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THE RATINGS SHAM II

TV Executives Still Hiding Behind a System That Doesn't Work

A PARENTS TELEVISION COUNCIL® SPECIAL REPORT • APRIL 16, 2007



Because Our Children Are Watching.



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Director of Research

Christopher Gildemeister
Senior Editor

Christopher Laurenzano
Research Assistant

Casey Williams
Content Manager

Aubree Bowling
Senior Entertainment Analyst

Caroline Schulenburg, Josh Shirlen,
Joseph Bozell, Katherine Kuhn and Keith White
Entertainment Analysts

Glen Erickson
Manager of Advertiser Programs

Dan Isett
Director of Corporate & Government Affairs

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Grassroots Communications**

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Robert Shear
Resource Development Manager

Marty Waddell
Eastern Regional Development Representative

Dan Bodwell
Western Regional Development Representative

Tracy Ferrell
Development Assistant

Larry Irvin
Development Associate

Jane Dean
Office & Graphics Admin.

Michelle Curtis, James Maxon, Andrew Bowser,
Mayra Vargas and Gary Coby
Interns

PTC'S HOLLYWOOD HEADQUARTERS
707 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 2075
Los Angeles, CA 90017 • (213) 629-9255

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FOR MEDIA INQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT

Kelly Oliver
CRC Public Relations
(703) 683-5004

THE RATINGS SHAM II

TV Executives Still Hiding Behind a Ratings System That Doesn't Work

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the Parents Television Council's fifth report examining the television ratings system. The TV ratings include guidelines for age-appropriateness (TV-Y, TV-Y7, TV-G, TV-PG, TV-14, and TV-MA) and content descriptors to indicate the presence of specific types of content ("S" for sexual content, "V" for violence, "L" for coarse language, and "D" for suggestive dialogue). This ratings system was voluntarily adopted by the television industry in the mid-'90s under the threat of government regulation due to growing public concerns about TV content.

Since the ratings were introduced, at least half a dozen studies conducted by the Parents Television Council and others have documented persistent problems with the application of the TV ratings. These problems stem from how the ratings were originally conceived and executed, to wit, there are no guidelines dictating how they should be applied and each network rates its own programs. During the same period, PTC studies have reported a dramatic increase in both the frequency and explicitness of sexual content, violence and foul language on prime time broadcast television. Public opinion surveys taken since the adoption of the TV ratings have also documented growing discontent over TV content and unfamiliarity with the ratings and V-Chip.

The TV ratings warrant close scrutiny because the entertainment industry is fighting a multi-million dollar battle in the courts of law and public opinion against the Federal Communications Commission and federal broadcast decency laws. The major broadcast networks have filed suit in federal court to overturn the decency law, arguing that the ratings and V-Chip have rendered the law obsolete. In addition, Hollywood is spending a combined \$550 million on public service announcements to educate consumers and parents about the TV ratings and V-Chip.

Madison Avenue also looks to the TV ratings system for guidance. Many corporate advertisers, particularly those which market or sell family products and services, rely on a program's ratings when deciding whether or not to sponsor that program.

The PTC set out to discover whether the TV ratings are reliably and consistently alerting parents

to potentially objectionable content on prime time broadcast television (which still captures the largest audience of young viewers). The PTC examined all prime time entertainment programming on the six broadcast networks (ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC, CW, and MyNetworkTV) during the November 2006 and February 2007 sweeps periods for a total of 546 hours of programming on 608 individual programs. Sports and news programs were not included in this analysis. Since 99% of the programs were rated either TV-PG (48%) or TV-14 (51%), the analysis focused primarily on quantifying sexual content (verbal and visual), violence, and foul language and the presence (or absence) of corresponding content descriptors.

The PTC found that content descriptors are not being consistently used by *any* of the broadcast networks during prime time viewing hours. **Two-thirds (67%) of the shows reviewed for this analysis containing potentially offensive content lacked one or more of the appropriate content descriptors.**

Other findings include:

- ✓ **54% of shows containing suggestive dialogue lacked the "D" descriptor.**
- ✓ **63% of shows containing sexual content lacked the "S" descriptor.**
- ✓ **42% of shows containing violence lacked the "V" descriptor.**
- ✓ **44% of shows containing foul language lacked the "L" descriptor.**
- ✓ **On ABC, 100% of the TV-14 rated programs lacked one or more descriptors.**
- ✓ **92% of NBC's TV-14 rated programs lacked one or more descriptors.**
- ✓ **On CBS, 73% of the TV-14 rated programs containing sexual content lacked the "S" descriptor.**
- ✓ **None of the programs included in this analysis received a TV-MA rating, meaning all programs were deemed appropriate by the networks to be viewed by a child as young as 14, including (for example) an episode of *C.S.I. Miami* in which a woman died of asphyxiation during an oral rape.**

The networks' premise that the decency laws are outmoded in light of new technologies is entirely false, as this study proves. The ratings system is a sham meant to keep Congress at bay while Hollywood continues to pump more and more of its toxic content into America's homes.

A new Zogby survey indicates that fewer than 15% of consumers are using the V-Chip. One likely reason for this abysmal adoption rate is that parents realize what the networks don't want to admit — that the V-Chip doesn't work.

The V-Chip allows parents to block channels based either on the age-based ratings (and since virtually all programs during prime time are rated either PG or TV-14, blocking programs based on the age ratings would immediately disqualify 50-99% of all prime time broadcast programming) or based on the content descriptors, which are inaccurate two-thirds of the time. The V-Chip can not be relied upon to consistently

block offensive programs because parents can not rely on the ratings to correctly identify problematic content.

