

**TV  
PG**

**TV  
Y7  
FV**

**TV  
PG  
DS**

**TV  
14  
V**

**TV  
MA**

# THE RATINGS SHAM

TV Executives Hiding Behind a System That Doesn't Work

A PARENTS TELEVISION COUNCIL® SPECIAL REPORT • APRIL 2005



Because Our Children Are Watching.



## PARENTS TELEVISION COUNCIL

**L. Brent Bozell III**  
Founder and President

**Tim Winter**  
Executive Director

**Mark Barnes**  
Senior Consultant

**Melissa Caldwell**  
Director of Research  
& Publications

**Aubree Bowling,  
Chris Laurenzano,  
Lucia Alzaga,  
Kristine Looney, and  
Karen Hanna**  
Entertainment Analysts

**Casey Williams**  
Research Assistant

**Kristi Labrum**  
Manager of Advertiser Programs

**Christiana Hills**  
Director of Marketing &  
Grassroots Communication

**Gavin McKiernan**  
National Grassroots Director

**Paul Cook**  
Director of Finance & Admin.

**Eric Floreen**  
Director of Development

**Marty Waddell**  
Eastern Regional  
Development Representative

**Dan Bodwell**  
Western Regional  
Development Representative

**Megan Coombes**  
Foundations Relations Manager

**Nonnie Warren**  
Development Associate

**Kimberly McGovern**  
Webmaster

**Jane Dean**  
Office & Graphics Administrator

**Hilary Siegal, Fallyn Smith,  
Kimberly Sielen, Gus Gonzalez,  
Charlie Sandacz, and  
Angela Whitenhill**  
Interns



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Executive Summary.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Background.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The Ratings System.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Study Parameters and Methodology....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>The Results.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Press Release: The ETS.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>About the PTC.....</b>	<b>16</b>

# THE RATINGS SHAM

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

---

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

This is the Parents Television Council's fourth report examining the television ratings system. The others, released in 1997, '98, and '99, when the ratings system was still relatively new, all documented how it was a failure. Nearly nine years after its creation, the TV ratings system is still a mess – and arguably worse than ever. For example, last year's Super Bowl was given a TV-G rating, but even if Janet Jackson's allegedly unplanned breast exposure had not occurred, the other performances during the halftime show would have warranted giving the broadcast at least a TV-PG rating. Even while TV content continues to coarsen, the ratings are often inconsistent and inaccurate, and are of little help to parents trying to make informed and appropriate viewing decisions for their families.

For this study, the PTC examined prime time entertainment programs from the first two weeks of the November 2003, February 2004, and May 2004 sweeps on the seven commercial broadcast networks (ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC, Pax, UPN, and the WB). These weeks traditionally have mostly original programming, which typically means a high level of indecent material as networks attempt to boost ratings. The study period comprised 638 shows, and a total of 528 hours.

The PTC found that every network had problems with the accurate and consistent application of content descriptors (a D, S, L, or V indicating the presence of suggestive dialogue, sexual behavior, foul language, or violence).

### OTHER FINDINGS:

✓ To this day, NBC still does not use content descriptors on its programs. Moreover, 36% of NBC's programs reviewed for this study

received a TV-PG rating, even though many of these shows contained foul language and adult sexual content.

- ✓ Of the 85 PG-rated shows on ABC, 52% were missing necessary content descriptors. 40% of the PG-rated shows containing foul language lacked an L descriptor; 75% of shows containing violence lacked the V descriptor; 60% of the shows containing sexual dialogue lacked the D descriptor; and 92% of the shows containing sexual behavior lacked the S descriptor.
- ✓ 73% of ABC's TV-14-rated shows lacked appropriate content descriptors.
- ✓ CBS fared better than ABC with the content descriptors, but still has plenty of room for improvement. Of the 89 shows given a PG rating, 34% of the shows containing foul language lacked an L descriptor; 44% of the shows containing violence lacked the V descriptor; 57% of the shows containing sexual dialogue lacked the D descriptor; and none of the 19 shows containing sexual behavior featured the S descriptor.
- ✓ 81% of CBS's TV-14-rated shows containing sexual dialogue lacked the D descriptor.
- ✓ On the WB network, of the 49 PG-rated shows containing foul language, 59% lacked an L descriptor. Of the 26 PG-rated shows containing violence, 35% lacked the V descriptor. Of the 50 PG-rated shows with sexual dialogue, 64% lacked the D descriptor.
- ✓ 82% of WB's TV-14-rated shows containing sexual behavior lacked the S descriptor.

