by interest groups on funding bodies, but the critical and cultural approach to media effects may be more appropriate to deal with the rate of change in the media environment and the need to research the processes underlying the effects, as opposed to just the effects themselves (Nabi & Oliver, 2009).

4.4 Research in the Republic of Ireland

In completing research for the Crisis Pregnancy Agency, *Teenagers and the media: A media analysis of sexual content on television*, MacKeogh (2004) conducted one of the few sexual content analyses in the British Isles that utilised the sexual content coding system designed by Kunkel et al. (1999). The research, conducted in the Republic of Ireland, sought to “provide a
comprehensive examination of the level of sexual content across the teenage television environment in Ireland and to investigate aspects of young people’s responses to sex on television” (p. 8).

Subsequent to the quantitative sexual content analysis phase of the research, a qualitative phase was added in which 12 focus groups, involving between five and eight participants, attended three sessions: one to assess participants’ priorities with regard to sex on television; one to view television media texts taken from the content analysis study; and a more focused discussion to summarise. All segments were transcribed for analysis.

The findings of the sexual content analysis could be, and were, expressed in percentage terms, such as:

- 50% of general audience programmes contain ‘talk about sex’ and 21% contain depictions of ‘sexual behaviour’ (with some scenes containing both).
- Of those programmes with scenes of a sexual nature, 28% made some reference to ‘risks and responsibilities’. This compares with 15% for the American study [Kunkel et al., 2003]. Of those programmes with intercourse related content, almost half (45%) have some reference to ‘risk and responsibility’ (26% in the US study). (p. 11)

The findings of the focus groups were expressed in predictably textual terms:

There was general agreement that there is a lot of sex on TV, and it has increased over time, but that there is not ‘too much’. There was a strong feeling generally that it was up to the individual to choose to view, or to switch off television. (p. 8)

This review will not discuss these findings in detail, as it would be too selective to do so, but will make comment on the researcher’s conclusions. McKeogh (2004) seeks to pull together the ethnographic observations of the focus groups with the statistical observations of the content analysis, including a cross-national comparison with the USA.

Addressing the audience that funded the research, McKeogh (2004) recommends that policy makers:

- Take account of the role of television as a source of information about the sexual character of the society in which we live.
- Provide the means and space for young people to discuss media messages about sexuality. This is particularly important for those young people who are reliant on the media as their main source of information.
• Distinguish more clearly between children and adolescents. While children may need to be ‘protected’ by measures such as restricted viewing, this may be counterproductive for adolescents. (p. 13)

It is interesting to contrast the above conclusions and recommendations, completed after sexual content analysis that utilised the ‘Kunkel’ methodology, with selected aspects of the conclusions provided by Kunkel et al. (2005), subsequent to their content analysis, which did not cross-reference to a more qualitative phase of research. Kunkel et al. found that:

• … television plays a meaningful role in sexual socialisation (Donnerstein & Smith, 2001; Gunter, 2002). Sexual socialisation consists of learning answers to such questions as who it is appropriate to have sex with, when to have sex with someone, and what precautions, if any, are appropriate.

• … exposure to sexual content on television is significantly correlated with teenagers’ sexual behaviour,… (Pardun, L’Engle & Brown, 2005).

• … sexual content on television exerts significant influence on the nation’s young people. (p. 57)

It is to be noted that the data collection and analysis of the two studies, by MacKeogh (2004) and Kunkel et al. (2005) are similar, yet the conclusions drawn are significantly different.

4.5 Research in the United Kingdom; England and Scotland

Merrin (2005) suggested that though any theory of the media varies between institutions and even individuals, research on the media in the USA can be considered as originating in communications studies, whereas that of the UK is based more on sociological and cultural strands. Buckingham (1993) has led government enquiries in both England and Scotland on the impact of the commercial world on children’s wellbeing (Press Notices, 2011) and sexualised goods aimed at children (Buckingham et al., 2010). Buckingham et al. (2010) expressed a danger in importing concerns of media effects from a culture significantly different from that of the UK and asserted that the debate in the USA is driven by the “religious right” (p. 7).

Rather than adopt a research model that is dominated by quantitative data collection by survey and subsequent correlational analysis, research by Buckingham and Bragg (2004) was based on extensive interviews with young people aged 9 to 17 years and their parents. In an initial, pilot stage of the research design, they interviewed 24 young people and an additional 96 in the main body of the research, in which they also interviewed 70 parents and surveyed
nearly 800 young people. Though the data obtained was rich in detail, the pupils, parents and schools with whom they worked were regionally selected, restricting the generalisation of their research to the population of 9 to 17 year olds in English schools.

The need to interview children is a response to the assertion by Buckingham and Bragg (2004) that research is more about what participants really think and feel as opposed to providing a neutral conduit to some suggested truth. It also supports the need to interview children due to the recognition that adults’ perceptions of sexual content on television is not always shared by children (Livingstone, 2002) and it is therefore necessary for research on the significance of media for children to examine and explain how the children themselves respond to media texts.

Buckingham and Bragg (2004) consider that counting references to sexual content on television can involve a considerable amount of interpretation, especially where sexual innuendo is concerned and find the results of such research to be “equivocal – and, in some cases, quite contradictory” (p. 9). They also assert that research involving the measurement of sexual content on television assumes that children automatically believe what they see and see exactly what the researchers see. Buckingham and Bragg view the media effects research as being particularly limited with respect to its significance for children in the UK, being conducted mostly in the USA and focused on the negative effects of television media texts, adding that any possible positive effects remain largely unexplored.

In designing the Young people new media project in 1999, Livingstone and Bovill recognised that both childhood and the media environment had changed radically since a previous, related and seminal report Television and the child, by Himmelweit et al. (1958). In response to these changes and Livingstone’s 1996 criticism of the media effects tradition prevalent in much media research in the USA, the Young people new media project aimed to provide “a more contextualised analysis of the meanings and practices which constitute children and young people’s lifeworlds” (Livingstone, 2002, p. 24).

The Young people new media project (Livingstone & Bovill, 1999) involved a multi-method design with a focus on access, meanings and use of media for children from 6 to 17 years. This expanded the age range of 10 to 11 year olds and 13 to 14 year olds in the previous study by Himmelweit et al. (1958) while focusing on children who are still within the family unit. Subsequent to a preparatory phase, a qualitative phase involved group and individual interviews with over 200 children in group interviews, individual interviews with children, and separately, with their parents in 32 homes. It also incorporated interviews with leaders of information technology in 13 schools and a booster sample of 36 internet users.
This qualitative phase was followed by a quantitative phase which included an independently administered survey questionnaire in a face-to-face, in-home interview to a national random location sample of 1303 young people aged 6 to 17 years, a self-administered questionnaire to the 978 parents of the young people surveyed and a time budget diary for 334 of the young people in the survey.

The Young people new media project (Livingstone & Bovill, 1999) generated “a rich body of empirical material, both qualitative and quantitative” (Chapter 12, p. 1), but the research conclusions presented by Livingstone and Bovill were focused on pursuing the meanings and impacts of media, while the statistical analyses allowed them to interconnect or segment these meanings and impacts within the target population of 6 to 17 year olds. They found that, in the last half of the twentieth century, children’s use of media was dominated by television, but expect that the twenty-first century will see children’s lives being increasingly affected by a diverse range of media, in different ways. Livingstone and Bovill identified a trend in children’s television use that views the television moving from foreground to background, from the centre of family life to a balance between family and individual uses and from family evening entertainment to 24-hour availability and use. They also considered the ‘bedroom culture’ (see Appendix 3 for a definition) representing a problem for parents, in that two thirds of the children surveyed had a television in their bedroom and many children watched television programmes after the watershed for children’s television. Parents were therefore unable or unwilling to initiate mediation processes for television within the ‘bedroom culture’.

Livingstone and Bovill (1999) also indicated that in comparing children in the UK with children in Europe, made possible by the replication of their study in 12 European countries, more UK children are likely to have a television, but fewer books, in their bedroom. They also spend more time watching the television, than their European peers, thus increasing the potential for unmediated viewing of post-watershed television programming.

The key research findings of the Glasgow Media Group, in a UK study that explored Scottish experiences of media, including television, were brought together in Message received, edited by Philo (1999). After initial content analysis research, published in 1976, 1980 and 1985, the Glasgow Media Group re-focused on relationships between media content and audience beliefs, attitudes and behaviour. The Glasgow Media Group, in common with Buckingham and Bragg (2004) and Livingstone and Bovill (1999) valued idiographic methods of data collection, collecting empirical data from 1,500 people in over 250 focus groups. They found evidence to suggest that it was as incorrect to ignore the influence of
media in determining behaviour as it was to accept its powerful effects, and recommended the continued critical interrogation of media effects. The Glasgow Media Group did not target children as a population of interest, hence their findings inform the aims of this review in less specific ways than other research.

Millwood Hargrave and Livingstone (2006) reviewed the evidence for harm and offence in nine media platforms, including television. Their research, which included comment on sexual content on television, is referred to in more detail in Chapter 5. The review of both empirical and theoretical research encouraged Millwood Hargrave and Livingstone to make a number of conclusions that inform the significance for children of sexual content on television:

- That television is a positive medium, offering a window on the world. It is not questioned, but this places significant responsibilities on free-to-air television channels.
- Television influences behaviour and attitudes. Pro-social effects are more readily accepted than malign effects, though there is an acknowledgement of the latter in regulation.
- The debate concerning sexual content on television is more centred on the level, nature and longevity of any effect than its existence or non-existence.
- Television seems to play a part in subtle, long-term, reality-defining effects, such as stereotyping, but it is unclear what other contributory influences exist and what the comparative importance of sexual content on television is, with respect to these effects.

Another series of research projects in the UK have been initiated and funded by the government. Buckingham, who led the Scottish government’s study into Sexualised goods aimed at children (2010), also led the 2009 English research project into The impact of the commercial world on children’s wellbeing, and this was followed in 2010 by Dr. Linda Papadopoulos’s research on the Sexualisation of young people: Review. These reviews will be examined for evidence to support the current Review of commercialisation and sexualisation of children, being conducted by Mr. Reg Bailey, Chief Executive of the Mothers’ Union, and which is due to be published in May 2011 (Press notices, 2011).

