



A Decade of Deceit

How TV Content Ratings Have Failed Families



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In its recent report to Congress on the accuracy of the TV ratings and effectiveness of oversight, the Federal Communications Commission noted that the system has not changed in over 20 years.

Indeed, it has not, but content has, and the TV ratings fail to reflect “content creep,” (that is, an increase in offensive content in programs with a given rating as compared to similarly-rated programs a decade or more ago). Networks are packing substantially more profanity and violence into youth-rated shows than they did a decade ago; but that increase in adult-themed content has not affected the age-based ratings the networks apply. We found that **on shows rated TV-PG, there was a 28% increase in violence; and a 44% increase in profanity over a ten-year period.** There was also a more than twice as much violence on shows rated TV-14 in the 2017-18 television season than in the 2007-08 season, both in per-episode averages and in absolute terms.



This is the tenth report from the Parents Television Council on the TV content ratings system. This study seeks to document changes in program content over the last decade and to determine whether the TV content ratings have accurately reflected the increase in explicit content. More specifically, what changes in adult-themed content have we seen over ten years on programs that were rated as appropriate for children to watch?

PTC entertainment analysts recorded and documented every instance of violence, sexual dialogue, sexual actions, and foul language, and the content ratings assigned to each episode, during the November, February, and May “sweeps” periods in 2007-08, and again a decade later, 2017-18 on prime-time broadcast network television.

Major Findings:

- Programs rated TV-PG contained on average 28% more violence and 43.5% more profanity in 2017-18 than in 2007-08.
- Profanity on PG-rated shows included suck/blow, screw, hell/damn, ass/asshole, bitch, bastard, piss, bleeped s—t, bleeped f—k. The 2017-18 season added “dick” and “prick” to the PG-rated lexicon.
- Violence on PG-rated shows included use of guns and bladed weapons, depictions of fighting, blood and death and scenes of decapitation or dismemberment; The only form of violence unique to TV-14 rated programming was depictions of torture.
- Programs rated TV-14 contained *on average* 84% more violence *per episode* in 2017-18 than in 2007-08.
- There was over 150% more violence, and 62% more profanity *total*, on programs rated TV-14 in 2017-2018 than in 2007-2008.
- In 2007-2008, there were more programs rated TV-PG [346] than programs rated TV-14 [273]. In 2017-2018, the opposite was true [224 PG vs. 383 TV-14].
- In February 2008, programs rated TV-PG outnumbered those rated TV-14 by more than 2-to-1; in February 2018, TV-14 content outnumbered PG content in almost the same ratio.
- There were no G-rated programs on Fox, CW, or ABC (even though ABC is owned by Disney) in any of the “sweeps” periods, in either 2007-2008 or 2017-2018.
- The overall number of G-rated shows in 2017-2018 was almost identical to that a decade earlier: five or fewer. Some “sweeps” periods contained no G-rated programming at all.

It has been more than 150 days since the FCC delivered its report to Congress. The television industry and the TV Parental Guidelines Oversight Monitoring Board (TVOMB) have had over four months to act on the FCC's findings that Hollywood should do a better job, and that the public concern about the system's accuracy merits additional action.

The Industry responded by insisting "the Monitoring Board is always interested in improving and is considering the feedback compiled by the FCC and its report." But no public actual action has been taken to improve the accuracy, reliability, transparency or consistency of the TV ratings.

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It is time for the TV content ratings system to reflect the realities of today's entertainment media technologies and cultural landscape. If parents are to protect their children from explicit, adult-themed program content, then bold, positive and comprehensive improvements to a 22-year old system are needed to bring it into the 21st century.

INTRODUCTION

The TV industry tells parents that TV Content Ratings are the last line of defense between children and inappropriate content.

The Federal Government has a limited oversight role to play, but they were spurred to action recently. The 2019 Federal Appropriations bill included language requiring the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to report on the accuracy of the television content ratings system and the ability of the TV Parental Guidelines Oversight Monitoring Board (TVOMB) to address public concerns about those ratings.

The FCC's final report, issued in the spring of 2019, affirmed what the PTC has been saying for years about the numerous, intrinsic failings of the TV content ratings system, concluding that Hollywood should do a better job, and that the public concern about the system's accuracy merits additional action.

But the report's last twelve words were perhaps the most important: "We note the ratings system has not changed in over 20 years."