- ✓ On Fox, 43% of the shows were missing appropriate content descriptors. 22% of the shows missing sexual content descriptors were in the seven o'clock hour (on Sunday, prime time begins at 7:00 p.m. Eastern) and 33% in the eight o'clock hour.
- ✓ 42% of Fox's PG-rated shows containing foul language lacked the L descriptor; 60% of the PG-rated shows containing violence lacked the V descriptor; 71% of the PG-rated shows containing suggestive dialogue lacked the D descriptor; and 76% of the shows containing sexual behavior lacked the S descriptor.
- ✓ UPN did a good job of identifying foul language. Of the 26 PG-rated shows with foul language, only 3 lacked the L descriptor. With respect to other kinds of content, UPN fared worse. Of the 63% of PG-rated shows containing violence lacked the V descriptor; 67% of the PG shows containing sexual dialogue lacked the D descriptor; and 93% of the PG shows containing sexual behavior lacked the S descriptor.
- ✓ Even the wholesome Pax network has problems with rating its programs appropriately. Because it is owned by NBC, Pax also does not use content descriptors. Nevertheless, 80% of the shows it gave a TV-

G rating deserved a tougher rating and should have been given an L descriptor.

Under fire from Congress and the Federal Communications Commission, one NBC executive said he didn't think the FCC should even be enforcing broadcast decency laws, given that families had the option of using the V-chip to block offensive content.

In essence, the TV ratings are meaningless. The ratings system is a failure and consequently the V-chip, which depends upon reliable ratings to work, also is a failure. It cannot be relied upon to consistently and accurately block offensive programming since parents can't rely on the ratings to identify problematic content.

The FCC must continue to crack down on broadcasters who violate common-sense decency laws. More than that, the networks need to take responsibility for their programs and take steps to reduce the amount of violent and vulgar programming flooding into America's living rooms on a nightly basis, instead of hiding behind a system that doesn't work.

The television industry has not taken its responsibility seriously, and it is perpetrating a fraud on the public with its deliberate inconsistencies and omissions. Industry-wide improvements must be made to the TV ratings before parents can rely on their accuracy and use them appropriately to make viewing choices for their families.

**BECAUSE OUR CHILDREN ARE WATCHING.**

# THE RATINGS SHAM

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

### I. BACKGROUND

In America's culture wars, Janet Jackson's Super Bowl halftime performance was the shot heard 'round the world. Congress already was planning hearings to explore the issue of broadcast indecency, in large part because of the national outrage triggered by the Federal Communications Commission's October 2003 ruling that Bono's use of the "F-word" during the Golden Globes was not indecent, but by exposing her breast during the most-watched TV event of the year to an audience that included millions of children, Jackson set off a powerful chain reaction. Hundreds of thousands of angry parents flooded CBS, the FCC, and Congressional offices with complaints. All of a sudden, curbing broadcast indecency was a number-one priority for everyone from lawmakers on Capitol Hill, to the FCC, to major broadcasters including Viacom and Clear Channel.

Predictably, Hollywood soon started to push back. Last February, representatives from ABC, NBC, and Fox broadcast networks were called to present testimony before the House Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet about the steps they intended to take to reduce the flow of indecent material over the broadcast airwaves. In their prepared statements and during the question-and-answer period that followed, Gail Berman, president of entertainment for Fox; Alex Wallau, the president of ABC; and Alan Wurtzel, president of research and media development for NBC all expressed support for the idea of educating consumers about how to use the TV ratings system and the V-chip to block offensive content. Not one of them discussed taking steps to reduce the volume of offensive material on their networks.

"ABC believes strongly that we have a responsibility to enable our viewers to make informed choices about the programs they watch and those their children watch," said ABC's Wallau. "The V-chip can play a critical role in these choices."

The networks, it seems, are all about empowerment. But whatever happened to responsibility? Statements from some network executives prove that they have no intention of curbing indecent material on their networks; they never did. 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 and that stations must now compete with raunchier, much less regulated pay-TV programming."

In NBC's view (a view that no doubt is shared by many broadcast and basic cable networks) the V-chip exempts the networks from any responsibility or restraint with regard to program content. This is a very puzzling position indeed, considering NBC and NBC-owned cable channels have steadfastly refused to adopt the content descriptors that trigger the V-chip that might allow a parent to block out the offending material.

The broadcast industry is hiding behind a system that doesn't work, rather than taking the necessary steps to reduce the amount of violent and vulgar programming flooding into America's living rooms on a nightly basis.



### II. INTRODUCTION

On February 29, 1996, TV executives announced they would rate entertainment programming so as to inform parents about its suitability for young viewers. The announcement was spurred not only by public demand for parental-guidance ratings, but also by the possibility that the federal government might impose a system if the industry didn't. Under those circumstances, the television industry chose to regulate itself by adopting a voluntary ratings system.

Almost ten months later, on December 19, a ratings system was unveiled. Despite widespread public support — 80 percent in one poll — for guidelines that would indicate specifically whether a show contained certain types of potentially objectionable content, the industry opted for an age-based system much like that used for theatrical films since the 1960s.