Clearly, the TV ratings and the V-Chip are inadequate for protecting children and families from offensive content. Congress and the courts should not be swayed by Hollywood's argument that the existing decency laws are no longer needed because of these technologies. The FCC must continue to vigorously enforce broadcast decency laws, and the American people must continue to hold the networks accountable for how they use the publicly-owned broadcast airwaves. The networks are perpetrating a fraud on the advertising community as well by under-rating programs so as to not scare-off advertisers.

Advertisers, the Congress, the courts, and — most importantly — the American public must not be fooled when the fox once again asks us to trust it to guard the henhouse.

The networks' premise that the decency laws are outmoded in light of new technologies is entirely false, as this study proves. The ratings system is a sham meant to keep Congress at bay while Hollywood continues to pump more and more of its toxic content into America's homes.

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THE RATINGS SHAM II

TV Executives Still Hiding Behind a Ratings System That Doesn't Work

APRIL 16, 2007 • BY KATHERINE KUHN

I. INTRODUCTION

On June 15th 2006 President George W. Bush signed into law the Broadcast Decency Enforcement Act which gave the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) the authority to impose meaningful, punitive fines against broadcasters who violate federal laws barring the airing of indecent or profane material during certain hours of the day. For months before the bill was passed, Hollywood lobbied against the fine increase, insisting that the existing TV ratings and blocking technologies were sufficient to protect children from inappropriate content.

This was hardly new or surprising behavior. Since the 1950s social scientists have studied and documented the harmful effects of exposure to media sex and violence on impressionable children. Every time the entertainment industry comes under fire for producing entertainment products saturated in sex, foul language and violence, industry executives scurry to offer a solution that will stall Congressional intervention. Concerns about sex and profanity in the movies in the mid-'60s prompted the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) to offer up an independent age-based ratings system as the solution, thus appeasing lawmakers without forcing the movie industry to change their product.

Concerns about TV content in the mid '90s led to a series of Congressional hearings and threats of regulation. Rather than submit to government-imposed guidelines, TV executives announced they would voluntarily adopt an age-based ratings system, similar to that employed by the MPAA to rate films, to inform parents about a program's suitability for young viewers.¹ Used in conjunction with the V-Chip, the ratings were meant to help parents block objectionable content from coming into their home. This calculated ploy was dismissed by the late George Gerbner, a leading researcher on the effects of violent

entertainment on children, as "a delaying tactic that's intended to alleviate the pressure from Congress and the American public."²

The industry's self-regulation regime was, as many expected it would be, an utter failure. Content has gotten measurably worse since the introduction of the TV ratings. The TV ratings have emboldened broadcasters to insert more frequent and more graphic sex, violence, and foul language into programs because they can now claim that parents were warned about the content beforehand. Until 2004 (when it was publicly embarrassed by the PTC) NBC refused to even use the content descriptors that would allow a parent to block out objectionable content on that network. The 2004 Super Bowl received only a PG rating, leaving parents unprepared for the Janet Jackson striptease that occurred during the halftime show.

The TV ratings warrant close scrutiny because the entertainment industry is fighting a multi-million dollar battle in the courts of law and public opinion against the FCC and federal broadcast decency laws. The major broadcast networks are now suing in federal court to overturn the decency law, arguing that the ratings and V-Chip have made it obsolete.

Hollywood is spending a combined \$550 million on public service announcements ostensibly designed to educate parents about the V-Chip and TV ratings.

But if the goal was to increase awareness and usage of the V-Chip, then the campaign has failed. Results from a Zogby International poll taken in March 2007 indicate that even though the vast majority (79%) of Americans think there is too much sex, violence, and coarse language on television, most (88%) are still not using the V-Chip to block unwanted content, and only 8% were able to correctly identify the content descriptors, even when provided with the correct answer as part of a multiple choice question.

Even if the V-Chip and TV ratings were universally understood, how useful would they really be?

In the years immediately following the introduction of the ratings system, the PTC issued a series of reports evaluating the effectiveness and accuracy of the new system. Those reports showed that the new ratings were often inaccurate and unreliable. Every broadcast network has had problems with the consistent application of content descriptors.

Are the networks doing any better now? This study, the fifth that the PTC has issued, seeks to discover whether the networks are doing a better job of rating their programs than they did in the late '90s.

-
1. Content descriptors ("D" for sexually suggestive dialogue, "L" for vulgar language, "S" for sexual situations, and "V" for violence) were added after complaints that the age-based ratings were too vague.
 2. Gerbner's cynicism was well founded. Two years earlier, when TV violence was a major topic in Congress, the networks volunteered to use parental advisories. Then, when the furor died down, the networks announced that they had not found any programs violent enough to merit an advisory.

II. THE RATING SYSTEM

There are six categories in the television ratings system. Two designations, TV-Y and TV-Y7, apply only to children's programs, most of which air weekday afternoons, on Saturday mornings, or on youth-oriented cable networks.

The primary ratings used for prime time shows are as follows. (The following definitions come from the FCC's website www.fcc.gov/parents/parent_guide.html.)

TV-G:

"Although this rating does not signify a program designed specifically for children, most parents may let younger children watch this program unattended. It contains little or no violence, no strong language, and little or no sexual dialogue or situations."