While it is true that the ratings system has not changed in over 20 years, content has. And the current ratings system has not only failed to reflect changes in content and the way content is accessed, the system has arguably facilitated the rapid deterioration of broadcast standards and permitted "ratings creep," a marked increase in offensive content in programs with a given rating as compared to similarly-rated programs a decade or more ago.

This is the PTC's tenth report on TV ratings. Whereas past PTC ratings studies have attempted to document inaccuracies and inconsistencies in the TV ratings, this study seeks to document extent of "ratings creep" – the expansion of adult-themed content into shows rated appropriate for children to watch – over a ten-year period.



BACKGROUND

Most parents do not feel the current ratings system is achieving its purpose. A 2011 IBOPE [Zogby International poll found that](#) 75% of Americans surveyed said that there is too much sex, violence and coarse language on television. In a 2007 Zogby International poll, almost 90% said that they have never used the V-chip or parental controls to block programs, and an incredible 92% couldn't explain what the industry's D, L, S and V content descriptors stand for. This clearly demonstrates that parents WANT an effective and trustworthy content ratings system...but they don't trust and don't understand the one that exists now – and has existed for over 20 years. A 2014 poll in *Costco Connection Magazine* found an astonishing 97% of readers agreed that we should rethink the rating system for television and film. In fact, the only public opinion polls that show support for or satisfaction with the existing ratings system are those paid for by the industry.

And it is not only parents who find the current system inadequate. A 2016 study published in the medical journal *Pediatrics* found that the current TV content ratings “were ineffective in discriminating shows for 3 out of 4 behaviors studied [violence, sexual behavior, alcohol use, and smoking in TV shows]. Even in shows rated for children as young as 7 years, violence was prevalent, prominent, and salient.”

Since their inception, the ratings given to television programs have been – and still are – grossly inaccurate. Programming inappropriate for younger teens has been rated TV-PG, instead of TV-14; programs with content inappropriate even for older teenagers has been rated TV-14 instead of TV-MA (mature audiences only). The rating descriptors (D, L, S, and V), supposedly implemented to designate sexual Dialogue, profane Language, Sexual depictions, and Violence, are frequently misapplied, or are simply not used at all.

The TV content ratings are ineffective in their stated purpose. Program creators constantly seek to “push the envelope” on their program's content...and network executives enable them by delivering such programs to the widest possible audience (including children) by mis-rating them. This has been acknowledged by those in the entertainment industry themselves:

“[We're] all about pushing the boundaries. There is a lot of drinking and recreational drug use and [the network] has reinforced and celebrated the tone of the show. ABC has been super supportive. [emphasis added] Nothing has been thrown out or questioned.” *Don't Trust the B---- in Apartment 23* writer/producer Nahnatchka Khan (*The Hollywood Reporter*, April 11, 2012).

“We've given broadcast standards a run for their money...We got away with murder.” *New Girl* executive producer Brett Baer (*The Hollywood Reporter*, November 5, 2014).

“Language-wise, when I watch a lot of network television now, I'm shocked by the discourse. It's pretty foulmouthed on regular 8, 8:30, 9 o'clock shows. Lots of penis discussion, three-way jokes, boob jokes.” — David Mandel, executive producer for HBO's *Veep* (*The Hollywood Reporter*, May 11, 2016).

“Yes, there will be jokes that are pitched that are a little too risqué. Part of the excitement of doing this show is to see where we can push the envelope.” – Bob Kushell, executive producer of ABC’s *The Muppets* (*TVLine*, September 22, 2015).

“I hope there are concerns about it, I really do. We’re going to push the envelope with that show... If we had abandoned or buried *Swingtown*, I would never have been able to live with myself. This is a labor of love!” -- CBS Entertainment President Nina Tassler (*Chicago Tribune*, June 2, 2008)

The core issue of greatest concern is the fact that the networks have a financial incentive not to rate programming accurately. Networks make money by selling time for advertising – commercials – during their programs. (Ultimately, the only reason TV shows exist is to deliver viewers to advertisers, through watching commercials.) The larger the viewership the network can promise for a given show, the more they can charge companies for commercial time during that show. By “under-rating” episodes, the V-Chip will not screen out these episodes, allowing children to watch them, thus delivering more viewers to advertisers... and more money to the network’s coffers. And younger viewers are innately more attractive to advertisers (and therefore, more lucrative to the networks), as their spending habits have not yet become fixed, and they are far more easily influenced by commercials. Additionally, and as a matter of corporate policy, most major sponsors of television programming do not advertise on content rated for mature audiences only.