Though this series of reviews do not directly inform the significance of sexual content on television for children, they all address areas of societal concern that run parallel to it. The most recent of this series of reports, Sexualisation of young people: Review (Papadopolous,
2010), is a review of literature that was generated from the 2009 government initiative, *Together we can end violence against women*.

The review by Papadopolous (2010) was desk-based, drawing on existing government research, lobby group publications and academic journals in order to build a “comprehensive picture” (p. 17), and considered “how sexualised images and messages may be affecting young people and influencing cultural norms, …” (p. 5). Papadopolous defined sexualisation as “the imposition of adult sexuality on to the children and young people before they are capable of dealing with it mentally, emotionally or physically” (p. 23). Papadopolous concluded that exposing children to images and messages that they are not yet equipped to deal with may well have a negative impact, but acknowledged that the way young people internalise media is complex. Papadopolous (2010) also recognised evidence to suggest that television programmes can be a valuable source of sexual learning and information.

Research on the significance of sexual content on television for children in the UK is observed to adopt a more child-centred perspective (Livingstone, 2002), as opposed to one that is media-centred. Combined with the comparative absence of the significant government, lobby group and academic pressures, prevalent in the USA, research has tended to be qualitative or has combined both qualitative and quantitative approaches, which Cresswell (2003) refers to as mixed methods. Many researchers in the USA have assumed, or been instructed by influential bodies – such as the American Association of Pediatrics (AAP) or politicians (the US Surgeon General) – to accept that the television media are a threat to children. This is not assessed to be the position in the UK, where media research objectives are more centred on meaning, rather than effect. Nevertheless, a cautionary note is sounded by Kitzinger (1999), who warns that it has become academically unfashionable to inquire about media effects, yet the very process of critique and concern about the impact of the media confronts the complexity of the medium-audience relationship.

The varieties of research positions elaborated above, inform the significance of sexual content on New Zealand television, but New Zealand’s geographical and cultural proximity to Australia suggest that research on the significance of sexual content on television for children in Australia will more effectively inform the aims of this review.

### 4.6 Research in Australia

Some of the earliest media research in Australia held the view that television texts were received by an active, rather than a passive audience. In her seminal book (Rutherford
&Bittman, 2007), *The lively audience*, Palmer (1986) drew on UK cultural perspectives to examine how audiences produced meaning from texts within domestic and social contexts. Palmer (1986) thereby made a major contribution to staking out the ground with respect to the Australian academic approach to children’s mediatthat, together with influences from the UK and Europe (Buckingham, 1993; Buckingham & Bragg, 2004; Livingstone, 2002; Livingstone & Bovill, 1999), encouraged the view of the active audience and a research perspective that did not assume the powerful negative effects model. Rather, the theoretical position dominant in Australia recognised that television media texts are influential, but that this influence can be seen as both positive and negative.

Buckingham et al. (2010) viewed the Australian Institute Report (Rush & La Nauze, 2006) to be sufficiently important to cite it in their recent report to the Scottish Parliament, but did so in order to oppose and critique its findings. Rush and La Nauze identified the high degree of sexual innuendo in television and asserted that the proliferation of sexualised media texts may encourage sexual intitiation before children have a full understanding of the consequences. Buckingham et al. (2010) cite extensive criticism of the Australian Institute Report, by Lumby and Albury (2008) and Egan and Hawkes (2008). This criticism relates to the report’s failure to clearly distinguish between teens and younger children and to the looseness of definition of critical terms, such as sexual and sexualisation, which Buckingham asserts qualifies almost any representation of the human body as sexual content. Buckingham et al. (2010) also assert a failure by Rush and La Nauze (2006) to distinguish between adult and children’s views of similar images.

In an argument for a different direction in Australian children’s media studies, Rutherford (2000) observes that previous approaches to children’s television research are audience, rather than industry focused. In her analysis of historical approaches to research of children’s media, she includes the dominant ‘effects research’ and the cognitive and developmental psychology approach, both centred in the USA, and the more sociological approaches that include ‘uses and gratifications’ and discursive traditions, that are more prevalent in the UK. Rutherford contends that the varied research traditions which have examined children’s television have made the audience their primary focus and industry or production-focussed analysis of children’s media research is “rare indeed” (p. 6) in Australia. This may be partially due to the concentration of funding provision for research into children’s television being focused on various broadcasting authorities and other organisations, such as the Australian Children’s Television Foundation (ACTF), which all
tend to be more interested in the audience and the significance, influence, impact or effect of media text on that audience of children.

In the third edition of the book *The media in Australia*, entitled *The media & communications in Australia*, edited by Cunningham and Turner (2002), it is asserted that the idea of a particular Australian approach to media is something that cannot be assumed when media, including television, is becoming increasingly globalised in terms of its supply and is also diluted by the access capabilities of a number of the receiving systems that audiences (or users) have at their disposal.

In a research project focusing on 8 to 17 year olds commissioned by the ACMA, Rutherford and Bittman (2007) built on a 1995 study, *Families and electronic entertainment* (Cupitt & Stockbridge, 1996), to understand the long-term effect of the media on children, families and society. In an extensive review of relevant literature, *Media and communications in Australian families: Review of research literature*, Rutherford and Bittman (2007) investigate, thoroughly and in-depth, much of the same ground covered by this literature review project, with two exceptions. One is the lack of reference to New Zealand research, apart from one article by Hancox, Milne and Poulton (2004) that asserted an association between television viewing in childhood and adolescence and being overweight, having poor fitness, smoking and raised cholesterol in adulthood. The other exception is the broader topic of media and communications in the research tackled by Rutherford, rather than the relatively focused aims for this literature review of sexual content on free-to-air, prime-time, television.

Rutherford and Bittman (2007) identified increasing challenges to the historical concentration on powerful negative effects and observed that children and young people use television as a source of information about sex and sexual health. While supporting the pervasiveness and influence of the television when compared to other media, they concluded that children are not passive respondents, but are able to interpret and evaluate television media text. They also viewed television viewing in social circumstances and “talking about TV content” (p. 211), as an important part of social interaction. They found that television content influences children’s perceptions of the world in which they live, but that children actively interpret and evaluate media texts as part of the process of establishing personal relationships and identity formation.

The comprehensive review of research literature completed in 2007 by Rutherford and Bittman on behalf of the ACMA was followed in 2008 by a Parliament of Australia Senate Environment, Communications and the Arts Committees inquiry into *The effects of premature sexualisation on child development*. The inquiry acknowledged that research that relates
sexualisation of children to sexual content in modern media has not established causality, but that the “cumulative affect of this material seems to be beyond dispute” (para. 2.3). Accepting that the 2007 report on sexualisation by the American Psychological Association, *Task force on the sexualisation of girls*, was the report predominantly cited to the inquiry, it observed that the report’s findings could be cautiously applied to conclude that some level of sexual content in media can “contribute to, and perhaps even cause, emotional and physical damage to children”, but, in the same paragraph (para. 3.7) noted that the research that encouraged the above conclusion was conducted on women of university age and older.

In a section of the inquiry report that considered expert perspectives, Australian academics and practitioners expressed concerns about the lack of definitive understanding of how child development is affected by early exposure to sexual imagery and concepts within media texts (paras. 3.17, 3.20), the lack of broad evidenced-based research to inform the inquiry (paras. 3.18, 3.19, 3.27) and the mediating influences of parental involvement (para. 3.21) and children’s own understanding (para. 3.22). Other opinion submitted confirmed the existence of early sexualisation and the complexity of relating sexual content to children’s differential stages of physical, emotional and cognitive ability (paras. 3. 24, 3.25, 3.26).

With specific reference to free-to-air television, the inquiry noted that it was the responsibility of the ACMA to regulate television broadcasting and that they were required to ensure that a high priority is placed on the protection of children from exposure to programme material which may be harmful to them.

The inquiry report noted that there were potential benefits of the media in the process of sexual socialisation (paras. 3.43, 3.44, 3.55), but concluded that in the presence of partial and equivocal evidence a conservative and precautionary approach “needs to be applied in favour of protecting children from things that are harmful” (paras. 3.50, 3.51).

The Australian Government’s 2009 response to the above Senate Inquiry included responses to the Senate Inquiry’s 13 recommendations. Of relevance to the focus of this review, the Australian Government undertook to explore opportunities for funding a major longitudinal study into the effects of the sexualisation of children (Recommendation 2), to increasing programming opportunities for children’s television programmes (Recommendation 3) and to setting up a children’s digital television channel on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (Recommendation 5).

Research on sexual content on television in Australia appears to be dominated by theoretical over empirical research. This may have been the motivation for Professor Catharine Lumby and Dr. Katherine Albury emphasising to the 2008 Senate
inquiry (Parliament of Australia Senate Environment, Communications and the Arts Committees, 2008) that there is a need for broad evidence-based research, which examines how children understand sexual content in the media.

### 4.7 Research in New Zealand

A significant proportion of New Zealand research into the significance of television for children is supported by organisations such as the BSA, the Office of Film and Literature Classification, the Families Commission and the Ministry of Education and is conducted by a relatively small group of academics and practitioners.

In a 1992 study, commissioned by the BSA, Watson and Lambourne investigated *Television sex*. This study is referenced as it incorporates the only use of sexual content analysis in New Zealand research identified by this literature review. Watson and Lambourne conducted a sexual content analysis of all programmes broadcast on the three public television channels from 11th to 17th of February 1991. Watson and Lambourne devised their own coding system, which they applied to programmes that had been flagged for sexual content during a 1991 study that coded for violence on television. They used two coders who were trained and provided with detailed coding instructions. The coders worked together as they were not coding in real time, but from videotapes.

Watson and Lambourne (1992) concluded that the sexual content of the sampled television was not of a quantity or type that would cause concern and that programmes were placed within the appropriately classified time slots. They also concluded that “While content-analysis studies of this type are valuable, there is a need for them to be complemented by qualitative studies, especially of the viewers themselves and their active engagement with the medium” (p. 10).

In 2001, another BSA commissioned project, *The younger audience: Children and broadcasting in New Zealand* was completed by Walters and Zwaga and was published in book form. Walters and Zwaga sought to understand the media consumption habits of children and asserted that “there are no other comprehensive New Zealand-based research projects that specifically identify the attitudes and behaviours of children in relation to broadcast media” (p. 12).