Complaints that this system was far too vague forced the networks to add content descriptors D (for sexually suggestive dialogue), L (vulgar language), S (sexual situations; this rating indicates a behavior or visual aspect), and V (violence).

The TV ratings are meant to work in conjunction with the V-chip — which by federal mandate is

required to be built into all new television sets 13 inches or larger manufactured after July 1, 1999 — to allow parents to block programs from coming into their home based on the ratings.

In the years immediately following the introduction of the ratings system, the PTC issued three reports evaluating the effectiveness and accuracy of the new system. Those early reports showed that the new ratings, which were supposed to assist parents in choosing appropriate shows for their children, were making such a determination more confusing than ever before.

With this study, the PTC set out to discover whether the networks were doing a better job of rating their programs than they did in the late '90s.

.....  
**III. 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 and on Saturday mornings.

The primary ratings used for prime time shows are as follows. (All quotations are from the press release issued by the industry group that devised the ratings system.)

- ☛ **TV-G: General Audience.**  
"Most parents would find this program suitable for all ages. It contains little or no violence, no strong language and little or no sexual dialogue or situations."
- ☛ **TV-PG: Parental Guidance Suggested.**  
"This program may contain some material that some parents would find unsuitable for younger children. [It] may contain infrequent coarse language, limited violence, [and] some suggestive sexual dialogue and situations."
- ☛ **TV-14: Parents Strongly Cautioned.**  
"This program may contain some material that many parents would find unsuitable for children under 14 years of age. [It] may contain sophisticated sexual themes, sexual content, strong language and more intense violence."

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.  
.....

## IV. STUDY PARAMETERS AND METHODOLOGY

For this study, the PTC examined prime time entertainment programs from the first two weeks of the November 2003, February 2004, and May 2004 sweeps on the seven commercial broadcast networks (ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC, Pax, UPN, and the WB). These weeks traditionally have mostly original programming, which typically means a high level of indecent material as networks attempt to boost ratings. The study period comprised 638 shows, and a total of 528 hours of programming.

The PTC set out to evaluate whether the programs were appropriately and consistently labeled with the age-based and content ratings that would trigger the V-chip and thus allow parents to block objectionable content.

Language was separated into two categories, one for milder expletives, such as "ass," "bitch," "bastard," etc., the other for obscenities and bleeped language. The mild profanities, "damn," "hell," and "crap," were not included in this analysis. Sexual content was divided into two categories, dialogue and behavioral acts. Violence was analyzed across three categories: harm depicted, credible threat, and pain.

Though there are four possible ratings for prime time shows, TV-MA was not applied to any programs included in this analysis. For each of the three remaining categories, the PTC broke down their usage per hour and according to which content descriptors were applied. The need for an L was determined by the presence of more than two mild expletives or any obscenities or bleeped foul language. In the same way, a D or S was deemed necessary if there were more than two instances of innuendo or sexual behavior. A V was called for if there were any instances of graphically depicted violence or if harm or pain was depicted more than twice.

Reruns that aired during the study period were included in this analysis using data from the original airdates. Any missing episodes were replaced with the next new episode after the end of the study period.

All of the content examples listed below are from shows that did not carry the appropriate content descriptor for the type of content shown.

## V. RESULTS

### NBC and Pax

**NOTE:** NBC and Pax are listed together because NBC has a controlling interest in Pax.

# NBC

**Totals for NBC: 109 hours, 118 shows**

**TV-G:** 0 shows

**TV-PG:** 42 shows

32 with obscenities, 32 without L  
7 with violence, 7 without V  
36 with sexual innuendo, 36 without D  
11 with sexual behavior, 11 without S

**TV-14:** 76 shows

72 with obscenities, 72 without L  
34 with violence, 34 without V  
65 with sexual innuendo, 65 without D  
28 with sexual behavior, 28 without S

#### BY HOUR

8:00	G:0	PG:21	14:21
9:00	G:0	PG:18	14:20
10:00	G:0	PG:3	14:35

#### CONTENT DESCRIPTORS

Neither NBC or Pax use content descriptors.

- ☛ 38.1% of all NBC shows warrant an L descriptor and 26.7% of those only carry a TV-PG rating.
- ☛ In the area of sexual content 59.3% of all NBC shows need an S or D descriptor and 47.5% are already rated TV-14.

The vast majority of these programs have an overwhelming need for the descriptor, especially since many of NBC's TV-14 shows fall in the eight o'clock hour.

- ☛ Only 10.2% of NBC programs contained the level of visual violence that would warrant a V descriptor and they were all rated TV-14.

## FOUL LANGUAGE

Like so many reality shows, NBC's *The Apprentice* got away with a TV-PG rating despite the torrent of bleeped obscenities.