As a result, an unmistakable conflict of interest permeates the current TV content ratings system:

- Broadcast and cable television networks distribute explicit content that is rated as appropriate for children.
- Television network staffers rate that content.
- The corporations that employ those TV network staffers profit from wrongly-rated content if the inaccuracy opens the door to younger viewers.
- Television network staffers who rate the content, or who oversee this process, also serve on the TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board (TVOMB).
- The leadership of the TVOMB rotates between the heads of the National Association of Broadcasters, the National Cable and Telecommunications Association, and Motion Picture Association of America. Therefore, lobbyists from the NAB, NCTA, and MPAA determine which “public interest groups” sit on the Monitoring Board. Their choice includes multiple industry-controlled groups.
- TVOMB meetings, if in fact they ever happen, are conducted entirely in secret.
- The TVOMB pays for polls and “research” about the ratings. Predictably, such polling has yielded wildly self-serving results, such as 95% of parents being satisfied with the current system, thus sheltering the TVOMB *status quo* from criticism.
- The TVOMB’s public comment in response to the Federal Communications Commission’s Notice of Inquiry into the ratings system was authored by the same attorney who helped broadcasters sue the FCC for the ability to use the F-word at any time of the day, even in front of children.

Apparently, this is what “oversight” looks like – in the eyes of the networks and the TVOMB. But such a lack of genuine oversight would never be tolerated in any other industry; in fact the PTC is unaware of any other industry that is allowed to oversee regulation of its own potentially harmful products. The current system in place is similar to Big Tobacco appointing the Surgeon General.

It is long past time that the entertainment industry as a whole, and specifically television networks, provide what they promised back in 1997: a TV content ratings system which takes into account parental concerns, and which is truly accurate, consistent, transparent, and accountable to the public.

METHODOLOGY

This study seeks to document changes in program content over the last decade and to determine whether the TV content ratings have accurately reflected the increase in explicit content. More specifically, what changes in adult-themed content have we seen over ten years on programs that were rated as appropriate for children to watch?

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November 2007	264 eps	245 hrs
February 2008	159 eps	161.5 hrs
May 2008	223 eps	200 hrs
November 2017	257 eps	238 hrs
February 2018	145 eps	150 hrs
May 2018	262 eps	237 hrs

This results in a grand total of 1,319 episodes and 1,231.5 hours of programming documented. Each episode was then evaluated in terms of relevance of its network-assigned content rating to the actual content present in the episode.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Networks are packing substantially more profanity and violence into youth-rated shows than they did a decade ago; but that increase in adult-themed content has not affected the age-based ratings the networks apply. On shows rated TV-PG, there was a 28% increase in violence; and a 44% increase in profanity over a ten-year period.

There was a significant increase from 2007-2008 to 2017-2018 in the amount of violence and profanity on programs rated TV-14, both in per-episode averages and in absolute terms. In the 2007-2008 study period, there were 1,986 instances of violence on prime-time broadcast TV shows rated TV-14; in the 2017-2018 period, there were 5,120 instances – a 158% increase, or more than double the amount of violence.

This means that, on average, there were 7.3 instances of violence per episode of TV-14 programs in 2007-2008, but 13.3 instances in 2017-2018 – an average increase per episode of almost 84%. Similarly, in the 2007-2008 period, there were 2,414 total instances of profanity used on programs rated TV-14; in 2017-2018 there were 3,924 – an average increase per episode of 62.5%.

Thus, in the ten-year period between 2007-2008 and 2017-2018, instances of foul language increased on TV-PG programs by almost 50%, and violence by over 25%...and on TV-14 rated programs, violence increased by 84%. Yet in the intervening decade, neither the TVOMB nor the television networks made any changes to the content ratings system as a whole to reflect the vast increases in child- and family-unfriendly content on television.



Summary of Findings

Programs rated TV-PG contained on average 28% more violence and 43.5% more profanity in 2017-18 than in 2007-08.

Profanity on PG-rated shows included suck/blow, screw, hell/damn, ass/asshole, bitch, bastard, piss, bleeped s—t, bleeped f—k. The 2017-18 season added “dick” and “prick” to the PG-rated lexicon.

Violence on PG-rated shows included use of guns and bladed weapons, depictions of fighting, blood and death and scenes of decapitation or dismemberment; The only form of violence unique to TV-14 rated programming was depictions of torture.

Programs rated TV-14 contained on average 84% more violence in 2017-18 than in 2007-08.