Walters and Zwaga (2001) investigated children’s current media consumption and children’s attitudes to controls applied to that consumption while examining parents’ attitudes to the protection of children from broadcast media content. The initial qualitative phase of
their research consisted of semi-structured interviews with 23, 6–13 year olds, from 14 separate households. This facilitated framing questions and refining objectives for the substantive phase of the research. This substantive phase involved a telephone survey with a nationally representative sample of 500 parents and caregivers and a face-to-face survey of 752 children which was also nationally representative.

Walters and Zwaga (2001) found that sexual content was second only to violence in parents’ concern about unsuitable content on television. The second part of the substantive phase of this research reflected the important goal, expressed by Walters and Zwaga, to provide New Zealand children with a voice within the research process. The children’s viewing preferences were thoroughly assessed. Though the sexual content of specific television programmes was not assessed, some indication of sexual content viewed was given by the analysis of viewing patterns by G, PGR and AO programme classifications (see Appendix 2 for a detailed explanation of these classifications).

Walters and Zwaga (2001) concluded that New Zealand children exhibit autonomy, independence, control and self-selection regarding their television habits and rely on warnings and classifications 86 percent of the time. This increases the responsibility of broadcasters for educating and advising their audiences concerning programme content. Wylie (2001), reporting on one aspect of the Competent children longitudinal study, referred to this research by Walters and Zwaga (2001), in comparing literacy standards with television viewing habits. The Competent children project followed children from “near-5” (p. 2) at age 6, 8 and 10 years and aimed to chart children’s literacy progress against a variety of educational and social factors. Wylie (2001) concluded that children watching television for substantial amounts of time are more likely to exhibit weaker literacy development and noted that access to television requires neither vocabulary nor alphabet.

Zanker (2004) is also aware of the need to encourage the expression of an articulated children’s agency in children’s television research, suggesting that “deep discursive fault lines run through debates over who should be the ‘principal agent’ for children’s television” (p. 437), but warns that a narrow conceptualisation of this agency may lead to a false sense of security for parents and provide an excessive opportunity for commercial interests. In order to inform the debates referred to above, Lealand and Zanker (2008) have replicated a research design in 1999, 2002 and 2005, by asking similar questions of 8 to 13 year olds, in order to produce a comprehensive child-centred assessment of media use. The mixed methods approach used, included school-based surveys in an intitial quantitative phase followed by a qualitative phase in which a convenience sample of the participants in the survey completed
drawings of their ideal media worlds in groups. During these group drawing sessions open questions were asked to elicit responses concerning other media issues.

In 2007, the BSA commissioned Jackson et al. to complete a review of the literature on *Children’s media use and responses*. This review examined children’s physical access to media, selection and use of media, social contexts in which media were used, and responses to media. Contemporaneously, the ACMA commissioned Rutherford and Bittman (2007) to complete a review of research literature entitled, *Media and communications in Australian families*. These two reviews covered similar subject matter and involved significant scholarship, led by Dr. Sue Jackson and Dr. Leonie Rutherford, respectively. The Australian review has been detailed above and this current review may be seen as a more recent ‘slice’ through these two more comprehensive reviews, in that it is focused on free-to-air, prime-time television and incorporates literature from 2007 to 2011.

Jackson et al. (2007) examined four major aspects of children and media: physical access, selection and ways of using media, social contexts of, and responses to, media. They found that children are demonstrating complex media-multitasking and that, dependent on family structure, children use media in the company of others and that the ways in which children respond to media are complex and influenced by a diverse range of factors. With specific reference to sexual content on television Jackson et al. (2007) observed that there is a lack of information on the scope of sexual content on television in New Zealand, but notes that analyses of sexual content on British and American television is pertinent, due to the number of television programmes broadcast to New Zealand television that originate in these two areas. Jackson et al. (2007) also observed that “relationships between sexual content and effects are highly complex” (p. 40) and supported the assertion of Escobar-Chaves et al. (2005), that there is a significant lack of recent, robust research in this area.

Jackson et al. (2007) emphasise the importance of avoiding assumptions about the significance of media for children and propose that a range of inter-related factors relating to the child, the content and the context, influence children’s responses to the media. They conclude that children are self-regulatory with regard to television content and consider that literature that successfully asserts the effects of sexual content on children is sparse. They also conclude that sexual content on television can represent a resource for children and that parental concerns underestimate children’s knowledge and awareness.

Following the literature review by Jackson et al. (2007), the BSA commissioned a follow-up survey in 2008, *Seen and heard: Children’s media use, exposure and response*. This study was considered to extend *The younger audience* (Walters & Zwaga, 2001) as the
second of a cross-sectional study. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 604 children, aged 6 to 13 years, and their primary caregivers. The age range was further stratified to consider: younger children, aged 6, 7 and 8; middle age children, aged 9, 10 and 11; and older children, aged 12 and 13. Participants were selected on the basis of a multi-stage, stratified sample design that, similar to the earlier research by Walters and Zwaga (2001), was nationally representative. The extensiveness of the questions and the nature of the sample, produce powerful and rich data. Specific findings relating to the significance of sexual content on television included, for the middle and older age groups, that about 20 percent of survey participants had been bothered or upset by sexual content on television, but 43 percent of these changed channels when they observed the sort of sexual content that had bothered or upset them. These observations are based on a question that does not ask further qualifying questions, such as: How did this bother or upset you? or Why did this upset you? or Did you understand the thing(s) that upset you? The survey also found that children in each of the three age groups were able to express what they considered inappropriate sexual content for their age group, but again the question was not qualified.

More general conclusions made by the survey included that children demonstrated the ability to self-select and control their active media consumption and had “clear ideas about what is harmful and unsuitable TV content” (BSA, 2008, p. 7). It was also of significance that children were aware of the use of warnings and classifications, but less so of the 8.30 p.m. watershed. This was illustrated by over half of the older age group evidenced as watching television after the watershed every night.

What may be considered as the third phase of the study by Jackson et al. (2007) and the BSA (2008) was completed in 2010, again by the BSA. This study was entitled, Watching the watchers and intended to explore and understand children’s television viewing in the context of family life. The study involved 14 families who had participated in the 2007 survey and observed and reported on children’s television viewing on three evenings, from 5.15 p.m. to 9.15 p.m., followed by a further evening that was assigned to a family discussion. In examining television content and children’s reactions, particularly to sexuality and nudity, the study found that children feel uncomfortable watching sexual material and/or nudity. With respect to the three age sub-groups used in the study (‘young’ children, 6 to 9 years old; ‘mid-aged’ children, 10 to 12; and ‘older’ children, 13 and 14) the study found that “young children feel uncomfortable, puzzled and curious about anything remotely related to the body or intimacy”, “mid-aged children can put up with a little more than their younger counterparts”, whereas older children “feel that sexual content or nudity is inappropriate” (p. 55). These
findings were illustrated by parts of the narratives of children and their parents, but did not appear to have been analysed directly from the narrative data.

Though the commissioner of the study, the BSA (2008), sought guidelines for “Did ‘sex’ mean kissing, hugging, nudity, something else?” (p. 5), the study concluded that “perceptions of inappropriate contents are highly subjective. The type of inappropriate content, and the level at which it becomes so, varies between parents and children, and between families” (p. 7).

In 2010, the BSA commissioned Dr. Sue Jackson to review the child complaints decisions between 1999 and 2009. The review analysed complaints in two broad categories: children as viewers and children as participants. The former category is of interest to this current literature review as ‘children as participants’ is more directed at privacy issues than sexual content. Two complaints were made during the specified period concerning children as viewers and both of these were not upheld by the BSA. Nevertheless, Jackson identified sufficient concerns involving children’s rights, interests, privacy and consent to recommend a separate Code of Broadcasting Practice for children.

Research in New Zealand appears to come from two main sources, that which is commissioned by government funded entities, such as the BSA, and that which is originated by academics as part of their professional contribution to research, such as Lealand and Zanker (2008). In most studies the research is multistage, as in Walters and Zwaga (2001) and the linked research by Jackson et al. (2007) and the BSA (2008, 2010). The sampling design is sometimes regional and cross-sectional, where funding is restricted, as in Lealand and Zanker (2008), but is nationally representative when adequately funded, as in Walters and Zwaga (2001). A longitudinal perspective is often evident, as in BSA (2008) and Lealand and Zanker (2008). The data varies in richness to reflect research design, but the use of focus groups and interpretive drawings (Lealand & Zanker, 2003, 2008) represent perhaps the richest of the data collection methods employed. The research also reflects a degree of children’s agency and children’s ability to actively interpret media text. The research characteristics thus described are considered by this review to reflect desirable research characteristics in assessing the significance for children of sexual content on television.
CHAPTER 5: TOWARDS A PREFERRED METHODOLOGY

5.1 Summary

This review has stated its intention to avoid ‘re-inventing the wheel’ by identifying studies that offer methodological specifications for assessing sexual content on television and examining the significance of this content for children. Appendix 5 details 10 selected references that are frequently used to support the findings of this review, but two of these are particularly telling in this regard.

The first is Harm and offence in media content: A review of the evidence, by Millwood Hargrave and Livingstone (2006). This text carefully critiques the existing evidence across nine media platforms, including television, and specifically examines the amount and manner of portrayals of sexual activity on television. Both authors have substantial, international experience in the subject matter for this review and focus on the strengths and limitations of methodologies in the specific area of research. They also carefully draw on empirical evidence, mostly initiated within the UK, to substantiate their findings.

The second study is the three-phase study commissioned by the BSA in 2007, 2008 and 2010. The first phase comprised an extensive review of literature by Jackson et al. (2007), the second phase involved a largely quantitative study, Seen and heard: Children’s media use, exposure and response and the third phase a qualitative study, Watching the watchers. This second, three-phasestudy incorporates many of the methodological strengths recommended by Millwood Hargrave and Livingstone (2006) and is culturally contextualised to New Zealand.

Supported by the previous historical, geographical and cultural perspectives, these two studies support the following specification for a potential empirical study to assess the significance for children of sexual content on television:

- The research will be child-centred to a degree, in accessing children’s voice directly and recognising children’s agency, while also accounting for children’s differential developmental capacities.