TV-PG:

"Many parents may want to watch it with their younger children. The theme itself may call for parental guidance and/or the program contains one or more of the following: moderate violence (V), some sexual situations (S), infrequent coarse language (L), or some suggestive dialogue (D)."

TV-14:

"Parents are strongly urged to exercise greater care in monitoring this program and are cautioned against letting children under the age of 14 watch unattended. This program contains one or more of the following: intense violence (V), intense sexual situations (S), strong coarse language (L), or intensely suggestive dialogue (D)."

The sixth rating is TV-MA, which no program received during our study period. TV-MA designates shows "specifically designed to be viewed by adults and [which] therefore may be unsuitable for children under 17. [They] may contain mature themes, profane language, graphic violence and explicit sexual content." TV-MA is applied almost exclusively to late-night and cable fare.

Within the study period examined by the PTC, one program was unrated, 5 were rated TV-G, 294 were rated TV-PG, and 308 were rated TV-14. None of the programs included in this analysis received a TV-MA rating, meaning all programs were deemed appropriate by the networks to be viewed by a child as young as 14.

III. Study Parameters and Methodology

The PTC examined all prime time³ entertainment programming on the six broadcast networks (ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC, CW, and MyNetworkTV) during the November 2006 and February 2007 sweeps periods, for a total of 541 hours of programming on 608 individual programs. Sports and news programs were not included in this analysis.

The suggestive dialogue was separated into two categories: references to a specific sexual act and sexual innuendo. References to a specific act included, but were not limited to: intercourse, bestiality, bodily functions related to a sexual act (e.g. ejaculation, erection, orgasm, etc.), pornography, anatomical references, and other sex-related references.

Language was separated into numerous categories: Curses and Intensives (hell and damn and the like); Offensive Epithets and Racial Slurs; Scatological Language; Sexually Suggestive Language; Vulgar Slang; Censored Language, and Euphemisms for obscenities. The PTC also tracked separately the original "Seven Dirty Words" on which the *FCC v Pacifica* case was based.

Since 99% of the programs were rated either TV-PG (48%) or TV-14 (51%),⁴ the analysis focused primarily on quantifying sexual content (verbal and visual), violence and foul language and the presence (or absence) of corresponding content descriptors.

3. 8:00-11:00 p.m. ET Monday-Saturday, 7:00-11:00 p.m. ET Sunday

4. None of the analyzed programs were rated TV-MA. The TV-MA rating indicates that a program should not be viewed by a child under the age of 18.

IV. Overview of Major Findings

- Two-thirds (67%) of the shows reviewed for this analysis containing potentially offensive content lacked one or more of the appropriate content descriptors.
- 54% of shows containing suggestive dialogue lacked the “D” descriptor.
- 63% of shows containing sexual content lacked the “S” descriptor.
- 42% of shows containing violence lacked the “V” descriptor.
- 44% of shows containing foul language lacked the “L” descriptor.
- 47% of shows lacking the “L” descriptor used one or more of the original “Seven Dirty Words,” on which the *FCC v. Pacifica* case was based.
- 40% of all TV-G shows examined were lacking one or more descriptor.
- 59% of all TV-PG shows examined were lacking one or more descriptor.
- 79% of all TV-14 shows lacked one or more descriptor.

ABC

- Of the 63 TV-PG shows, 73% were missing the necessary content descriptors.
- The single not-rated (NR) show had content that would have warranted the “D,” “V,” and “L” descriptor.
- 100% of the 31 TV-14 shows lacked one or more of the necessary descriptors.
- 30% of the TV-PG shows and 58% of the TV-14 shows with suggestive dialogue lacked the “D” descriptor.
- 32% of TV-PG-rated shows contained sexual behavior but lacked the “S” descriptor and 65% of TV-14 rated shows contained sexual behavior but lacked the “S” descriptor.
- 26% of TV-PG shows contained violent content but lacked the “V” descriptor, 48% of TV-14 rated shows had violent content but lacked the “V” descriptor.
- 24% of TV-PG shows had foul language but lacked the “L” descriptor, 87% of TV-14-rated shows had foul language but lacked the “L” descriptor.

CBS

- Of the 89 TV-PG rated shows, 54% lacked one or more of the necessary content descriptors.
- Of the 53 TV-14 rated shows 83% lacked one or more of the necessary content descriptors.
- Of the 22 TV-14 rated shows with sexual behavior, 73% lacked the “S” descriptor.
- 55% of the TV-14 rated shows lacked the “L” descriptor.

Fox

- 70% of the TV-PG shows lacked one or more necessary content descriptors.
- 59% of the TV-14 shows lacked one or more necessary content descriptors.

NBC

- 92% of TV-14 shows lacked one or more content descriptors. 55% lacked the necessary “V” descriptor, and 70% lacked the necessary “L” descriptor.
- Of the 59 TV-14 shows that lacked the “L” descriptor, “son of a bitch” was used in 23 shows once or more.
- One episode of *Friday Night Lights* had 14 instances of profanity but no “L” descriptor. The following week’s episode was rated TV-PG L, but contained only 9 instances of profanity.
- One episode of *Medium* had ten instances of profanity and no “L” descriptor. Two weeks before, an episode of the same program had three instances of profanity and was rated TV-14 L.

CW

- 89% of the TV-14 shows lacked one or more necessary descriptors.
- Of the 19 TV-14 shows with sexual content, 53% lacked the “S” descriptor.
- 42% of the TV-PG shows with foul language lacked the “L” descriptor.
- On the CW, one of the five TV-G rated shows contained the word “ass,” which would warrant at least a TV-PG if not a TV-PG with the “L” descriptor.