Heidi to Omarosa: "Why does it take her so long to make a (bleeped 'goddamn') decision. I love Kristie, but she's too 'Oh, okay.' No, let's (bleeped 'fucking') get it done."

## SEX

*Will and Grace* is notorious for its raunchy banter and is often not appropriate for even the 9 o'clock hour, but when NBC moved it into the 8 p.m. hour the need for content descriptors became all the more pressing.

Lyle finds Karen in Grace's office.

**Lyle: "Well, how about dinner?"**

**Karen: "I've got my dinner."**

**Lyle: "Coffee?"**

**Karen: "No, thanks."**

**Lyle: "Raunchy sex in the back of a dirty cab?"**

**Karen: "I don't think so."**

**Lyle: "...so you're not going to get rid of me that easily, Karen. I'm going to stick to you like bangers to mash."**

**Karen: "You're not getting your banger anywhere near my mash."**

The following is from an episode of *Las Vegas* that received a TV-14 rating and aired at 9 p.m. Eastern.

Mary gets the wet T-shirt contest started.

**Mary: "Hose 'em down."**

**Mike: "Make sure you wet all the ladies. We want to be fair and square. Aw, yeah!"**

He begins dancing. Muscle men, smiling broadly, begin spraying the women with water. The women dance seductively and rub their hands all over their bodies, especially their breasts. An old man is shown using binoculars even though he is right at the edge of the stage. Another man takes pictures. The camera gets angles that focus on their butts and cleavage.

The women in the contest continue to get sprayed. They rub up against each other and run their hands over their breasts, pushing them together. Their T-shirts get saturated and as their nipples become visible the

men in the audience go crazy. One blond woman is wearing a low-cut white T-shirt and her breasts are almost completely visible. She bounces up and down.

**Mike: "Aw, yeah, aw, yeah. That can't be a guy."**

The same blond runs her hands down over the crotch of her shorts and her upper arms push her breasts together.

## SEX AND VIOLENCE

The following from *Third Watch* is an example of strong violence and strong sexual content.

Detective Cruz is working undercover as a sex therapist trying to prove that the clinic is really a brothel. A man comes seeking help with performance anxiety.

**Cruz: "And what kind of therapy were you thinking of specifically?"**

**Man: "Um, well, you have a very pretty mouth."**

**Cruz: "Using my pretty mouth will be \$150."**

Another man comes in to get sexual therapy from Cruz. She says that she's surprised that he has trouble getting girls, but he says that he doesn't like white girls.

**Man: "White girls, they're just pale and pasty, like you're having sex with a corpse."**

**Cruz: "Yeah, the exact same thing."**

**Man: "I'd rather be with one of you, or a colored girl, or oriental."**

**Cruz: "'Oriental' is a type of architecture. The word is 'Asian.'"**

He has stripped down to his underwear and she is trying to use the cost diversion that has worked on all of the other men. She has her back to him.

**Cruz: "We haven't even talked about how much this is gonna cost or what you like and how you like it. So why don't we just start with that. Let's talk about what you like. Let's just start there."**

She turns around to see him nearly naked.

**Man: "I'm just trying to pay you a complement."**

**Cruz: "Whoa, papi let's just slow down."**

He punches her hard in the stomach and she falls to the ground. He holds her down by the back of her neck.

**Man: "I say I like you and you act like that? Huh?"**

It later becomes obvious that he raped her.

# Pax

**Totals for Pax: 30 hours, 30 shows**

## TV-G: 9 shows

6 with obscenities, of those 6 without L  
1 with violence, of those 1 without V  
1 with sexual innuendo, of those 1 without D  
0 with sexual behavior, of those 0 without S

## TV-PG: 21 shows

0 with obscenities  
11 with violence, of those 11 without V  
1 with sexual innuendo, of those 1 without D  
0 with sexual behavior

## TV-14: 0 shows

### BY HOUR

<b>7:00</b>	G:5	PG:1	14:0
<b>8:00</b>	G:2	PG:10	14:0
<b>9:00</b>	G:0	PG:6	14:0
<b>10:00</b>	G:2	PG:4	14:0

## CONTENT DESCRIPTORS

Although Pax programming contains virtually no sex and there is rarely a need for the V descriptor, 80% of the TV-G shows airing during the seven o'clock hour needed L descriptors.

## FOUL LANGUAGE

This is an excerpt from an episode of *Candid Camera* that received a TV-G rating and aired in the seven o'clock hour.

Setup: People encounter a change machine that only gives pennies.

**Man:** "What the hell?...what the (bleeped 'fuck') am I gonna do with a hundred pennies?... (bleeped) am I supposed to do with this?..."