- In order to encourage generalisations to the targeted population a sample design that includes national representation and stratification for important demographic variables is specified. The targeted population will be sub-divided into three sub-groups: 6 to 8 year olds; 9 to 11 year olds; and 12 to 14 year olds, inclusive.
• Contextual factors are considered important in any assessment of sexual content on television and, more so, to any significance that is ascribed to the meaning that children give to, and take from, that content. The contextual factors considered will not only relate to the viewing context of sexual content by participants, but also the data collection context. This latter context will include assessment of the data collection methods considered appropriate for the sub-groups.

• The methodology will be characterised by research that is multi-method, or mixed method, involving both qualitative and quantitative data collection relating to sexual content.

• The specification of a mixed methods approach will result in the use of data collection methods that will include survey, focus groups, semi-structured interviews and rich data collection methods such as the drawings employed by Lealand and Zanker (2003, 2008).

• These varied data collection methods will produce data of varying richness and this will require data analysis at several levels of data reduction.

• The research design, data collection and data analysis will be best served by a multi-disciplinary team.

• The above specification will provide base-line information. A longitudinal replication of the specification will improve the robustness of sequential findings.

5.2 Introduction

The previous chapters have re-framed the aims for this literature review through lenses that describe the medium and the audience (Chapter 2), historical (Chapter 3) and geographical and cultural perspectives (Chapter 4). Having addressed the aims in this way, methodological specifications can be identified.

Aims:

1. Identify the results and findings of previous studies with respect to sexual content on television, with specific reference to children’s television in New Zealand.

2. Identify methodologies that have been previously utilised in order to inform a future empirical study with respect to the significance for children of sexual content on television in New Zealand.
The results and findings of previous studies with respect to sexual content on television have been found to be diverse and equivocal. To a certain extent these findings are seen to be polarised between those that seek to confirm negative or harmful effects and those who contend that either there are no such effects or that the effects are not able to be clearly identified, let alone quantified.

This polarisation is also seen to be reflected in a geo-cultural divide between a majority of researchers in the USA and a similar majority of researchers in the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. This simplifies the argument between the two research positions, but it may also encourage a dichotomous choice in the selection of one position and the rejection and denial of the other. Kitzinger (1999) warns that celebrations of audience creativity and restraint from the interrogations of media power has rendered the existence of media effects sufficiently unpopular to overlook the influence that media representations, in certain circumstances, can have. The Glasgow Media Group contends that audiences did not typically make their own meanings from media text; rather they engaged previous direct experience, logic and a sequence of processes involving cultural affinities and value systems to determine whether to believe or reject the media text (Philo, 1999).

The position taken by the Glasgow Media Group is supported by Millwood Hargrave and Livingstone (2006) who criticise the powerful effects position, noting that evidence points to “more modest, qualified and context-depending conclusions” (p. 19), but also rebut the null effects position by recognising the complex and diverse ways in which media are involved in our lives.

This literature review has stated its intention to avoid ‘re-inventing the wheel’ and, in identifying methodologies that have previously been utilised in order to inform a future study of sexual content on television, draws heavily on two particular studies. The first is Harm and offence in media content: A review of the evidence, by Millwood Hargrave and Livingstone (2006). This text carefully critiques the existing evidence across nine media platforms, including television, and specifically examines the amount and manner of portrayals of sexual activity on television. The second study is the three-phase study commissioned by the BSA in 2007, 2008 and 2010. The first phase comprised an extensive review of literature by Jackson et al. (2007), the second phase a largely quantitative study, Seen and heard: Children’s media use, exposure and response, and the third phase a qualitative study Watching the watchers. This second, three-phase study, incorporates many of the methodological strengths recommended by Millwood Hargrave and Livingstone (2006) and is culturally contextualised to New Zealand.
The selection of these studies is not arbitrary. The powerful media effects models are often found to make invalid assumptions about the participant audience. They often use sampling techniques that are not representative of the populations to which generalisations are extended. They also use methods for sexual content data collection that equate the researchers’ views to that of the participants, despite substantial age and developmental differences. They also engage subsequent data analysis in a way that probabilistically tests directional hypotheses while overlooking mediating variables and the bi-directional nature of social influences and effect processes.

The null-effects models are also criticised by Kitzinger (1999) and Millwood Hargrave and Livingstone (2006) as dismissing the likely influence that media content has when rejecting the more extreme ‘powerful media effects’ research position. Media, media content and sexual media content are embedded in complex and diverse ways into children’s everyday lives and it seems equally implausible to suggest that they have no effect or influence as it is to assert that they have a powerful, specific and quantifiable effect.

5.3 Millwood Hargrave and Livingstone (2006)
The first seminal text identified to comprehensively address methodological considerations relating to the significance for children of sexual content on television is, *Harm and offence in media content: A review of the evidence* (Millwood Hargrave and Livingstone, 2006). Both of these researchers bring to the aims of this literature review indisputable research credentials. The report, *Young people new media*, by Livingstone and Bovill (1999) and the book that is based on the empirical material in that report,*Young people and new media* (Livingstone, 2002), have both been cited earlier in this literature review. In the *Young people new media* report, Livingstone and Bovill (1999) employed an empirical research design in which “a multi-method design triangulating qualitative and quantitative data sources” (p. 25) was used to collect data. In co-authoring the identified text, Millwood Hargreave complements the euro-centric research profile of Livingstone with an appreciation of the New Zealand context, due to her collaboration with Geoff Lealand of Waikato University and Paul Norris of the Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology in a 2006 report to the BSA on *Issues facing broadcast content regulation*.

Millwood Hargrave and Livingstone (2006) suggest that a review of the significance and effect of media on beliefs, attitudes and behaviour requires an approach that is as convergent as the media is itself becoming. Their review purposefully excluded the positive
effects of media, focusing on the harmful or offensive effects, and concentrated on empirical research, published after 1999, which had been subjected to academic peer review. Research on television that met this qualification was included as one of nine different classifications of media.

Though Millwood Hargrave and Livingstone (2006) observe that the greatest research effort has been devoted to the effects of television on children, they also note that,

…the body of available research is less than ideal. Many studies are designed to identify correlations not causes. Possible confounding factors tend to be examined where convenient to measure (e.g. age, gender) while key factors may be neglected (e.g. parental mediation, personality, social inequalities, peer norms). Restrictions on research funding are evident in the plethora of small studies and simple measures, and in the paucity of longitudinal designs and the lack of good replications. On the positive side, much of the research has been funded by public bodies, conducted by independent researchers, and published in peer-reviewed journals available in the public domain. (p. 33)

Millwood Hargreave and Livingstone (2006) examine research on short-term and long-term and direct and indirect media effects and assess the three main types of research methods in media effects research: experiments, surveys and qualitative social research. They also examine both the ethics and politics of media effects research.

Additional evidence cited by Millwood Hargrave and Livingstone (2006) with respect to sexual content on television, includes The Communications Research Group’s sexual content analyses of “peak time” (p. 73), free-to-air television on behalf of the Broadcasting Standards Commission (BSC) in the UK between 1991 and 2002 and a more recent analysis for the BBC, BSC and Independent Television Commission (ITC) in 2003. This latter study improved the representativeness of their sample of peak time, free-to-air television programmes by removing distortions produced by specific programming events. These studies, of a longitudinal nature, indicate that in 2002, 21 percent of programmes contained some form of sexual activity and that sexual content showed an increase over the ten-year period monitored.

Millwood Hargrave’s 1999 study used three data collection methods – qualitative discussion groups, a quantitative survey of 732 adults and 83 young people between 13 and 15, and a multi-media interview of 261 adults – to show that, in comparison to a similar 1992
study, there was a decrease in the level of parental concern about television programmes, despite the sexual content increasing across the same time period. Millwood Hargrave and Livingstone (2006) also cite the research of Barnett and Thomson (1996), who found that the context in which a scene was set was central to any tolerance to sexual content on television, asserting that context as a factor is an essential methodological parameter in research design.

Millwood Hargrave and Livingstone (2006) offered the following conclusions with respect to methodological design:

- It is not considered that methodologies that incorporate experimental methods can be generalised either longitudinally or to populations outside the sample.
- Content analysis techniques are methodologically restrictive in defining complex processes in such a way as to facilitate simple coding schemes.
- It is considered more preferable to talk to audience groups and understand their reasoning and reactions to sexual content.
- Audiences are generally able to distinguish fact from fiction, but this observation has no potential to reduce or increase any effect.
- Research confirms the importance of context in mediating any potential effect of sexual content on television. Gender, age and family settings all contribute to context.

Millwood Hargraves and Livingstone (2006) also identify that some persistent questions continue to undermine the evidence base of research into media effects. These include how far findings from one cultural and regulatory context can inform the same research questions in a different cultural and regulatory context, and to what extent research in one media platform can be generalised to another media platform.

5.4 Jackson et al. (2007) and the Broadcasting Standards Authority (2008, 2010)

These three related and sequential reports have already been discussed in section 4.7 on New Zealand research. The subject of these reports:

- Children’s media use and responses: A review of the literature (Jackson et al., 2007);
- Seen and heard: Children’s media use, exposure, and response (BSA, 2008); and
- Watching the watchers: What children watch on TV and how they respond (BSA, 2010),

is far broader than that which is informed by this literature review. There were three research objectives in the second of the two sequential studies. The first two of these research objectives
were concerned with media use and exposure and were more amenable to using a survey as a data collection method and subsequent quantitative data analysis and description. The third research objective was concerned with children’s responses to media and was not as amenable to the data collection, analysis and description methods as the first two. Though the face-to-face nature of the survey enriched the data to a degree, the third research objective demanded a more exploratory approach that, in turn, required the employment of qualitative methods of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2003). The third research question in the 2008 study was, “Children’s thoughts and feelings about the media – including the influence of media on values and beliefs and perceptions of the appropriateness of media” (p. 1).

This research objective was superficially examined within the second report (BSA, 2008), which notes that “some of these objectives may be addressed in-depth in later qualitative research” (p. 1). The third sequential report was intended to respond to this third research question by observing children watching television, but this review asserts that the data collection method employed, sometimes referred to as ethnographic observation, was not able to respond to the complexity of the area of study and few robust conclusions could be approached.