MyNetworkTV

- MyNetworkTV does by far the best job in implementing content descriptors, with the exception of the “D” descriptor. 46% of the TV-14 shows lack the “D” descriptor, 14% lack the “S” descriptor, 1% lack the “V” descriptor, and 8% lack the “L” descriptor.

V. Network-by-Network Analysis and Examples

ABC

Totals: 94 hours, 95 shows

TV-G: 0

TV-PG: 63 shows

LANGUAGE

42 shows with obscenities
16 (38%) without "L" descriptor
1 with "L" descriptor but no foul language

VIOLENCE

29 shows with violence
22 (76%) without "V" descriptor
1 with "V" descriptor but no violence

SEX

31 shows with sexual behavior
26 (84%) without "S" descriptor
0 with "S" descriptor but no sex

DIALOGUE

33 shows with suggestive dialogue
15 (45%) without "D" descriptor
5 with "D" descriptor but no suggestive dialogue

TV-14: 31 shows

LANGUAGE

30 shows with obscenities
27 (90%) without "L" descriptor
0 with "L" descriptor but no obscenities

VIOLENCE

27 shows with violence
15 (56%) without "V" descriptor
0 with "V" descriptor but no violence

SEX

25 shows with sexual behavior
20 (80%) without "S" descriptor
0 with "S" descriptor but no sexual behavior

DIALOGUE

25 shows with suggestive dialogue
18 (72%) without "D" descriptor
0 with "D" descriptor but no suggestive dialogue

NR: 1 show

1 show with obscenities, 1 without "L"
1 show with violence, 1 without "V"
0 shows with sexual behavior
1 show with suggestive dialogue, 1 without "D"

BY HOUR:

7:00.....G: 0 PG: 5..... 14: 0..... NR: 1
8:00.....G: 0 PG: 33 14: 1..... NR: 0
9:00.....G: 0 PG: 11 14: 18 NR: 0
10:00.....G: 0 PG: 14 14: 12 NR: 0

MISSING DESCRIPTORS

DIALOGUE

Grey's Anatomy (TV-14) 9:00 p.m. ET

Nancy: "So tell me about this slutty girl. Fine, slutty intern."

Derek: "It was the slutty part that I had a problem with."

Later in the conversation:

Nancy: "Oh come on, everybody sleeps with Mark. It's practically a rite of passage."

Nancy is describing how sleeping with Derek's best friend is something that every woman does.

There were eight other instances of sexual dialogue that would warrant a "D" descriptor.

SEX

What About Brian? (TV-PG DL) 10:00 p.m. ET

David, Jimmy, Adam, and Brian are at a strip club. There are scantily clad strippers dancing suggestively on stage. The song in the background is as follows: "Can I get freaky freaky with you? Can I get freaky freaky with you? Hell yeah."

While the episode was correctly labeled with a "D" and "L," it should have also received an "S" for the sexual content.

VIOLENCE*Supernanny* (TV-PG) 9:00 p.m. ET

Combined, four episodes of *Supernanny* had 47 scenes of violence with 104 incidents of violence within those scenes. Those scenes depict children misbehaving and undermining their parents by hitting, punching, biting, and kicking their siblings and parents. Although mild, this show should carry a "V" descriptor.

FOUL LANGUAGE*America's Funniest Home Videos* (TV-PG) 7:00 p.m. ET

A clip sent in by a viewer depicts a man stripping on a chair in front of some women. The man shows his behind to the women which is blurred out. The host narrates the scene:

Host: "This is a union jack [pause] ass."

CBS**Totals: 124 hours, 142 shows****TV-G:** 0**TV-PG:** 89 shows**LANGUAGE**

71 shows with obscenities
14 (20%) without "L" descriptor
9 with "L" descriptor but no obscenities

VIOLENCE

49 shows with violence
20 (41%) without "V" descriptor
0 with "V" descriptor but no violence

SEX

26 shows with sexual behavior
23 (88%) without "S" descriptor
1 with "S" descriptor but no sexual behavior

DIALOGUE

42 shows with suggestive dialogue
16 (38%) without "D" descriptor
4 with "D" descriptor but no suggestive dialogue

TV-14: 53 shows**LANGUAGE**

47 shows with obscenities
29 (62%) without "L" descriptor
1 with "L" descriptor but no obscenities

VIOLENCE

45 shows with violence
9 (20%) without "V" descriptor
1 with "V" descriptor but no violence

SEX

22 shows with sexual behavior
16 (73%) without "S" descriptor
0 with "S" descriptor but no sexual behavior

DIALOGUE

28 shows with suggestive dialogue
16 (57%) without "D" descriptor
1 with "D" descriptor but no suggestive dialogue

BY HOUR:

8:00G: 0 PG: 48 14: 3

9:00G: 0 PG: 30 14: 23

10:00G: 0 PG: 11 14: 27

MISSING DESCRIPTORS**DIALOGUE***How I Met Your Mother* (TV-14) 8:00 p.m. ET

Ted complains that his girlfriend is too private and never tells him anything.

Barney says to Ted: "Fine. You want to know what Robin's secret is?"

Ted: "You know?"

Barney: "Of course I know. She couldn't look at us, her face got flushed. That's shame, my friend. Our friend Robin used to do porn...wait for it...ography."