In 2007-2008, there were more programs rated TV-PG [346] than programs rated TV-14 [273]. In 2017-2018, the opposite was true [224 PG vs. 383 TV-14].

In February 2008, programs rated TV-PG outnumbered those rated TV-14 by more than 2-to-1; in February 2018, TV-14 content outnumbered PG content in almost the same ratio.

There was over 150% more violence, and 62% more profanity, on programs rated TV-14 in 2017-2018 than in 2007-2008.

There were no G-rated programs on Fox, CW, or ABC (even though ABC is owned by Disney) in any of the “sweeps” periods, in either 2007-2008 or 2017-2018.

The overall number of G-rated shows in 2017-2018 was almost identical to that a decade earlier: five or fewer. Some “sweeps” periods contained no G-rated programming at all.

TABLE 1: RATING TOTALS BY SWEEPS PERIOD

	G	PG	TV-14	N/A
NOVEMBER 2007	0	138	126	0
FEBRUARY 2008	2	108	46	3
MAY 2008	4	110	101	8
NOVEMBER 2017	0	105	151	1
FEBRUARY 2018	55	90	0	
MAY 2018	5	114	142	1

TABLE 2: CONTENT TOTALS BY SWEEPS PERIOD

	VIOLENCE	PROFANITY
NOVEMBER 2007	1349	1647
FEBRUARY 2008	372	845
MAY 2008	1004	1443
NOVEMBER 2017	2252	2151
FEBRUARY 2018	1054	1479
MAY 2018	2497	1787

TABLE 3: PG VS. 14 TOTALS BY DECADE

	#EPS	VIOLENCE	PROFANITY
TV-PG 2007-08	356	673	1355
TV-PG 2017-18	274	663	1497
TV-14 2007-08	273	1986	2414
TV-14 2017-18	383	5120	3924

TABLE 4: PG VS. 14 BY DATE

	#EPS	VIOLENCE	PROFANITY
NOV 2007 TV-PG	138	337	577
NOV 2007 TV-14	126	1012	1070
FEB 2008 TV-PG	108	91	421
FEB 2008 TV-14	46	280	343
MAY 2008 TV-PG	110	245	357
MAY 2008 TV-14	101	694	1001
NOV 2017 TV-PG	105	262	602
NOV 2017 TV-14	151	1971	1539
FEB 2018 TV-PG	55	60	398
FEB 2018 TV-14	90	994	1081
MAY 2018 TV-PG	114	341	479
MAY 2018 TV-14	142	2155	1304

TABLE 5: PG VS. 14 BY RATING

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TABLE 6: PER-EPISODE AVERAGES 2007-2008 VS. 2017-2018 BY RATING

RATING/ YEAR	VIOLENCE PER EPISODE	PROFANITY PER EPISODE
PG 07-08	1.89	3.81
PG 17-18	2.42	5.46
%increase	28.0%	43.5%
14 07-08	7.27	8.84
14 17-18	13.37	10.25
%increase	83.8%	15.9%

CONTENT EXAMPLES

2017-2018 Television Season

Mom Kate berates her daughter Taylor for dumping her boyfriend.

Katie: "Why are you sending slutty emojis to someone who isn't your nice sweet boyfriend?...I'm gonna stay on you forever about this, Taylor. I'm like herpes."

(*American Housewife*, ABC, 9:30 p.m. ET, November 1, 2017. TV-PG, no descriptors)

Susan and Kevin vandalize their neighbor Edward's yard, knocking down the mailbox with a baseball bat, throwing toilet paper around the property, and spraying lighter fluid on the front lawn.

Susan: "Suck it, Eddie Goodwin."

Susan lights a match and drops it on the front lawn igniting the grass on fire.

Kevin: "What the hell? Is that a penis?"

Susan: "Yeah, yeah it is...That little bitch."

Kristin arrives and criticizes them.

Kristin: "What the hell are you doing? Ed is a respected member of the community, and you burned a penis into his lawn!"

Susan: "He burned boobs into my front lawn."

(*Kevin (Probably) Saves The World*, ABC, 10:00 p.m. ET, November 14, 2017. TV-PG DL.)

The elderly Ms. Robbins criticizes Nick in Judy and Harry's apartment.

Ms. Robbins: "Why did you touch my boob? Can't a woman fall asleep here for five seconds without getting felt up?"

Ms. Robbins remarks on Eve's closeness to her child.

Ms. Robbins: "Is it an incest thing?"