The Recommendations and Conclusion in Chapter 6 extend the contributions that these three sequential research studies can make to the aims of this literature review. The commissioning of the review of literature (Jackson et al., 2007) as a preliminary phase informed the more quantitative phase of the three-phase research, while the third phase was intended to answer the research question that was not readily approached by the quantitative methods of the second phase. The research also displays quasi-longitudinal characteristics in being modeled on a 2001 study, *The younger audience*, which has also been extensively cited throughout this literature review (Walters & Zwaga, 2001). The sampling methodology is particularly robust and encourages generalisations to the same target population as for this literature review and the data collection method of face-to-face survey gives some voice to the target population, but does so in a far more structured and restricting way than the more child-centred approach adopted by other research, including Lealand and Zanker (2003, 2008). Nevertheless, these sequential studies have “minimized the methodological difficulties” (Millwood Hargrave & Livingstone, 2006, p. 96) that are considered to restrict the credibility of research findings in studies of sexual content on television (Buckingham & Bragg, 2004; Livingstone, 2002).
5.5 Toward a methodological specification

Millwood Hargrave and Livingstone (2006) provide sufficient methodological critique of research on sexual content on television to integrate with research design characteristics employed by the BSA (2008) and the previous findings of this review, to construct a methodological specification. This specification covers the type of approach to the research and its short term or longitudinal nature, the sampling design, the degree of richness sought in data collection, appropriate analysis and presentation processes for that data and the short term or longitudinal nature of the research.

5.5.1 Qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods approach?

Justifying a choice between a quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods approach to finding answers to research questions implies that these three methodologies are mutually exclusive. Patton (2002) asserts that the research challenge is more one of matching methods to research, rather than adhering to a narrow methodological orthodoxy.

The choice of methodological direction responds to a number of factors. These factors include philosophical considerations, the nature of the research questions and the limitations of extant theory to specifically inform the research questions and their constituent concepts and constructs. In informing research on the significance for children of sexual content on television this literature review finds that concepts and constructs are not well defined and that many definitions proposed are the subject of debate. Many of the theories forwarded to explain the significance for children of sexual content on television are partial or disputed. Hence, there exists a prior need to explore and explain phenomena which are socially situated.

A qualitative approach will best inform a subject about which there is significant debate and which is socially situated (Creswell, 2003). Such a qualitative approach will severely restrict generalisation outside of the population of participants and this serves to limit the reach of any valuable exploratory or explanatory findings from the qualitative research. Hence, there also exists a need to introduce to the qualitative approach, a sampling design that will facilitate the generalisation of qualitative findings to the population of interest, in this review the population of New Zealand children from 5 to 14 years.

It is also envisaged that the research design will be replicated at intervals in order to provide the important longitudinal aspect that will clarify changes to sexual content and the sexual content of television, over time, while also chronologically mapping the significance for children of that sexual content. This longitudinal dimension of the research design is a response to research that considers that any reality-defining, or aggregate, effects that
television may have are more likely to be observed over a period of time as opposed to short term effects in controlled experiments. (Livingstone, 2002; Livingstone & Bovill, 1999; Millwood Hargrave & Livingstone, 2006; Rutherford & Bittman, 2007)

5.5.2 The sampling design

The selection of a sample should be directed by a sampling design that encourages conclusions to be made for the population of interest. Should the BSA wish to undertake future research in this area in order to inform its decisions and policies, then that population is likely to comprise New Zealand children within a defined age category. This would hold true for both qualitative and quantitative approaches to research. A sampling design that selects a stratified random sample across that targeted population is recommended, incorporating ethnicity, rural and urban lifestyles, age group and socio-economic demographics.

As this literature review recommends the use of some qualitative methods of data collection, the amount of data collected is likely to be substantial and rich in nature. This literature review therefore recommends the acceptance of a higher statistical margin of error in the findings in order to reduce the sample size and give greater emphasis to the data collection methods used.

The age range between 5 and 14 years (as specified for this review) is too broad a category in terms of developmental, as opposed to chronological, age. It is recommended that the sampling design reflects this by sampling sub-groups. This technique was employed by Brown, Steele and Walsh-Childers (2002) in a study of adolescents, by identifying early, middle and late adolescents. The BSA (2008) study, while not accounting for this in its sampling design, did so in its analysis and presentation of data, in which the targeted age group was split into three sub-groups: 6 to 8 years; 9 to 11 years; and 12 to 13 years.

5.5.3 Data collection

The data collection methods used by the Glasgow Media Group in their research from 1993 to 1998 (Philo, 1999), Livingstone and Bovill (1999), Millwood Hargrave and Livingstone (2006), BSA (2008) and Lealand and Zanker (2008) all responded to the different research questions that they posed, but were similar in engaging qualitative data collection that recognised the child as an active participant in the research, as opposed to being an uninvolved subject. The Glasgow Media Group’s work was not restricted to children and they consequently found that focus groups were appropriate. The BSA (2008) study omitted certain questions when surveying younger age groups in their face-to-face structured survey,
as they did not consider that younger children had the necessary cognitive development to understand some of the questions. Lealand and Zanker (2003) used guided interpretative drawings of children’s real and fantasy bedrooms to obtain rich, textured data. These drawings were also instrumental in the creation of a relaxed environment for structured conversations involving the children (R. Zanker, personal communication, May 31, 2011). Stake (2003) and Patton (2002) observe that documents, such as these drawings, are a particularly rich source of information. Stake refers to them as the “spoor” (p. 235) of contemporary society, while Hodder (2003) confirms that documents can elaborate that which is hidden from oral language. It is this sort of data collection approach that will best respond to the aims of this review, especially when the second aim is considered, which foresees future empirical research in the complex subject area of the significance for children of sexual content on television.

5.5.4 Data analysis and presentation

This review asserts that the rich data that would be collected from the qualitative methods of data collection recommended will require comprehensive analysis, in terms of both the coding of sexual content and determining the significance of that content for children. Traditional, statistical methods of quantification will not alone suffice to represent the complex and rich data that are likely to be collected.

Table 5.1 illustrates a process of data analysis that employs different levels of data reduction. The greatest data reduction could be achieved by quantification of survey responses, and this would be supported and enriched by analysis of textual data that reduced the data by different degrees, including quantitisation (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003), key words in context (KWIC) (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2005; Ryan & Bernard, 2003) and yet further analysis which did not reduce the data but employed narrative, or discourse, analysis.

The first level of data analysis employs largely statistical methods to analyse data derived from survey questions, the second may use the process of quantitisation, which is a process that transforms qualitative data in the form of text to a numerically represented form of data (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). This type of data analysis can be subjected to computer aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), such as nVivo9. Quantitising can be expressed in terms of scores, scales, clusters or matrices in order to more fully describe a target phenomenon. Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2005) view the process of quantitisation of manifest effects as a means of enhancing qualitative data.
Table 5.1: Four levels of data analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of analysis</th>
<th>Method of data analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Statistical analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Classical content analysis to reduce text to code, followed by quantitisation of that code.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Key words in context (KWIC) analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>Narrative or discourse analysis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Developed for this research*

The second level of data analysis informs the first level, but employs techniques that reduce data, but not in such a way that their richness is completely sacrificed. KWIC involves the identification of concordance by listing significant words or phrases and examining them within a defined context in which they appear. The final level of analysis uses selected parts of collected narrative, including drawings and documents, to support the analysis in the first three levels.
CHAPTER 6: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This literature review has followed a methodology that has gradually reduced uncertainty relating to its two aims:

1. Identify the results and findings of previous studies with respect to sexual content on television, with specific reference to children’s television in New Zealand.
2. Identify methodologies that have been previously utilised in order to inform a future empirical study with respect to the significance for children of sexual content on television in New Zealand.

In doing so, the review has sought to specify methodological parameters that will facilitate an answer to the question, ‘What is the significance for children of sexual content on prime-time, free-to-air, television in New Zealand?’ Recommendations will be provided for the two aims as separate entities, though the conclusion will incorporate comment on both.

6.2 Recommendations to assess sexual content on free-to-air television at prime-time

There is consensus across the different research positions defined throughout this literature review, and in each of the geo-cultural research areas explored in Chapter 4, that sexual content on television is increasing. While this trend is broadly accepted, it is important to emphasise that ‘sexual content’ is culturally-defined in the region in which the research was completed.

Few studies have been completed in New Zealand that are either focused on sexual content on television, or which include a research question or null hypothesis that is similarly directed. The study by Watson and Lambourne (1992) is now nearly 20 years old and cannot be expected to inform this aim in the context of a television media environment that has changed, and is changing rapidly. The more recent study, Watching the watchers (BSA, 2010), was intended to inform children’s behavioural responses and reactions to sexual content on television, but found that “perceptions of inappropriate content are highly subjective. The type of inappropriate content, and the level at which it becomes so, varies between parents and children, and between families” (p. 7).

Jackson et al. (2007) do offer some comment on sexual content on television and this literature review extends the analysis made by them and is generally consistent with it. The
subsequent and related quantitative study to the study by Jackson et al. (BSA, 2008) applies a broad quantitative brush to the periphery of the above aim, but provides little rich data and avoids a complete answer to the third research objective, which is the objective which displays the greatest resonance with this review. When taken together the three sequential studies by Jackson et al. (2007) and the BSA (2008, 2010) can be identified by Creswell’s (2003) typology of research designs as a QualQUANTqual sequential exploratory mixed methods design. The term ‘QualQUANTqual’ refers to the balance of qualitative and quantitative research in the study, in this case qualitative work occurs first, but has less dominance than the subsequent quantitative phase, which is also more dominant than the third qualitative phase (Cresswell, 2003). The BSA’s 2008 study offers a robust sampling methodology that strengthens the research design and allows its findings to be stated with statistical confidence for the target population. The BSA study also refers back to the methodologically similar research by Walters and Zwaga (2001), thus providing it with a quasi-longitudinal perspective.

Research completed outside of New Zealand is considered more relevant in terms of form, as opposed to content, including findings. We conclude that adopting sexual content definitions and subsequent data collection and analysis techniques, similar to that which was advanced by Kunkel et al. (2005), is inappropriate in terms of the requirement for cultural fit. The methodology of this same study was also underpinned by differential researcher and participant understandings of sexual content.

This literature review concludes that sexual content is culturally and sub-culturally defined and that to provide the concept with sufficient contextual meaning for New Zealand television will require an in-depth qualitative study to deconstruct sexual content, so that it can be identified, explored, explained and defined for the contemporary New Zealand free-to-air television media environment current at the time of the research. The categorisation of sexual content by Hetsroni (2007) may provide a template to initiate this process. Having elaborated the nature of sexual content on New Zealand television in a significant qualitative phase, a further, but smaller, qualitative phase, would involve the design of a sexual content coding system and a coding protocol and their use in a pilot sexual content coding study (Manganello et al., 2010). The third phase would be a quantitative phase in which a sample of prime-time, free-to-air television is coded for sexual content, following the sampling methodology for the television media texts advanced by Cumberpatch et al. (2003).