Ted: "Yeah we didn't have to wait for that. And it's ridiculous."

Lily: "I don't know, he could be right. She does have those fake orgasm noises down."

Ted: "Hey!"

Lily: "What? The walls are thin."

Here the three friends are talking about Robin's apparent pornographic past. There are numerous sexual references within this scene to pornography and to sex itself. This episode had 11 instances of sexual dialogue with no "D" descriptor.

VIOLENCE*NCIS* (TV-PG DL) 8:00 p.m. ET

A woman is found nude covered only by a bedsheet. She is dead and has strangulation marks on her neck.

This episode had seven scenes showing corpses with some scenes showing how the people died. The episode received "D" and "L" descriptors but no "V."

The following episode of *NCIS* was rated TV-PG L but should have also received a "V."

Woman: "I was just using Tate to get even for this bitch's blog!"

In a flashback, we see a man being stabbed by a security guard.

SEX, LANGUAGE, VIOLENCE*Criminal Minds* (TV-14) 9:00 p.m. ET

In this episode, the killer lures her victim into her apartment using a variety of sexual gestures. This episode should have an "S" descriptor. The language and the violence that accompanies the scenes warrant "L" and "V" descriptors.

The killer lures an unsuspecting man to her apartment. The victim is under the impression that she is going to have sex with him. The scene opens with the killer passionately kissing her victim. Once they are in the killer's apartment, she ties him up in bed. She then straddles him with a knife in hand and slashes his chest. The man begins to bleed.

Man: "What the hell?!"

Later in the scene:

The killer is in bed with her victim. He is still tied up and now is covered in blood from where she cut him.

Man: "You crazy bitch."

The FBI team then enters and points guns at the woman.

Fox

Totals: 84.5 hours, 103 shows

TV-G: 0

TV-PG: 54 shows

LANGUAGE

39 shows with obscenities
13 (33%) without "L" descriptor
2 with "L" descriptor but no obscene language

VIOLENCE

28 shows with violence
14 (50%) without "V" descriptor
2 with "V" descriptor but no violence

SEX

24 shows with sexual behavior
17 (71%) without "S" descriptor
1 with "S" descriptor but no sexual behavior

DIALOGUE

27 shows with suggestive dialogue
14 (52%) without "D" descriptor
0 with "D" descriptor but no suggestive dialogue

TV-14: 49 shows

LANGUAGE

45 shows with obscenities
9 (20%) without "L" descriptor
1 with "L" descriptor but no obscene language

VIOLENCE

42 shows with violence
11 (26%) with "V" descriptor
0 with "V" descriptor but no violence

SEX

25 shows with sexual behavior
14 (56%) without "S" descriptor
0 with "S" descriptor but no sexual behavior

DIALOGUE

30 shows with suggestive dialogue
14 (47%) without "D" descriptor
6 with "D" descriptor but no suggestive dialogue

BY HOUR:

8:00.....G: 0PG: 3214: 25

9:00.....G: 0PG: 2214: 24

MISSING DESCRIPTORS

DIALOGUE

The O.C. (TV-PG VL) 9:00 p.m. ET

Taylor: "I'm afraid of his sensual powers. Ryan, the man is a sexual Jedi. Whatever he asks you to do, you do it. It doesn't matter how depraved..."

Ryan: "Ok, some people are trying to eat here, including me..."

SEX, DIALOGUE

America's Most Wanted (TV-PG V) 9:00 p.m. ET

The host explains how children in Cambodia are being used as sex slaves. There are girls shown dancing suggestively. The host talks about how a man trains the slaves for sex when his wife or girlfriend does not want to have sex with him.

American Dad (TV-14 L) 9:30 p.m. ET

Steve's grandfather tells him that every time Steve interrupts him while he's talking, Steve's penis is going to get smaller.

Grandfather: "For every time you interrupt, your penis is getting shorter."

Later in the episode:

Steve's friend: "I can't believe I'm giving you away on your wedding day...Oh seems like just yesterday you popped out of that box and I was planning to have sex with you... sunrise... sunset..."

As this episode has sexually charged dialogue in several scenes, the show should have received a "D" in addition to the "L" descriptor it was given.

VIOLENCE

Family Guy (TV-14 DL) 9:00 p.m. ET

A scene shows two men fighting in the park. One man gets slapped and falls to the ground. The aggressor then continues to hit the fallen man until blood begins to drip from his nose.

In another scene from the same episode, The "Cheetoh's Cheetah" snorts a line of cheese powder

off a glass coffee table. He then smashes his hand into the table. He holds his hand up and there are shards of glass in it. Blood drips onto the floor.

This episode contained multiple scenes of violence, which in most cases resulted in physical harm. This episode should have been given the "V" descriptor.

LANGUAGE

24 (TV-14 V) 9:00 p.m. ET

Jack: "Take out the syringe! Do it! Now! Son of a bitch! You son of a bitch! Do you want to die?"