Later, Ms. Robbins chastises Eve and Andrew.

Ms. Robbins: "You and your husband are so petty, you've spent the whole day squabbling over a woman who - case closed - is the biggest bitch at Shady Pines."

Harry: "That's my mother."

Ms. Robbins: "That's why I didn't say 'slut.' "

(*9JKL*, CBS, 9:30 p.m. ET, November 20, 2017. TV-PG. No descriptors.)

Fawz talks about his new job.

Fawz: "It's a very sexy profession. It's not just my shirt that's well hung."

Carl: "Well, I can't be late for my handjob."

(*Superior Donuts*, CBS, 9:00 p.m. ET, November 13, 2017. TV-14 L, no "D" descriptor)

Peter answers the door and a man shoots him repeatedly in the chest with an automatic rifle. Peter wakes up covered in his own blood and full of bullet holes.

His former boss pulls the trigger and shoots him in the head.

Peter again wakes up in a hospital bed. Peter takes a scalpel and stabs Dr. Hartman in the eyes with it.

In a parody of the movie *Kill Bill*, Peter walks out of the house carrying a sword.

He arrives at a warehouse and is surrounded by 88 women holding swords.

One of the women runs at him and Peter decapitates her. Blood sprays out of her neck like a fountain.

Peter stabs another woman in the stomach and immediately slashes another woman across the chest. He slices through two other women at the same time.

Peter stabs another woman through the torso and out the other side, and also kicks through a woman's torso and out the other side.

A beer bottle is thrown. Peter dodges it and it hits a woman in the eye and kills her. Peter jumps on top of another woman and crushes her under his own weight.

Peter punches one of the women in the face, breaks off a valve on one of the beer tanks, and then he grabs her and holds her mouth to the spout until she fills up with beer and explodes.

Peter's former boss runs at him holding two swords.

Peter slices her in a downward motion into two halves, causing blood to spray from both halves in an orchestrated pattern like the fountain of a casino.

(*Family Guy*, Fox, 9:00 p.m. ET, November 5, 2017. TV-14 DLSV.)



Murderface is shown wearing a spiked helmet and spiked gauntlets. He repeatedly punches and head-butts Solomon Grundy. Grudy rips off Murderface's arm. He beats Murderface with his own dismembered arm, as Murderface bleeds to death. (*Gotham*, Fox, 8:00 p.m. ET, November 9, 2017. TV-14 DLV.)



At the bowling alley, a man opens his bag and reveals a decapitated head inside. Later, a caricatured, flamboyant gay man approaches another man. Flamboyant man: "Polish your balls?" Man: "Wow. This alley really does have everything." Flamboyant man: "Ooooh, I don't work for the alley. No, indeed...Can I wax YOUR alley?" (*The Simpsons*, Fox, 8:00 p.m. ET, November 19, 2017. TV-PG DLV.) Rogelio talks to Xiomara as Darci and Esteban have sex in another room. The sex is clearly audible. Esteban: "Ride me, Darci! Ride me!" Rogelio: "I can't tolerate having to hear Esteban have sex with my unborn child." Xiomara: "He's having sex with your unborn child's mother." Esteban emerges from the bedroom and boasts about his sexual prowess. While wearing only a towel. Esteban: "I did it! I broke her water!" Rogelio and Xiomara watch Darci go through birth pangs in the tub, half-nude in the tub. Darci: "I need a freakin' epidural!" Rogelio steps into the tub while apparently naked. Rogelio: "You wanted to be in control of the birth. Then take control, damn it!"

(*Jane the Virgin*, CW, 9:00 p.m. ET, October 27, 2017. TV-14. No "D" or "S" descriptors.)

Xiomara talks to Rogelio.

Xiomara: "There's something I want to talk with you about before we have sex...I didn't realize how much the fear of getting pregnant was holding me back, sexually."

Later, Danny tells Jane about Lina's bachelorette party.

Danny: "There will be glitter, penises, cake, ooh, and a striptease."

(*Jane the Virgin*, CW, 9:00 p.m. ET, November 10, 2017. TV-PG. No descriptors.)

Jane walks Alba into a sex shop, with sex toys like edible handcuffs visible.

Jane: "Now, I was doing a little research while you were driving, and it looks like, as you age, your vagina gets dry."

Jane shows Alba a vibrator.

Jane: "There are half a dozen other vibrators exactly like this one on that rack."

Later, at the hotel, a man bumps into Alba and she drops her vibrator, which turns on and buzzes in front of the man's young daughter.