**Man:** "What the (bleeped 'fuck') is this?...what the (bleeped 'fuck') am I gonna do with pennies?..."

**Man:** "Oh (bleeped 'shit')..."

**Man:** "You gotta be (bleeped 'shitting') me..."

**Man:** "What the (bleeped 'fuck')..."

**Woman:** "You gotta be (bleeped 'fucking') kidding me, man...(bleeped) pennies..."

**Man:** "What the (bleeped 'fuck') is that? ...Who in their right mind would want a hundred (bleeped 'fucking') pennies?"

**Man:** "Are you (bleeped 'fucking,' bleeped 'shitting') me?"

# ABC

**Totals for ABC: 73.5 hours, 100 shows**

## TV-G: 0 shows

## TV-PG: 85 shows

52 with obscenities, 21 without L  
28 with violence, 21 without V  
80 with sexual innuendo, 48 without D  
37 with sexual behavior, 34 without S

### BY HOUR

#### 7:00 – 4 shows

none of those had content descriptors

#### 8:00 – 42 shows

16 with L, 20 with D, 0 with S, and 3 with V

#### 9:00 – 30 shows

14 with L, 10 with D, 1 with S, and 0 with V

#### 10:00 – 9 shows

5 with L, 2 with D, 2 with S, and 3 with V

## CONTENT DESCRIPTORS

☛ Of the 85 shows rated PG on ABC, 51.8 % were missing necessary content descriptors.

☛ 42.4% of those lacked proper descriptors for sexual content and 38.9% of the unlabeled sexual content was in the 8 o'clock hour.

## TV-14: 15 shows

13 with obscenities, 8 without L  
15 with violence, 7 without V  
14 with sexual innuendo, 11 without D  
7 with sexual behavior, 6 without S

### BY HOUR

#### 7:00 – 0 shows

#### 8:00 – 2 shows

(0 with L, 0 with D, 0 with S, 0, with V)

#### 9:00 – 5 shows

(0 with L, 0 with D, 0 with S, 4 with V)

#### 10:00 – 8 shows

(5 with L, 3 with D, 1 with S, 4 with V)

☛ 73. 3% of ABC's TV-14 shows lacked proper content descriptors and 46.7% of those programs aired during the first two hours of prime time, when children are most likely to be in the viewing audience.

## FOUL LANGUAGE

A TV-PG episode of *America's Funniest Home Videos* which aired at 7:00 ET had five bleeped obscenities and no language descriptor. Sadly, reality shows often seem to be judged less harshly for language simply because they aren't scripted.

## SEX

The following is an example from the PG-rated family sitcom *8 Simple Rules for Dating My Teenage Daughter*. This episode also contained a reference to Rory's use of pornography.

**Rory, a teenage boy, kisses the girl he likes**

**Missy: "Wow, Rory. Where'd you learn to kiss like that?"**

**Rory: "My cousin."**

**Missy: "Your cousin? Ew!" She runs off.**

**Rory: "No, wait! It's not like it seems. My cousin's a guy."**

## Violence

*Threat Matrix* is a fairly typical crime drama located squarely in the 8 o'clock hour. Though it does receive a TV-14 rating, parents who know nothing about the program might be very surprised by the gruesome violence found in a show lacking a V descriptor. In one episode a man has cut off the hand of his victim. He also cuts off a particular finger and later, in a very grisly scene, removes the skin from the severed finger and wraps it around his own to disguise his fingerprint.

# CBS

**Totals for CBS: 113 hours, 118 shows**

### TV-G: 7 shows

- 1 with obscenities, 1 without L
- 1 with violence, 1 without V
- 2 with sexual innuendo, 2 without D
- 2 with sexual behavior, 2 without S

### BY HOUR

**7:00 – 0 shows**

**8:00 – 3 shows** (no descriptors)

**9:00 – 3 shows** (3 with L, no other descriptors)

**10:00 – 1 show** (no descriptors)

### CONTENT DESCRIPTORS

☛ None of the TV-G shows lacked necessary descriptors.

### TV-PG: 89 shows

- 61 with obscenities, 21 without L
- 34 with violence, 15 without V
- 53 with sexual innuendo, 30 without D
- 19 with sexual behavior, 19 without S

### BY HOUR

**7:00 – 1 show**

no descriptors

**8:00 – 34 shows**

16 with L, 9 with D, 0 with S, 2 with V

**9:00 – 36 shows**

22 with L, 11 with D, 0 with S, 8 with V

**10:00 – 18 shows**

10 with L, 6 with D, 0 with S, 7 with V

### CONTENT DESCRIPTORS

☛ 28.1% of the shows rated TV-PG were lacking descriptors. 7.9% of language and 14.6% of the sexual content was without a proper descriptor while only 5.6% of the violent content needed a V.