NBC

Totals: 109 hours, 119 shows

TV-G: 0

TV-PG: 35

LANGUAGE

9 shows with obscene language
4 (44%) without "L" descriptor
0 with "L" descriptor but no obscene language

VIOLENCE

3 shows with violence
3 (100%) without "V" descriptor
0 with "V" descriptor but no violence

SEX

3 shows with sexual behavior
3 (100%) without "S" descriptor
0 with "S" descriptor but no sexual behavior

DIALOGUE

7 shows with suggestive dialogue
6 (86%) without "D" descriptor
0 with "D" descriptor but no suggestive dialogue

TV-14: 84

LANGUAGE

80 shows with obscene language
59 (74%) without "L" descriptor
0 with "L" descriptor but no obscene language

VIOLENCE

69 shows with violence
46 (67%) without "V" descriptor
0 with "V" descriptor but no violence

SEX

44 shows with sexual behavior
26 (59%) without "S" descriptor
0 with "S" descriptor but no sexual behavior

DIALOGUE

49 shows with suggestive dialogue
27 (55%) without "D" descriptor
6 with "D" descriptor but no suggestive dialogue

BY HOUR:

8:00.....G: 0 PG: 27 14: 16

9:00.....G: 0 PG: 8..... 14: 32

10:00.....G: 0 PG: 0..... 14: 36

MISSING DESCRIPTORS**LANGUAGE***Friday Night Lights* (TV-PG) 8:00 p.m. ET**Assistant Coach: "People are a bunch of damn PC sons of bitches trying to get my damn job."****Coach: "I'm afraid it's not just a bunch of sons of bitches."**

Later in the conversation:

Coach: "What I'm telling you is that it's not too damn smart to be making generalizations."

This episode of *Friday Night Lights* had 14 instances of profanity and no "L" descriptor. The following week's episode was rated TV-PG L and had 9 instances of profanity.

Medium (TV-14 V) 10:00 p.m. ET**Girl: "I wish they would just catch the son of a bitch already. You're damn right it's scary."**

This episode had ten instances of profanity and no "L" descriptor. Two weeks earlier, the 2/14/2007 episode had three instances of profanity and was rated TV-14 L.

DIALOGUE*Scrubs* (TV-14) 9:00 p.m. ET**Dr. Cox: "You have a penis, or that's what I think it is."****JD: "It's a penis."**

No "D" descriptor.

SEX, DIALOGUE, LANGUAGE*Scrubs* (TV-14)

Elliot and her boyfriend participate in a kinky sex game where each one gets into a cardboard box. They make noises as if they are experiencing an orgasm and then emerge from their respective boxes. Elliot is shown in lingerie.

In another scene:

Elliot: "Living with a guy before marriage makes me feel too whorey."**Nurse: "You can live in separate states, but if you're doing the nasty before you get married, your ass is going to burn."**

Clearly this episode, which aired in the 9:00 hour, should have been given "S," "D," and "L" descriptors. The show had 11 instances of profanity, 11 instances of sexual dialogue, and one instance of sex.

VIOLENCE*Las Vegas* (TV-14 SDL) 9:00 p.m. ET**Sam: "I'm going to give you one more chance and then I'm going to have to kick your ass."**

Sam grabs a woman by the neck and then slams her head into the back of a car seat repeatedly.

Due to the violent nature of this scene, there should have been a "V" descriptor. There were several other scenes in this episode where Sam was attempting to collect money and used violence to get her point across.

CW**Totals: 61.5 hours, 76 shows****TV-G: 5****LANGUAGE**

1 show with obscene language
1 (100%) without "L" descriptor

VIOLENCE

0 shows with violence
0 without "V" descriptor

SEX

0 shows with sexual behavior
0 without "S" descriptor

DIALOGUE

1 show with suggestive dialogue
1 (100%) without "D" descriptor

TV-PG: 52**LANGUAGE**

44 shows with obscene language
22 (50%) without "L" descriptor
0 with "L" descriptor but no obscene language

VIOLENCE

19 shows with violence
7 (37%) without "V" descriptor
0 with "V" descriptor but no violence

SEX

13 shows with sexual behavior
10 (77%) without "S" descriptor
0 with "S" but no sexual behavior

DIALOGUE

21 shows with suggestive dialogue
8 (38%) without "D" descriptor
5 with "D" descriptor but no suggestive dialogue

TV-14: 19**LANGUAGE**

18 shows with obscene language
2 (11%) without "L" descriptor
1 with "L" descriptor but no obscene language

VIOLENCE

13 shows with violence
7 (54%) without "V" descriptor
0 with "V" descriptor but no violence

SEX

17 shows with sexual behavior
10 (59%) without "S" descriptor
0 with "S" descriptor but no sexual behavior

DIALOGUE

15 shows with suggestive dialogue
4 (27%) without "D" descriptor
1 with "D" descriptor but no suggestive dialogue

BY HOUR:

7:00.....G: 0 PG: 4..... 14: 0
8:00.....G: 5 PG: 31 14: 4
9:00.....G: 0 PG: 17 14: 15

MISSING DESCRIPTORS**LANGUAGE**

7th Heaven (TV-G) 8:00 p.m.ET

Annie: "Oops, my ass."

While *7th Heaven* almost always has the appropriate descriptors, this episode should have received a TV-PG rating with the "L" descriptor. If the TV rating guidelines outlined at the beginning of the report were followed, no TV-G show would have any strong language at all.

VIOLENCE

Everybody Hates Chris (TV-PG) 8:00 p.m. ET

Caruso is punching a boy on the playground while his friends hold the boy down. Caruso asks Chris if he would like to hit the kid, too. Chris declines.

Later in the episode:

Caruso and his gang beat up Chris at school. While this may be comic violence, it should be given the "V" descriptor based on the fact that this bullying happens several times in the episode.

SEX

The Game (TV-14) 9:30 p.m. ET

Kelly pole dances in front of Melanie and Tasha, showing them how to "please their man."

Tasha: "I'm not gay, but damn!"