(*Jane the Virgin*, CW, 9:00 p.m. ET, February 9, 2018. TV-PG, no "D" or "S" descriptors)

Jane interviews Petra as they work out together.

Petra: "Sex. I let go in bed. I like to submit. To be dominated. That's why Rafael and I got along so well."

Later, Jane talks to Rafael after entering his apartment.

Jane: "Can we have sex already? ...I mean, I love a full package."

(*Jane the Virgin*, CW, 9:00 p.m. ET, February 9, 2018. TV-PG, no "D" or "S" descriptors)

The Winchesters enter the cave with guns and other weapons in hand. They find a woman's bloody corpse. It has been ripped to shreds. They see a vampire eating the remains of another corpse. Dean decapitates it with his machete.

They are attacked by several vampires. Dean is held captive by two vampires while several more surround Sam. One vampire bites Sam's neck and causes blood to spray everywhere.

(*Supernatural*, CW, 8:00 p.m. ET, May 3, 2018. TV-14, no "V" descriptor)

2007-2008 Television Season

Liz walks in on Pete and his wife having sex. Paula is shown on top of Pete, straddling him. She is wearing lingerie, but the top is pulled down. She clutches both of her bare breasts. Liz asks why there are pop tarts in bed with them. Paula picks one up and covers her breast with it.

(*30 Rock*, NBC, 9:30 p.m. ET, November 8, 2007. TV-PG S.)

The Winchesters find a huge puddle of blood. There are two female vampires who have been beheaded. Their hanging bodies are tied to a tree. The bloody stump of a neck is visible. There is a close-up of the bloody neck, and it starts gurgling. Sam realizes that the heads haven't been cut off; they have been ripped off by hand.

(*Supernatural*, CW, 9:00 p.m. ET, November 15, 2007. TV-PG LV.)

Justin plans a float for the high school parade and proclaims that "teen sex" should be the float's theme. Justin: "You gotta wake up to reality, man. Teen sex churches. So we gotta take the dialogue to the streets, in our floats."

Nicole: "Unprotected sex is a huge problem at school."

Student 1: "The float could be two kids lying on a bed making out."

Student 2: "And we could throw condoms at the crowd!"

Later, guidance counselor Matthews observes the juniors working on the float, which is adorned with the words "Teen Sex!"

Matthews: "You are not going to have two kids bumpin' uglies on a float!.....There will be no girl-on-guy action, there will be no two-girls-and-a-guy action, there will be no two-guys-and-a-girl action, there will be no action at all! You will have the same pointless

float that you have every year. I don't care whether it rips, it rules, or it rocks, but it doesn't go 'humpity humpity'....Little orgy float is canceled, and that's that." (*Aliens in America*, CW, 8:30 p.m. ET, November 5, 2007. TV-PG V.)

Barney tells Ted about a new girl he met.

Barney: "So perky, full of life, and not at all fake."

Ted: "You're talking about her boobs, right?"

Barney: "C. And that wasn't Spanish. That was cup size."

Ted: "So, these boobs. Paint me a word picture."

Barney: "Imagine the heads of two Irish babies..."

(*How I Met Your Mother*, CBS, 8:00 p.m. ET, November 5, 2007. TV-PG DL.)

The team enters an abandoned warehouse, guns drawn. They find a man's corpse inside an elevator shaft. He is wearing just a loin cloth. His hands and feet are nailed to the wall. Blood surrounds the nails and runs down his body. Flies buzz around the corpse. Later, in the morgue, Ducky stands over the corpse. He points out bruises on its arms and the bloody wounds on its chest. Ducky says the man's attackers nailed him to the floor so they could torture him and he couldn't get away.

(*NCIS*, CBS, 8:00 p.m. ET, November 6, 2007. TV-PG. No descriptors.)

JJ shows photos of a young woman killed in Florida. She's dead on the ground with bloody wounds on her neck. Her lower body has been eaten by alligators. There is a satanic symbol carved into her chest. They also note that the killer cut off her fingers.

In the morgue, the ME says the woman's nose was broken, the cause of death was a slit throat, and the pentagram that was carved in her chest was after she died. He says he can't figure out if she was raped due to the gator damage. He adds that the fingers were severed prior to death because he found all 10 of them in her stomach--the killer forced the woman to eat them before she died. The team determines that the fingers in the woman's stomach were not hers, and that six of them were index fingers, indicating many more victims. The team talks about how the killer is taking his victim's legs and how they think the killer has been eating them.