### TV-14: 22 shows

- 19 with obscenities, 7 without L
- 18 with violence, 7 without V
- 16 with sexual innuendo, 13 without D
- 12 with sexual behavior, 7 without S

**BY HOUR****7:00 – 0 shows****8:00 – 2 shows**

(1 with L, 0 with D, 0 with S, 0 with V)

**9:00 – 9 shows**

(8 with L, 3 with D, 3 with S, 7 with V)

**10:00 – 11 shows**

(4 with L, 1 with D, 2 with S, 4 with V)

**CONTENT DESCRIPTORS**

☛ Nearly 43% of CBS's TV-14-rated shows with sexual content had an S descriptor, but should have received a D descriptor as well.

**FOUL LANGUAGE**

The TV-14 CBS movie *It Must Be Love* contained one scene in which a woman calls her husband an "arrogant prick." There was no L descriptor.

**SEX**

Yes *Dear* airs at eight o'clock, but is often full of inappropriate innuendo such as the conversation below. This PG-rated episode was given an L descriptor, but should also have received a D label.

**Greg tells Jimmy that since Christine feels better due to her exercise regimen, Jimmy is in for "the night of his life."**

**Jimmy: "I can't even think about sex until I find my left testicle."**

**In a later scene Jimmy makes a crude reference to masturbation.**

**Jimmy: "It's like when I was 15 and learned about sex, you can only get so good by yourself."**

**VIOLENCE**

In an episode of *CSI: Miami* (10:00 p.m. ET/PT) Horatio, the lead CSI, hears a whimpering sound and then finds a man under a tarp, impaled on the wrought-iron stakes of a low fence. There is a closeup of the hole in the man's chest and the scene is very graphic and bloody. The episode was rated TV-14, but had no V descriptor.

*Navy NCIS* is another investigative drama that airs at eight o'clock. In an episode that received a TV-PG rating and no V descriptor, there is a scene in which a sniper shoots a Marine recruiter at his desk. Blood spatters all over the blotter and the man pitches forward, dead.

**WB****Totals for WB: 78 hours, 100 shows****TV-G: 8 shows**

1 with obscenities, 1 without L

0 with violence

5 with sexual innuendo, 5 without D

1 with sexual behavior, 1 without S

**BY HOUR****7:00 – 0 shows****8:00 – 8 shows** (no descriptors)**9:00 – 0 shows****CONTENT DESCRIPTORS**

☛ None of the 8 G-rated shows carried content descriptors and 4 of those 8 needed an S or a D while only one needed an L.

**TV-PG: 68 shows**

49 with obscenities, 29 without L

26 with violence, 9 without V

50 with sexual innuendo, 32 without D

10 with sexual behavior, 16 without S

**BY HOUR****7:00 – 5 shows**

(0 with L, 2 with D, 0 with S, 4 with V)

**8:00 – 37 shows**

(10 with L, 9 with D, 1 with S, 10 with V)

**9:00 – 26 shows**

(12 with L, 9 with D, 1 with S, 3 with V)

**CONTENT DESCRIPTORS**

☛ 25% of all the PG-rated shows on WB were mislabeled. 18.9% were eight o'clock shows that should have had an S or a D.

**TV-14: 24 shows**

24 with obscenities, 3 without L

16 with violence, 9 without V

23 with sexual innuendo, 7 without D

17 with sexual behavior, 14 without S

## BY HOUR

1 show at 7:00

(1 with L, 1 with D, 0 with S)

3 shows at 8:00

(3 with L, 2 with D, 0 with S, 1 with V)

20 shows at 9:00

(17 with L, 13 with D, 5 with S, 6 with V)

## CONTENT DESCRIPTORS

☛ 37.5% of the TV-14 shows on WB lacked proper descriptors though 29.2% were in the nine o'clock hour.

## FOUL LANGUAGE

*Steve Harvey's Big Time* is a G-rated variety show that airs at 8:00 p.m. Eastern. This episode had no L descriptors.

Steve Harvey is trying to get a dog to perform a trick.

**Steve: "Stay on his ass...now go on, get his ass."**

## SEX

This TV-14 episode of *One Tree Hill* should have been given a D descriptor for this sexually charged dialogue.

**Brooke: "My parents usually close this place down every year. So if you want, we can go back to my place and start the party early—we have a Jacuzzi."**

**Lucas: "That sounds tempting, but..."**

**Brooke: "We have a naked me in the Jacuzzi."**

**Lucas: "Okay...what if I told you there was someone else?"**

**Brooke: "Normally, I'd suggest a threesome. But I think the person you have in mind is getting back together with her old boyfriend."**

*What I Like About You* aired at 8:30 Eastern and received a TV-PG rating.

Lauren is sick, but she is exaggerating her condition.

**Lauren: "If something should happen to me, I need you to go to my apartment. In my nightstand, in the second drawer, in the very, very back on the way right, under my personal Lauren stationary, there is a long box." [The allusion is to a vibrator.]**

**Valerie: "Oh, God."**

**Lauren: "No...Look, you would be saving my family from a great deal of embarrassment. Also, I'd like to be buried with it."**

## VIOLENCE

An episode of the PG-rated drama *Everwood* contained some graphic medical violence and did not receive a V descriptor.