Later in the show:

Melanie takes off her robe when she hears Derwin coming down the hall. She stands completely naked at a pole wearing high heels and dances. She is shown only from her shoulders up, implying that she is nude.

Though this is a TV-14 show, because the theme of stripping and showing the act of stripping is prominent in this episode the "S" descriptor should have been applied.

Everybody Hates Chris (TV-PG V) 8:00 p.m. ET

Two men are shown in a strip club watching a girl on a pole dancing suggestively. She is scantily clad, wearing a short skirt, tight sweater, and stockings.

This scene clearly illustrates strong sexual behavior that warrants the "S" descriptor.

My Network TV

Totals: 73 hours, 73 shows

TV-G: 0

TV-PG: 1

LANGUAGE

1 show with obscene language
 1 (100%) without "L" descriptor
 0 with "L" descriptor but no obscene language

VIOLENCE

1 show with violence
 0 without "V" descriptor
 0 with "V" descriptor but no violence

SEX

1 show with sexual behavior
 0 without "S" descriptor
 0 with "S" descriptor but no sexual behavior

DIALOGUE

1 show with suggestive dialogue
 1 (100%) without "D" descriptor
 0 with "D" descriptor but no suggestive dialogue

TV-14: 72

LANGUAGE

64 shows with obscene language
 6 (9%) without "L" descriptor
 2 with "L" descriptor but no obscene language

VIOLENCE

60 shows with violence
 1 (2%) without "V" descriptor
 12 with "V" descriptor but no violence

SEX

41 shows with sexual behavior
 10 (24%) without "S" descriptor
 13 with "S" descriptor but no sexual behavior

DIALOGUE

33 shows with suggestive dialogue
 33 (100%) without "D" descriptor
 0 with "D" descriptor but no suggestive dialogue

BY HOUR:

8:00 G: 0 PG: 0 14: 37
 9:00 G: 0 PG: 1 14: 35

MISSING DESCRIPTORS

DIALOGUE

Watch Over Me (TV-14 SV) at the 9:00 hour

Caitlin and Michael are in bed together. Michael straddles Caitlin while kissing her. He asks her, "...that [secret affair] doesn't turn you on?"

The rest of the episode centers around the characters' sexual affairs. Michael is having an affair with Caitlin; Jack and Julia are having an affair while Jack is engaged to Natalie.

This episode, for its focus on the sexual affairs warrants a "D" descriptor.

VI. Conclusion

After the Janet Jackson Super Bowl debacle in 2004, executives from the major broadcast networks were called before Congress to outline what steps they would take to prevent such occurrences from happening in the future. According to Broadcasting & Cable, "NBC said the FCC should review whether it should be enforcing any anti-indecency rules nowadays given that broadcast viewers have the option of using the V-Chip to block channels they don't want coming into their homes."

The networks' premise that the decency laws are outmoded in light of new technologies is entirely false, as this study proves. The ratings system is a sham meant to keep Congress at bay while Hollywood continues to pump more and more of its toxic content into America's homes.

A new Zogby survey indicates that fewer than 15% of consumers are using the V-Chip, probably because they realize what the networks don't want to admit – that the V-Chip doesn't work.

The V-Chip allows parents to block channels based either on the age-based ratings (and since 99% of all programs during prime time are rated either PG or TV-14, blocking programs based on the age ratings would immediately disqualify 50-99% of all prime time broadcast programming), or on the content descriptors, which are inaccurate two-thirds of the time. The V-Chip cannot be relied upon to consistently block offensive programs because parents can not rely on the ratings to correctly identify problematic content.

As a practical, workable, long-term solution, the ratings system – and by extension, the V-Chip – falls far short of the mark. What most people don't realize is that there is no independent body administering the ratings, monitoring their use, or ensuring accuracy and consistency in their application; there are no rules governing the ratings' use; they are not subject to any kind of testing to ensure their accuracy; and the networks are not penalized for failing to use them

properly. The ratings are administered by individual producers or programming executives. Which is why, ultimately, the television ratings and the V-Chip can't work. If it was just a matter of making a few mistakes, they wouldn't all skew in one direction – but they are.

There is also an element of self-interest at play in allowing the networks to rate their own programs. Networks are financially motivated to under-rate their programs because a more restrictive rating could scare off advertisers. Martha Kleder of Concerned Women for America observed, "When the TV ratings system was first introduced, decency advocates warned that allowing networks to self-rate their programming posed a conflict of interest. The highest authority the networks answer to is the advertiser, and advertisers don't want to pay for ads on programs that might be blocked from a sizeable portion of the audience. This fact alone taints the network's objectivity when rating its own shows."

Clearly, the TV ratings and the V-Chip are inadequate for protecting children and families from offensive content. Congress and the courts should not be swayed by Hollywood's argument that the existing decency laws are no longer needed because of these technologies. The FCC must continue to vigorously enforce broadcast decency laws, and the American people must continue to hold the networks accountable for how they use the publicly owned broadcast airwaves.

The entertainment industry hypocritically insists on the need for greater parental responsibility. Indeed, they are spending \$550 million on an advertising campaign lecturing the public on how to be responsible with the sewage they are pumping into our homes. Parents don't need any more lectures from Hollywood. Hollywood needs to clean up its act. Consumers and Congress should not be fooled when the fox once again asks us to trust it to guard the henhouse.