Another important method of adding to the credibility of findings is to recycle the three phases of this research as a repeated longitudinal study at three or four year intervals. This
will encourage comparison of future results with those of the base-line year and would develop answers to the question, ‘Has sexual content increased on prime-time, free-to-air, television and, if so, in what way?’

6.3 Recommendations to assess the significance for children of sexual content on free-to-air television, at prime-time

Having assessed the type and extent of sexual content in a three-phase, sequential exploratory research design, the research challenge is then to identify any significance of this sexual content for children. This literature review concludes that qualitative methods will be most appropriate for an area about which there is considerable equivocation concerning concepts, constructs and theory. The qualitative approach could be carefully imbued with many of the techniques identified by Lincoln and Guba (1999), Creswell (2003) and Patton (2002) to ensure the authenticity of the research and maximise the credibility of its findings.

The research design could employ a combination of data collection methods, detailed and conducted by a multi-disciplinary team (Jackson et al., 2007). Data collection could include face-to-face, one-to-one, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and document analysis similar to that advanced by Lealand and Zanker (2003, 2008) and Livingstone (2002). Again, the exact ‘menu’ of data collection methods would be matched to the age subgroups of 6 to 8, 9 to 11 and 12 to 13, inclusive, and the specific research questions posed by the research. The resulting rich data could then be transcribed and then subjected to the levels of analysis described in Chapter 5.

This research, directed at the second aim of this literature review, could be conducted sequentially with the design that is directed at assessing sexual content on prime-time, free-to-air television or could be run parallel to it. In this latter case the final phase for both research studies would be an interpretation of the entire analysis (Creswell, 2003).

6.4 Limitations

This literature review was designed to address two different aims and both were worked on simultaneously. The literature sourced was broad in nature in order to encompass international and national research studies. As the literature review sought to maintain its focus on the two declared aims within a New Zealand context, not all areas of theoretical and political variation were included. The selected references in Appendix 5 provide additional literature for a fuller analysis.
The parameters relating to sexual content on prime-time, free-to-air television and the specific age range between 5 and 14 years, have not been intensively elaborated in this literature review due to the lack of extant research in an area that is progressively restricted first to the single medium of television, and then to free-to-air television and then to free-to-air television at prime-time. The age range specified for this literature review was not found as a particular category in any research outside of New Zealand.

While the international literature provided varied theoretical and empirical input to the focus for this review, it was the limited literature that was specific to the New Zealand context which challenged the ability of the review to address the specific aims set. This was not assisted by terms and concepts being inconsistently defined in the varied international literature sources. The age range specified for this literature review was not found in any research outside of New Zealand. Based on the research for this review, we are unable to conclusively link children’s viewing of sexual content on New Zealand television to specific behaviours or aspects of their psychological and social development.

Jackson et al. (2007) found that children respond to the media in complex ways and their responses to sexual content “cannot be assumed to be negative or harmful” (p. 7). The subsequent survey (BSA, 2008), repeated an observation by Walters and Zwaga (2001) that New Zealand children have clear ideas about harmful and unsuitable sexual content on television, but reported no detailed findings concerning sexual content on television, children’s responses to that content and the significance of that sexual content for children. The research did suggest that the children’s responses to media may be examined in later qualitative research. This observation, in combination with our conclusion that it is important to undertake research that is culturally and socially applicable, leads to our recommendation for further research. A study following the methodological specification provided by this review would enable the BSA to monitor sexual content on free-to-air television, and its influence on children.

6.5 Conclusion

We have identified that prior research on sexual content in television programmes, with particular regard to children, is culturally defined and depends upon the type of research that is undertaken. Studies in the USA contrast in definition, method and content to that facilitated within the Republic of Ireland, UK, Australia and New Zealand. This difference reduces the comparability of results and only serves to emphasise the need for further New Zealand
research. Specific findings, as outlined in this review, provide insight into how certain societies identify ‘sexual content’ within the media and its possible effects on children. However, they are less applicable to other contexts where values and social mores are differentially framed.

We conclude that completing research that concerns sexual content on television is required to be child-centred to a degree (Lealand & Zanker, 2008; Livingstone, 2002). It is considered that any research into sexual content on television will be more complex than previous research by the BSA, and it would therefore benefit from being multi-method, multi-disciplinary and multi-phase.

The use of the term ‘multi-method’, or ‘mixed methods’, reflects a necessity to use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, particularly of data collection and analysis. This recognises the complexity of understanding sexual content on television and elaborating its significance to children in the target population.

The necessity for a multi-disciplinary approach is a recognition that the complexities involved will benefit from research contributions from experts in such diverse fields as cognitive and developmental psychology, media studies, sociological and linguistic studies and child development and education.

The multi-phase research design will allow the culturally-contextualised and in-depth study of sexual content on television, followed by a testing or pilot phase, and only then by an assessment of sexual content that will be both quantitative and qualitative. These three sequential QUALqualquant phases may be followed by, or paralleled with, a QUAL study in which the significance for children of sexual content on television is credibly explored to elaborate the relationship between television media text and the active role that the target group of children will take in giving meaning to, and taking meaning from, television media text.

These two sequential or parallel studies could then be brought together in a final phase in which the findings of both studies are interpreted. Having completed such research, the BSA will have a base-line of the type and nature of sexual content at a certain time, and its assessed significance to the target group of children. The leverage of such a multi-methods, multi-disciplinary, multi-phase research study will be significantly increased if a longitudinal aspect is added to the research by replicating it every three or four years. This literature review concludes that subsequent replications of the research will need to cycle through each of the three phases elaborated above, as it is expected that there will be an evidenced
difference between the type and nature of sexual content over the intervening period between successive replications.

Repeating the earlier metaphor of not ‘re-inventing the wheel’ this review draws on the significant research that has preceded it:

- Rutherford and Bittman (2007, p. 210)
  
  *This review finds that television is still the most pervasive and influential media in the lives of children...Studies have found that children and young people use television...as a means of accessing information about sexuality and sexual health in the context of their personal relationships and identity formation.*

- Wilson and Drogos (2009, p. 480)
  
  *Broadening our theoretical and methodological approaches will help us elucidate the complex role of media during infancy, childhood, and adolescence.*

- Jackson et al. (2007, p. 52)
  
  *...we add our voice to those of other researchers...who take a balanced and critical approach to interpreting media research...The challenge for the future is to study in an interdisciplinary theoretical and methodical fashion how children's cognitive, social, and ecological development interface with their media use, access, and responses.*

The final quotation in this literature review is from one of the earlier researchers from the USA and reflects the equivocation in the research that this review has considered.

  
  *...for some children, under some conditions, some television is harmful. For some children under the same conditions, or for the same children under other conditions, it may be beneficial. For most children, under most conditions, most television is probably neither particularly harmful nor particularly beneficial.*
This equivocation in an area of social research that is important at a societal, government, group, family and individual level can only be dissipated by empirical research that is carefully devised, such that its findings are imbued with authenticity and carry a high degree of credibility.
APPENDIX 1

Free-to-air television code of broadcasting practice

Introduction

The Broadcasting Act 1989 requires every broadcaster to be responsible for maintaining in programmes and their presentation, standards which are consistent with:

a. The observance of good taste and decency.
b. The maintenance of law and order.
c. The privacy of the individual.
d. The principle that when controversial issues of public importance are discussed, reasonable efforts are made, or reasonable opportunities are given, to present significant points of view, either in the same programme or in other programmes within the period of current interest.
e. Any approved Code of Broadcasting Practice applied to programmes.

The BSA is responsible for administering the standards regime, determining formal complaints and encouraging broadcasters to develop and observe appropriate Codes of Broadcasting Practice.

This Code of Broadcasting Practice has been prepared by the New Zealand Television Broadcasters’ Council on behalf of TV One, TV2, TV3, C4, Māori Television and other free-to-air services.

In the application of this Code, the ethic of social responsibility is recognised both by broadcasters and the Authority.

Under section 14 of the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990, there is a right to freedom of expression. When the Authority makes decisions on complaints, it will consider and apply the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act.
Broadcasters and the BSA also acknowledge that New Zealand is party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**Grounds for a formal complaint**

Formal complaints allege that the broadcaster has failed in its responsibility to maintain one or more of the broadcasting standards set out in Standards 1 to 11 below.

**Standard 1:** Good Taste and Decency

**Standard 2:** Law and Order

**Standard 3:** Privacy

**Standard 4:** Controversial Issues - Viewpoints

**Standard 5:** Accuracy

**Standard 6:** Fairness

**Standard 7:** Discrimination and Denigration

**Standard 8:** Responsible Programming

**Standard 9:** Children’s Interests

**Standard 10:** Violence

**Standard 11:** Liquor

**About This Code**

The requirements of the Code are set out in each standard. Each standard has a number of associated guidelines. These guidelines do not, of themselves, impose requirements on a
broadcaster. They are included to provide interpretative assistance for broadcasters and the public, and indicate factors that the broadcaster should consider when assessing whether a programme complies with a particular standard. A programme which does not adhere to the letter of a particular guideline may not be in breach, depending on the programme's overall compliance with the relevant standard.

**How to make a formal complaint**

Formal complaints must be:
- made in writing; and
- lodged with the broadcaster concerned within 20 working days of the broadcast.

The one exception is an allegation of breach of privacy (Standard 3) which may be made directly to the BSA without first being referred to the broadcaster. This can be done through the BSA website.

Formal complaints should specify:
- the name of the programme;
- the date and approximate time of broadcast;
- the standard(s) alleged to have been breached and the reasons why.

Free-to-Air broadcasters are also required to comply with the Programme Code covering Election Programmes such as Opening and Closing Addresses and Advertisements. A copy of this Code is on the BSA’s website. Complaints under this Code are made direct to the BSA.

Apart from programme promotions and broadcast political advertising, the BSA has no jurisdiction over advertisements. Complaints about advertisements should be made to the Advertising Standards Complaints Board.

Copies of all broadcasting Codes are available from the BSA and from its website.