Andrew is drilling into Daniel Sullivan's skull to relieve some pressure. A closeup shows him inserting a syringe into the wound to remove pooling blood.

# Fox

**Totals for Fox: 88.5 hours, 116 shows**

### TV-G: 11 shows

3 with obscenities, 2 without L

1 with violence, 1 without V

6 with sexual innuendo, 6 without D

2 with sexual behavior, 2 without S

### BY HOUR

**7:00 – 0 shows**

**8:00 – 10 shows** (1 with L)

**9:00 – 1 show** (no descriptors)

### TV-PG: 68 shows

50 with obscenities, 21 without L

30 with violence, 18 without V

51 with sexual innuendo, 36 without D

25 with sexual behavior, 19 without S

### BY HOUR

**7:00 – 11 shows**

6 with L, 1 with D, 0 with S, 0 with V

**8:00 – 31 shows**

17 with L, 9 with D, 3 with S, 12 with V

**9:00 – 26 shows**

12 with L, 7 with D, 4 with S, 7 with V

## CONTENT DESCRIPTORS

☛ 42.7% were missing appropriate descriptors. 22.2% of the shows missing sexual content descriptors were in the seven o'clock hour and 33.3% in the eight o'clock hour.

**TV-14: 47 shows**

32 with obscenities, 12 without L  
 16 with violence, 2 without V  
 24 with sexual innuendo, 7 without D  
 14 with sexual behavior, 10 without S

**BY HOUR****7:00 – 0 shows****8:00 – 19 shows**

13 with L, 14 with D, 2 with S, 8 with V

**9:00 – 18 shows**

10 with L, 8 with D, 4 with S, 11 with V

**CONTENT DESCRIPTORS**

☛ More than thirteen percent of the TV-14 shows were lacking content descriptors of any kind, 8.1% should have had language descriptors and 5.4% should have had sex descriptors.

**FOUL LANGUAGE**

*Boston Public* received a TV-PG rating.

**Charlie:** "Hey, kid, you know something, you're really starting to aggravate me. And how's about this, maybe if you weren't such a ballbuster you'd have some friends and you wouldn't want to off yourself."

A bit later:

**Oswald:** "Usually I get some by-the-book lame ass."

**SEX**

*Arrested Development* airs at 9:00 p.m. ET/PT. This episode received a TV-PG L.

**Lyndsey:** "We just had an amazing fundraiser for HOOP."

**Michael:** "HOOP?"

**Lyndsey:** "My anti-circumcision movement. I think it looks frightening when its cut off. It's a Doberman. Let it have its ears."

**VIOLENCE**

All of the episodes of *Cops* are violent in nature even if they don't depict graphic violence. One episode showed officers forced to tackle a man high on crystal meth, which results in a violent encounter that leaves the man bleeding from his mouth and nose. This episode was rated only TV-PG L.

**UPN****Totals for UPN: 36 hours, 56 shows****TV-G: 1**

1 with obscenities, 1 without L  
 1 with violence, 1 without V  
 1 with sexual innuendo, 1 without D  
 0 with sexual behavior

**BY HOUR****7:00 – 0 shows****8:00 – 1 show** (no descriptors)**9:00 – 0 shows****TV-PG: 45 shows**

26 with obscenities, 3 without L  
 8 with violence, 5 without V  
 39 with sexual innuendo, 26 without D  
 15 with sexual behavior, 14 without S

**BY HOUR****7:00 – 0 shows****8:00 – 27 shows**

12 with L, 6 with D, 2 with S, 2 with V

**9:00 – 18 shows**

17 with L, 6 with D, 0 with S, 1 with V

**TV-14: 10 shows**

7 with obscenities, 2 without L  
 4 with violence, 2 without V  
 8 with sexual innuendo, 2 without D  
 8 with sexual behavior, 6 without S

**BY HOUR****7:00 – 0 shows****8:00 – 1 show** (1 with V)**9:00 – 9 shows**

5 with L, 5 with D, 1 with S, 1 with V

**CONTENT DESCRIPTORS**

☛ 40% were missing necessary labels, all in the nine o'clock hour. Additionally three programs were labeled with a D, but also warranted an S.

## **FOUL LANGUAGE**

*Girlfriends* airs 9:30 ET and received a TV-14 rating.

**Joan: "...treat me to lunch. Come on. You heard the bitch. I'm on the clock, get up."**

## **SEX**

This episode of *Eve* received a TV-PG SL, but it should also have been given a D.