ABOUT THE PTC

The Parents Television Council is the nation's most influential advocacy organization protecting children against entertainment sex, violence, and profanity. Founded in 1995 to stem the dramatic rise in indecent programming, the PTC today has become one of the strongest watchdog organizations of the entertainment industry.

The PTC accomplishes its mission via two primary mechanisms: (1) by educating families so they can be more informed consumers of media; and (2) by motivating activism to reduce the amount and the degree of harmful and offensive content.

Through its comprehensive database of network prime time programming, the PTC makes available to sponsors and viewers an exhaustive list of network television shows that are considered socially responsible; that are uplifting rather than denigrating; that display positive role models; and are devoid of blatant sex, graphic violence, and profanity. With its powerful national coalition of more than 1.1 million members, national and local advertisers hear the PTC voice when they sponsor programs with harmful or offensive content. In many instances advertisers are unaware of the show's content and voluntarily pull their sponsorship of these negative messages.

The PTC works with the Hollywood creative community to encourage the production of programs that are appropriate for a family audience. When necessary, the PTC targets specific programs that contain egregious levels of sex, violence, and profanity by encouraging its members to contact the producers, network executives, and sponsors. It is a formula that has resulted in numerous shows being pulled off the air or rescheduled to a later time slot.

The PTC awards its Seal of Approval to producers, networks, and advertisers responsible for creating, broadcasting, and sponsoring programs with positive messages and that are free of strong sexual, violent, and profane material. The Seal is a highly sought-after award with strong economic benefits accruing to the honoree.

The Parents Television Council works closely with elected and appointed government officials to ensure enforcement of federal broadcast decency laws.

The PTC produces highly respected and objective analytical research on television content. Recent PTC studies have shown that foul language and violence on television has literally doubled in just the past four years. With PTC analysts watching every prime time television show and selected cable programming, the Parents Television Council is the leading authority on television content. Its videotape library chronicles every network prime time program since the organization's inception. It is considered one of the nation's foremost authorities for research and information on television content and advertising.

Yet much of the power of the organization comes from the PTC's ability to mobilize a grassroots outreach. With more than 36 chapters nationwide and growing, the PTC can, at a moment's notice, send a torrent of information to constituents across the country to address and respond to broadcast decency issues. These "feet on the street" carry the PTC message to their community; to local television affiliates; to national and local advertisers; and to local, state and federal officials.

Perhaps the PTC's most important role is to provide viewers with information about current television shows, films, video games, and other entertainment media. The

PTC Family Guide uses a concise system of "red light," "green light," and "yellow light" to rate television shows for foul language, sexual content, and violence. Families need only to log on to www.parentstv.org to secure accurate, unbiased information about film and television content, as well as a list of pertinent information on important media issues.

The Parents Television Council does not believe in censorship. It strongly advocates free speech and free expression. What it does desire is a choice for families who do not want their children exposed to blatant sex, profuse violence or profanity. Adults should not be denied the right to consume any lawful media, but a balance must be struck to consider the public interest of protecting children from harmful content. Therefore the PTC advocates careful consideration of time, place and manner of adult-oriented content.

Entertainment Tracking System: State-of-the Art Television Monitoring System

The PTC's ability to scientifically track network and selected cable programs for sex, violence, and profanity is directly attributable to its state-of-the-art monitoring system, ETS. Conceived and designed by the PTC, ETS, or Entertainment Tracking System, allows the Parents Television Council to monitor every instance of sex, violence and profanity in network programs, and in many cable shows.

This research allows the organization to produce important studies such *What Are Your Children Watching: Rating the Top 20 Most Popular Prime Time Broadcast TV Shows, Watched by Children Ages 2-17*, *Basic Cable Awash in Raunch*, the groundbreaking *Wolves in Sheep's Clothing: A Content Analysis of Children's Television* and *MTV-Targeting Teens*.

Here's how it works: Every evening PTC VCRs record every prime time series on ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC, PAX, UPN, the WB, as well as original programming on basic cable, including MTV. The following day, the PTC's entertainment analysts don their headsets, turn on their computers, grab the remote controls and set about the arduous work of transcribing every offensive word, every instance of sexual innuendo and violence in detail. These reports are fed into the PTC's custom-designed computer program.

The PTC is able to generate reports from the information collected by ETS. These reports form the basis of the organization's comprehensive studies, e-mail alerts, television recommendations and newsletters. ETS reports are provided to the Federal Communications Commission and other federal regulatory agencies, as they are the most reliable analysis of television programming available. Even the television networks do not have as comprehensive a resource as ETS.

Today the PTC programming archive consists of more than 110,000 hours of programming on nearly 17,000 video tapes. There is no other organization in the world that has this comprehensive library of television content analysis.

The organization will soon transfer all current video taped programming into digital. It is a major undertaking requiring staff time and significant monetary resources. But as the repository of the most comprehensive archive of television programming, it's a responsibility the PTC sees as important. ETS is just one of the powerful tools that the PTC uses to affect positive change in the quality of television broadcasting.



PARENTS TELEVISION COUNCIL

WEST COAST HEADQUARTERS
707 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 2075
Los Angeles, California 90017
(213) 629-9255

EAST COAST OFFICE
325 South Patrick Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
(703) 684-1699

www.ParentsTV.org

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The Parents Television Council is the nation's most influential advocacy organization protecting children against sex, violence, and profanity on television and in other media because of their documented and long-term harmful effects. Founded in 1995 to stem the dramatic rise in indecent programming, the PTC today has become one of the strongest watchdog organizations in the entertainment industry.

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