Later, the team enters Floyd's home, guns drawn. They go into the basement. They find a large freezer room with the corpses of many women. All have had their throats slit. They go into another room and find Floyd sitting before his satanic shrine in his underwear. There is blood all over the walls.

A priest and Detective Morgan interview Floyd.

Priest: "God is in all of us."

Floyd: "So is Tracy Lambert."

The priest has a flashback of ladling out soup to a

large group of people.

Priest: "Son of a bitch!"

The priest jumps across the table and starts choking Floyd. Morgan pulls him off.

Priest: "He was feeding volunteers."

Morgan and the team are horrified, realizing Floyd fed human flesh to the volunteers.

(*Criminal Minds*, CBS, 9:00 p.m. ET, November 14, 2007. TV-14 LV.)

Three girls gather in the center of the casino floor and strip until they are naked. They run around the casino. On the security monitors the naked girls are clearly visible.

Their buttocks are visible though shadows are used to censor the breasts and genitals. As the girls run their breast noticeably bounce. In slow motion one girl is scene fully

exposed from the front but blurred due to motion.

Danny and Mike chase the girls on the casino floor. After they catch up to the streaking girls, one girl is shown

standing naked and clutching her breasts to cover them.

Later, Danny blows up an inflatable sex doll in preparation for Mike's bachelor party.

Danny: "Don't you worry. You're going to get your sausage party, Mike."

Casey's brother: "Why not show us that big set of balls you're so famous for?"

Later, Polly brings two male strippers dressed as doctors to Delinda's bachelorette party. Polly dances with the strippers. She pulls one man's shorts away from his body and looks down at his penis

(*Las Vegas*, NBC, 9:00 p.m. ET, February 15, 2008. TV-14. No descriptors.)

Christine is on the phone with her boss, Daniel.

Daniel: "What are you wearing?"

Christine: "Oh, no, no, no, you know what, I know where you're going here

and I'm gonna have to stop you. I'm so bad at..."

Daniel: "Oh yeah? Maybe you need a little spanking!"

Christine: "No, Daniel, stop, seriously. Phone sex is not my thing. I

get way too dirty, way too fast and people don't react well."

Daniel: "How many people?"

Christine: "A few people. One person. It got me fired."

Daniel: "Ok, so no phone sex."

Christine: "I guess there's always real sex."

Daniel: "I thought you wanted to wait."

Christine: "I did, I thought it was important that we get to know each other first. I didn't want to mess this up by jumping into bed too fast like I have with other people."

Daniel: "How many people?"

Christine: "It got me fired."

Daniel: "I can wait as long as you can."

Christine: "I think I'm ready."

Daniel: "Be there in 10 minutes."

Christine: "Ok. Yeah, yeah, you know what? I'm gonna need a little prep time. Ah, but here's the thing. Richie's asleep and if I start turning on the equipment it gets too loud..."

Daniel: "So how about tomorrow night?"

Christine: "Tomorrow night sounds perfect. And you know what I'm gonna do?"

Daniel: "Tell me."

Christine: "I'm gonna throw you on the floor and rip your clothes off and shove my..."

Daniel: "Hey, don't make me fire you."

Christine: "Sorry, sorry, it's just the phone, I'm much more gentle in person."

Daniel: "I'll see you tomorrow."

Christine: "Not if I see you first, you sexy mother---"

(*The New Adventures of Old Christine*, CBS, 9:30 p.m. ET, February 4, 2008. TV-PG D.)



House has a flashback to his bus accident. He witnesses the bus crash into the back of Amber's head. Glass shatters and passengers go flying. The bus overturns in slow motion. He wakes up in the midst of the wreckage, with bloody people all around him. Amber lies bloody on the floor with a metal pipe driven through her leg. Blood on her face. House crawls over to help her.
(*House*, Fox, 9:00 p.m. ET, May 12, 2008. TV-14 DS. No "V" descriptor.)

A prostitute with a prosthetic hand meets Rudy on the street, and they go back to a hotel room. She's shown laying on her stomach in a bed and he's doing something to her off camera that she is saying feels good. She tells Rudy she's surprised that he isn't getting all "pervy with my stump" again. Rudy says that her stump is what saved her.

The camera pulls back, showing how he's lying on top of her, he's in a pair of black underpants, laying on top of her on a bed covered in plastic sheeting. Then he tells her she's his escape plan and chokes her until she's unconscious. Then he carries her into a walk-in freezer.