**The standards**

The following standards apply to free-to-air television programmes broadcast in New Zealand.
Standard 1: Good Taste and Decency

Broadcasters should observe standards of good taste and decency.

Guidelines

1a. Broadcasters will take into account current norms of good taste and decency, bearing in mind the context in which any content occurs and the wider context of the broadcast e.g. programme classification, target audience, type of programme and use of warnings etc.

1b. The use of visual and verbal warnings should be considered when content is likely to disturb or offend a significant number of viewers except in the case of news and current affairs, where verbal warnings only will be considered. Warnings should be specific in nature, while avoiding detail which may itself distress or offend viewers.

Standard 2: Law and Order

Broadcasters should observe standards consistent with the maintenance of law and order.

Guidelines

2a. Caution should be exercised in broadcasting items which explain the techniques of crime in a manner which invites imitation.

2b. Factual programmes should not glamorise criminal activity or condone the actions of criminals.

2c. Except where justified in the public interest, ingenious devices or unfamiliar methods for inflicting pain, injury or death should not be shown.
2d. The realistic portrayal of anti-social behaviour, including violent and serious crime and the abuse of liquor and drugs, should not be shown in a way that glamorises these activities.

2e. Programmes should not glamorise suicide and should not give detailed descriptions about methods of suicide.

**Standard 3: Privacy**

Broadcasters should maintain standards consistent with the privacy of the individual.

**Guideline**

3a. When considering an individual’s privacy, broadcasters shall apply the privacy principles developed by the BSA (see Appendix 2).

**Standard 4: Controversial Issues – Viewpoints**

When discussing controversial issues of public importance in news, current affairs or factual programmes, broadcasters should make reasonable efforts, or give reasonable opportunities, to present significant points of view either in the same programme or in other programmes within the period of current interest.

**Guidelines**

4a. No set formula can be advanced for the allocation of time to interested parties on controversial issues of public importance. Significant viewpoints should be presented fairly in the context of the programme. This can only be done by judging each case on its merits.
4b. The assessment of whether a reasonable range of views has been presented takes account of some or all of the following:
   • the programme introduction;
   • whether the programme approaches a topic from a particular perspective (e.g. authorial documentaries, public access and advocacy programmes);
   • whether viewers could reasonably be expected to be aware of views expressed in other coverage.

**Standard 5: Accuracy**

Broadcasters should make reasonable efforts to ensure that news, current affairs and factual programming:
   • is accurate in relation to all material points of fact; and/or
   • does not mislead.

**Guidelines**

5a. The accuracy standard does not apply to statements which are clearly distinguishable as analysis, comment or opinion.

5b. In the event that a material error of fact has occurred, broadcasters should correct it at the earliest appropriate opportunity.

5c. News must be impartial.

**Standard 6: Fairness**

Broadcasters should deal fairly with any person or organisation taking part or referred to.

**Guidelines**

6a. A consideration of what is fair will depend upon the genre of the programme (e.g. factual, dramatic, comedic or satirical programmes).
6b. Broadcasters should exercise care in editing programme material to ensure that the extracts used are not a distortion of the original event or the overall views expressed.

6c. Except as justified in the public interest:
   • contributors and participants should be informed of the nature of their participation;
   • programme makers should not obtain information or gather pictures through misrepresentation;
   • broadcasters should avoid causing unwarranted distress to surviving family members by showing footage of bodies or human remains.

6d. Broadcasters should respect the right of individuals to express their own opinions.

6e. Individuals and particularly children and young people, taking part or referred to should not be exploited, humiliated or unfairly identified.

6f. Where the programme deals with distressing circumstances (e.g. grief and bereavement) discretion and sensitivity are expected.

**Standard 7: Discrimination and Denigration**

Broadcasters should not encourage discrimination against, or denigration of, any section of the community on account of sex, sexual orientation, race, age, disability, occupational status, or as a consequence of legitimate expression of religion, culture or political belief.

**Guideline**

7a. This standard is not intended to prevent the broadcast of material that is:
   • factual; or
   • the expression of genuinely held opinion in news, current affairs or other factual programmes; or
   • legitimate humour, drama or satire.
Standard 8: Responsible Programming

Broadcasters should ensure programmes:

- are appropriately classified;
- display programme classification information;
- adhere to timebands in accordance with Appendix 2;
- are not presented in such a way as to cause panic, or unwarranted alarm or undue distress; and
- do not deceive or disadvantage the viewer.

Guidelines

8a. Broadcasters should use established classification codes:

- classification symbols should be displayed at the beginning of each programme and after each advertising break;
- warnings should be considered when programme content is likely to offend or disturb a significant number of the intended audience.

8b. All promos (including promos for news and current affairs) should be classified to comply with the “host programme” (the programme in which they screen):

- promos for AO programmes shown outside AO time should comply with the classification of the host programme;
- promos shown in G or PGR programmes screening in AO time should comply with the G or PGR classification of the host programme;
- when a promo screens during an unclassified host programme (including news and current affairs) in G or PGR time, the promo must be classified G or PGR and broadcasters should pay regard to Standard 9 – Children's interests;
- when a promo screens adjacent to an unclassified host programme (including news and current affairs) in G or PGR time, the promo should comply with the underlying timeband;
- broadcasters should be aware that promos showing footage of violence or other explicit material outside the context of the original programme may be unacceptable to viewers in the context of the host programme in which they screen.

8c. Except as justified in the public interest, news flashes screening outside regular news and current affairs programmes, particularly during children’s viewing time, should avoid
unnecessary, distressing or alarming material or should provide a prior warning about the material.

8d. Advertisements and infomercials should be clearly distinguishable from other programme material.

8e. Broadcasters should ensure that there is no collusion between broadcasters and contestants that results in unfair advantage to any contestant.

8f. Broadcasters should not use the process known as “subliminal perception” or any other technique which attempts to convey information to the viewer by transmitting messages below or near the threshold of normal awareness.

**Standard 9: Children’s Interests**

During children’s normally accepted viewing times (see Appendix 2), broadcasters should consider the interests of child viewers.

**Guidelines**

9a. Broadcasters should be mindful of the effect any programme or promo may have on children during their normally accepted viewing times – usually up to 8.30pm – and avoid screening material that would disturb or alarm them.

9b. When scheduling AO material to commence at 8.30pm, broadcasters should ensure that strong adult material is not shown soon after the watershed.

9c. Broadcasters should have regard to the fact that children tend to:

- stay up later than usual on Friday and Saturday nights and during school and public holidays; and
- watch television through to midday on Saturday and Sunday mornings, and during school and public holidays.

Accordingly, special attention should be given to providing appropriate warnings during these periods.
9d. Programmes containing disturbing social and domestic friction or sequences in which people – especially children – or animals may be humiliated or badly treated, should be handled with care and sensitivity:

- all gratuitous material of this nature should be avoided and any scenes shown must pass the test of relevancy within the context of the programme. If thought likely to disturb children, the programme should be scheduled later in the evening.

9e. Children’s cartoons should avoid gratuitous violence – especially violence involving humans or human-like creatures – unless it would be clear to the child viewer that the themes are fanciful or farcical.

**Standard 10: Violence**

Broadcasters should exercise care and discretion when dealing with the issue of violence.

**Guidelines**

10a. Any violence shown should be justified in the context of screening and not be gratuitous.

10b. Broadcasters should be mindful of the cumulative effect of violent incidents and themes:

- the impression that violence is dominating a single programme, a programme series, or a line-up of programmes screened back-to-back should be avoided.

10c. Programmes in which rape or sexual violence is a theme should be treated with care:

- explicit detail and prolonged focus on sexually violent contact should be avoided;
- any programme in which rape is depicted should be preceded by a warning;
- the combination of violence and sexuality in a way designed to titillate should not be shown.

10d. In news, current affairs and factual programmes, where disturbing or alarming material is often shown to reflect a world in which violence occurs, the material should be justified in the public interest:

- editors and producers must use judgement and discretion in deciding the degree of graphic detail to be included in news programmes when children are likely to be watching;
- warnings within news programmes should be used when appropriate;
- when executions and assassinations are shown the coverage should not be explicit, prolonged, or repeated gratuitously.
10e. In sports programmes violent incidents during or surrounding play should not be repeated gratuitously:
   - sports announcers and commentators should avoid making comments which appear to approve of, or glamorise, any dangerous or violent behaviour, on or off the field, that is not in accordance with the rules of the particular sport.

**Standard 11: Liquor**

Broadcasters should observe restrictions on the promotion of liquor appropriate to the programme genre being broadcast. Liquor Promotion should be socially responsible and must not encourage consumption by people who are under the legal age to purchase liquor.

**Definition**

Liquor Promotion comprises:
   - promotion of a liquor product, brand or outlet (‘promotion’);
   - liquor sponsorship of a programme (‘sponsorship’);
   - advocacy of liquor consumption (‘advocacy’).

**Guidelines**

11a. Liquor Promotion must not appear in programmes specifically directed at children.
11b. Broadcasters must ensure that Liquor Promotion does not dominate programmes.
11c. Broadcasters must avoid advocacy of excessive liquor consumption.
11d. Broadcasters are not required to exclude promotion from coverage of an actual event or situation being broadcast where promotion is a normal feature of the event or situation but must take guideline 11b into account.
11e. Sponsorship of a programme must be confined to the brand, name or logo and must not include a sponsor's sales message:
   - when scheduling liquor-sponsored programmes, broadcasters will also take into account the requirements of principle 4.4 and Guideline 4(c) of the Advertising Standards Authority's Code for Advertising Liquor (which requires broadcasters to take care to avoid the impression that liquor promotion is dominating the viewing period);
   - promos for a liquor-sponsored programme shall clearly and primarily promote the programme. The sponsor and sponsorship may be featured only in a
subordinate manner, be confined to the brand, name or logo and must not include a sponsor's sales message.

Note: To assist programme makers, sports organisations and sponsors, television broadcasters have published guidelines for restrictions on liquor promotion in the coverage of sports events.
APPENDIX 2

Free-to-air programme classifications (BSA, n.d.)

**Definition**
A child means a boy or girl under the age of 14 years (Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989).

**G – General**
Programmes which exclude material likely to be unsuitable for children. Programmes may not necessarily be designed for child viewers but should not contain material likely to alarm or distress them.

G programmes may be screened at any time.