**Donovan: "Women, they see jewelry boxes, and their brains just have orgasms."**

**JT: "If she gets one, maybe I'll get one."**

## VI. CONCLUSION

What many parents don't know is that unlike movies, there is no independent ratings board for television. There is no panel of impartial reviewers who watch and rate the programs applying disinterested, objective criteria — the TV shows are rated by the networks and their distributors. There is an inherent conflict of interest at play in this system. If the network gives a program a more mature rating, it could scare off advertisers, with the direct effect of lowering the network's revenue. The networks are financially motivated to under-rate their programs.

This study demonstrates, as did the three that came before it, that the TV ratings can not be relied upon to accurately and effectively warn parents about potentially offensive content — even as TV content continues to coarsen. There is no inter-network consistency in the ratings; worse, there is not even intra-network consistency. In short, the TV ratings system is an utter failure.

The PTC is not alone in reaching this conclusion. A study conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that content descriptors are not being used on the vast majority of general-audience shows containing sex, violence, or adult language. Children's programs also contain a significant amount of violence, most of which is not indicated by a FV (fantasy violence) content descriptor.

Further complicating the issue is the fact that many parents still don't understand how the TV ratings system and V-chip work. A survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that more than eight out of ten parents who use the ratings system say

that improvements could be made to make the ratings more useful, and many do not have a good understanding of how the current system works. The majority of parents surveyed were unaware that the television industry rates itself.

A more recent survey by Kaiser found that many parents don't understand what the various ratings guidelines mean. For example, 28% of parents of young children (2-6 years old) know what the rating TV-Y7 means (directed to children age 7 and older) while 13% think it means the opposite (directed to children under 7); only 12% know that the rating FV is related to violent content, while 8% think it means "family viewing." Only 15% of parents surveyed have used the V-chip. Many of the survey's respondents (39%) didn't realize that their new TV sets were equipped with a V-chip, others (20%) knew they had a V-chip, but haven't used it.

In the years since the PTC's initial analysis of the TV rating system, not much has changed. The system is simply an excuse for the networks to take more liberties. The descriptors are the key to the V-chip's effectiveness. It is not enough to simply educate the public about the V-chip. Networks, intent on relying on the device, must be held accountable to rate shows in a manner that makes the device useful. If parents cannot understand the arbitrary way in which the networks rate their shows and cannot trust the V-chip to block shows because of the lack of content descriptors, they are powerless to decipher what is suitable for their children.





## **FOR INFORMATION CONTACT**

Christiana Hills, PTC Director of Marketing  
Tele: (213) 629-9255  
chills@parentstv.org

# **PRESS RELEASE**

---

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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

**Los Angeles, CA** — The Parents Television Council'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 as "TV Bloodbath: Violence on Prime Time Network Television," "The Blue Tube: Foul Language on Prime Time Network TV," "The Sour Family Hour," and "Wired for Raunch." 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 and grab the remote controls and set about the arduous work of transcribing verbatim 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 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 96,000 hours of programming on more than 15,000 video tapes. There is no other organization in the world that has this comprehensive library of television content analysis. The PTC has more research about the networks than the networks have themselves.

In addition to the well-documented reports produced by the PTC, ETS can be a gold mine for the advertising industry. ETS contains hours upon hours of television commercials. For example, if anyone wanted a historical representation of Coca Cola advertisements from 1989 to the present, it could be found at the Parents Television Council Virginia office. By special arrangements and under special circumstances, content is made available to the advertising industry.

When funding is available, the PTC will 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.



## **FOR INFORMATION CONTACT**

Christiana Hills, PTC Director of Marketing  
Tele: (213) 629-9255  
chills@parentstv.org

# **PTC Background**

LOS ANGELES, CA—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 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 both 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 grassroots coalition of over one 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 28 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](http://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.



## **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](http://www.ParentsTV.org)**

## **PARENTS TELEVISION COUNCIL ADVISORY BOARD**

**Steve Allen**  
Honorary Chairman Emeritus

**Phil Barron**

**Michelle Barron**

**Dr. William Bennett**

**William Blinn**

**Pat Boone**

**Wendy Borchardt**

**Sen. Sam Brownback**

**John Carvelli**

**Tim Conway**

**Billy Ray Cyrus**

**Hon. Jim Greenwood**

**Susan Howard**

**Bruce Jarchow**

**Dave Johnson**

**Gary Johnson**

**Dean Jones**

**Naomi Judd**

**Coleman Luck**

**Holly McClure**

**Michael Medved**

**Jim Otto**

**Father Val J. Peter**

**Mel Renfro**

**Cheryl Rhoads**

**Connie Sellecca**

**Jane Seymour**

**Dr. Robert Shaw**

**Mary Streep**

**Dr. C. DeLores Tucker**

**Ken Wales**

**Susan Wales**



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 of the entertainment industry.

## 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](http://www.ParentsTV.org)

**BECAUSE OUR CHILDREN ARE WATCHING.**