**PGR – Parental Guidance Recommended**
Programmes containing material more suited for mature audiences but not necessarily unsuitable for child viewers when subject to the guidance of a parent or an adult.

PGR programmes may be screened between 9am and 4pm, and after 7pm until 6am.

**AO – Adults Only**
Programmes containing adult themes and directed primarily at mature audiences.
AO programmes may be screened between midday and 3pm on weekdays (except during school and public holidays as designated by the Ministry of Education) and after 8.30pm until 5am.

**AO-9.30pm – Adults Only 9.30pm–5am**

Programmes containing stronger material or special elements which fall outside the AO classification. These programmes may contain a greater degree of sexual activity, potentially offensive language, realistic violence, sexual violence, or horrific encounters.

**Unclassified Programming**

1. News and Current Affairs programmes, which may be scheduled at any time and may, on occasion, pre-empt other scheduled broadcasts, are not, because of their distinct nature, subject to censorship or to the strictures of the classification system:
   - Producers should be mindful that young people may be among viewers of news and current affairs programmes during morning, daytime and early evening hours and should give consideration to including warnings where appropriate.

2. Sports and Live Programming cannot be classified due to the ‘live’ nature of the broadcast. The broadcaster should take all reasonable steps to ensure that the content of the programme conforms with the underlying timeband in which the programme is broadcast.
APPENDIX 3
Definition of terms used within the literature review

Bedroom culture refers to the tendency of children to access media in the potential privacy of their own media room, or bedroom. This access is a response to the new technologies available and the prevalence of ownership of a second television that is incorporated into the media-rich bedroom (Rutherford & Bittman, 2007). Walters and Zwaga (2001) confirm the existence of bedroom culture in New Zealand homes, though Lealand and Zanker (2008) suggest that media use in New Zealand is not evidenced to be a solitary or isolated activity.

Child, for this review of literature, is a boy or girl at least 5 years of age, but under the age of 14. The term ‘child’ is problematic for this review, in that no universal definition or protocol exists for the use of the word ‘child’ and researchers are not consistent in clearly defining the age range for their research participants (Millwood Hargrave & Livingstone, 2006).

The notion of childhood is quite recent (Walters & Zwaga, 2001) and is a social construction of relatively modern western society, which is often an idealised and romantic one (Howard, 1998). Researchers use the expressions child, children, young people and adolescent to refer to a wide range of chronological and developmental ages to represent anyone from 0 to 18 years, and even up to 25 years (Rutherford & Bittman, 2007). Zanker (2004) is one researcher who has specified the expression ‘child’ for her New Zealand research. Zanker tied the age of a child to between the ages of 5 and 12 years to conform to New Zealand advertising codes. Wright (2009) also provided some definition, but this could obfuscate rather than clarify, “the terms ‘adolescent’, ‘teen’ and ‘teenager’ are used interchangeably to refer to youth approximately 13–18 years of age” (p. 181).

Much of the research conducted in the USA is conducted on adolescents, usually defined by the age-range 12 to 17 years (Collins et al., 2004), but Escobar-Chaves et al. (2005) suggest that adolescence is variously defined between 10 and 24 years. Brown et al. (2002) divide adolescence into early, middle and late adolescence, but within New Zealand research, Schott and Lealand (2010) suggest that the term ‘adolescent’ is little used.

Millwood Hargrave and Livingstone (2006) endeavour to state the age of research subjects, but assume “that ‘children’ generally refers to primary school-age children, and ‘young people’ to secondary school age children, though the latter sometimes includes young adults (i.e. students)” (p. 20). Schott and Lealand (2010) confirm that age-determined stages
of development or socialisation are unstable. The lack of definition of ‘child’ in much of the research and the overlap and blurring of age-related boundaries between both national research cultures and individual research approaches discourage exact age-range comparisons within this literature review and, thereby restrict its ability to satisfy those aspects of the aims and parameters that refer to specified age-ranges. The only research located that uses the age range between 5 and 14 years, is that which has been commissioned by the BSA (BSA, 2008; Jackson et al., 2007; Walters & Zwaga, 2001) and the only research found to particularly focus on 9 to 11 year olds is more restricted to that of the BSA (2008).

Content analysis refers to a method of data analysis for narrative data, such as texts and transcriptions, in which segments of text are systematically categorised such that segments within each category are similar to each other and can be differentiated from segments in other categories (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

Convergence refers primarily to the dissolution of distinctions between media systems and media content, but can equally be applied as technological convergence which refers to the ability to carry and convert media content into other forms. This latter form of convergence has also resulted in industry convergence in which previously separate organisations that produced and transmitted discrete types of media content, are now merging and forming alliances to exploit the effects of technological convergence (Cunningham & Turner, 2002).

Data are numerical and non-numerical symbols that represent properties of objects, events and phenomena. They are gathered according to rules and established practices (Barabba, Pourdehnad & Ackhoff, 2002; Neuman, 2003).

Digital divide describes inequities in access to various electronic media, since ownership of media is not equally distributed (Jackson et al., 2007).

Effect size refers to the magnitude, intensity or practical significance of an obtained result in data analysis (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003).

Exploratory research refers to research in an area where little research has been completed and in which a researcher wants to develop ideas and focused research questions (Creswell, 2003; Neuman, 2003).
Free-to-air refers to television that is broadcast by government and privately owned corporations, and which are made available by terrestrial, satellite or cable systems on a non-subscription basis. There are over 30 national and regional free-to-air television channels in New Zealand. The Sky Television Network, a subscription-based service, carries most of the free-to-air channels for their subscribers, thus expanding the definition of that which comprises ‘free-to-air’ broadcasting in New Zealand.

Idiographic is contrasted with nomothetic and refers to a focus on specifics, uniqueness and particularities, as opposed to generalisation.

Mass media refers to organisations that are structured to create or gather, generate, and disseminate news, information and entertainment through different channels (Viswanath, Flynt Wallington, & Blake, 2009).

Media is the plural of medium, the Latin word for middle. Media therefore act as intermediaries between ourselves as audience and real or imaginary events in the world (Matthewman, 2010).

Media effects are the social, cultural or psychological changes that occur in consumers of media message systems as a result of being exposed to, processing or acting on those messages (Bryant & Zillmann, 2009).

Media text refers to any media product delivered on a media platform to consumers or audiences. They are codified, media-based, units of content, which can be categorised according to type (Kavka, 2010).

Moral panic refers to a stylised form of journalism in which an event or group becomes defined as a danger to societal values in a way which is disproportionate to the actual threat posed (Lemish, 2007). A moral panic follows a clear sequence; the emergence of an identified problem that relates to negative influences on the young, the development of societal concern, amplified by the media and out of all proportion to the actual scale of the problem, and a political reaction to the above (Shuker, Openshaw, & Soler, 1990). Miller and Philo (1999),
however, doubt that the above sequence would frequently operate conclusively, but also observe that the unlikely nature of moral panic should not obviate the influence of media.

*Prime-time* refers to broadcasts between 6.00 p.m. and 10.00 p.m. in New Zealand (Ministry of Social Development, 2007). Prime-time varies considerably for different countries.

*Quantitising* is a term, originally coined by Miles and Huberman (1994), which refers to converting qualitative data into numerical codes.

*Street culture* refers to the historically prevalent tendency of children to play in unsupervised public spaces (Livingstone, 2002).

*Watershed* refers to the time in the evening after which AO (Adults Only) content can be shown on free-to-air television. The time set for the watershed is not the same in all countries referred to in this review.
## APPENDIX 4

### Methods and protocols used to conduct the literature review project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scopus; Web of Science</td>
<td>Scholarly journal articles, some conference papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PsycINFO</td>
<td>Journal articles, some books and book chapters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index New Zealand (INNZ)</td>
<td>NZ journals, magazines and newspapers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAIster</td>
<td>Digital resources from institutions around the World. Very little of interest found and nothing not previously found in above databases. Search functionality is very basic and sophisticated searching is not possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiwi Research Information Service (KRIS)</td>
<td>Research outputs, including theses/dissertations, from NZ universities and polytechnics. Nothing of relevance found.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Full Text</td>
<td>Mainly North American sources, full text of most recent items is available online (click the ‘Go to URL’ link in EndNote Web)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ProQuest Dissertations and Theses UK &amp; Ireland</td>
<td>Nothing of relevance found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google Scholar</td>
<td>Scholarly articles. Search functionality more limited than the databases at top of list.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The search used the algorithm:

\[
\text{(sex* w/5 explicit*) or (sex* w/5 content) or (sex* w/5 message*) or (sex* w/5 theme*) or (sex* w/5 scene*)}
\]

and

\[
\text{television or broadcast*}
\]

and

\[
\text{child* or teen* or adolescen*}
\]
APPENDIX 5

Key references to extend this literature review and contextualise it to New Zealand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/researcher</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Empirical / Theoretical (E/T)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Livingstone &amp; Bovill</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>A substantial multi-method study, employing a nationally representative sample, based in the UK, but involving European comparisons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walters &amp; Zwaga</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Empirical research commissioned by the BSA to inform a review of the free-to-air television code in NZ. Involved a qualitative and sequential quantitative phase which led to conclusions informed by both phases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livingstone</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>A theoretical analysis based on the empirical study by Livingstone and Bovill (1999).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunkel et al.</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>The most recent of four replications of a consistently applied and detailed method for assessing sexual content on USA television, with prime-time over-samples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millwood Hargrave &amp;</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>A review of the evidence relating to the risk of harm or offence from media content which aimed to balance an account of empirical research findings against the critique that they were subject to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livingstone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rutherford &amp; Bittman</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>A review of research literature for ACMA aimed at understanding the long-term effect of all media on children, families and society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackson et al.</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>A review of literature for the BSA of NZ that considers the physical access, selection and ways of using all media, social contexts of media use, and responses to media accessed and used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSA</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>An empirical study, based on the research by Jackson et al. (2007) and intended to update the research by Walters and Zwaga (2001). Involves a face-to-face survey of a nationally representative sample of NZ children between the ages of 5 and 14 years.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nabi &amp; Oliver (Eds.)</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>The Sage handbook of media processes and effects includes contributions from many contemporary USA academics in the field of media research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goode &amp; Zuberi (Eds.)</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Media studies in Aotearoa New Zealand 2 includes contributions from many contemporary NZ academics and practitioners in the field of media studies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 6

References