Later, Rudy has murdered and dismembered the prostitute, and laid out all of her body parts on a table, drained of blood and tied up with Christmas ribbons and decorations. Rudy sings "Deck the Halls -- with parts of Holly." He picks up her dismembered hand and looks at her ring. Later, Dexter sees that Rudy has gift-wrapped the dismembered body parts and put them under the tree at a Christmas display.
(*Dexter*, CBS, 9:00 p.m. ET, May 4, 2008. TV-14 LSV.)

Sock and Sam go to a sperm bank, where the latest target -- a man possessed by a demon -- has set up shop. The man has given his sperm to hundreds of women for their babies.

Sock: "So did the Devil happen to mention what this semen demon's special powers are? 'Cause my head is going to some pretty awful places with this one."

At the sperm bank, Sock and Sam encounter their demon-possessed enemy, Jack.

Jack: "You're not here for a deposit, are you?"

Sock: "I don't know, we might be making one big deposit today. You, back to Hell."

Jack: "You don't think I really belong in Hell? I was just trying to make the world a better place. And I did. Please, don't do this. I have children to think of. Hundreds and hundreds of children."

Sam decapitates Jack, cutting off his head with his scythe. After being beheaded, Jack's headless corpse

begins to run aimlessly around the room.

Sock: "Cut him again! Cut him again!"

Sam stabs Jack's corpse in the heart with his scythe. The corpse evaporates. Sam repeatedly smashes Jack's head with his scythe.

(*Reaper*, CW, 9:00 p.m. ET, April 29, 2008. TV-PG. No descriptors.)

Melanie: "Jerome, he wants it so bad. But I just can't do it."

Kelly: "What's the big deal? All you have to do is open your mouth, control your breathing, relax, and enjoy it."

Melanie: "Every time I try, it makes me gag."

Tasha: "Me, too. I'm telling you, I ain't ever liked it. I only do it on special occasions: birthdays, anniversaries, MLK Day."

Kelly: "You guys are ridiculous. It's just phone sex. He's out of town. That's what me and Jason do. It's the only reason he sprung for unlimited minutes."

(*The Game*, CW, 9:00 p.m. ET, May 4, 2008. TV-PG D.)

Roger: "Ah! It was a pomegranate. That's what was in my teeth. Look at this thing! It looks like a woman's baby-cannon."

Stan: "I know we're in the middle of a show, but that was American Dad's 1,000th vagina joke!"

Stan hands Roger a trophy.

Roger: "Wow! Our 1,000th vagina Joke! Gosh, where do I start? I guess I'd like to thank vaginas everywhere. They're creepy, and I don't know what they're for, but boy, are they funny. Thank you!"

(*American Dad*, Fox, 9:30 p.m. ET, February 17, 2008. TV-14 DLV.)



CONCLUSION

In a letter to the PTC dated June 3, 2019 – and which was sent just a few weeks after the FCC delivered its report to Congress – Michael Powell, President & CEO of the NCTA (The Internet and Television Association) and current chairman of the TVOMB stated, “The Monitoring Board shares your goal of ensuring that the TV ratings system remains a source of accurate and helpful information, and we are deeply committed to continuing to provide parents with the necessary resources to enable them to make informed choices about TV viewing in their homes.”

It sounds good; but this assertion is simply not true. Despite two decades of parental concerns about the TV content ratings system, the entertainment industry has consistently defied public calls for reform. There have been promises of improvement, but no improvement, as this report demonstrates.

The networks claim that parents and viewers are universally delighted with the workings of the ratings system. This in spite of the fact that, when given the opportunity by the Federal Communications Commission to weigh in on the need for changes to the TV content ratings system, over 1,700 Americans called for reform, while only one comment said the current ratings system is perfect the way it is. That comment came from representatives of the entertainment industry itself.

The networks claim that “ratings are subjective;” but the entire point of a rating system is to provide viewers with objective information about program content. This is even stated on the TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board’s [own website](#).

The networks also defensively state that “ratings are voluntary and should not be used as a way to determine what content appears on television.” This is a false flag. No one is trying to dictate program content; but it is not asking too much for the broadcast networks (who use the publicly-owned airwaves for free, and make billions of dollars a year in profit doing so) to provide viewers with accurate, consistent, and transparent ratings, in a manner accountable to the public. This is inherent in the condition of each broadcaster’s license, which requires the broadcaster to act “in the public interest.”

In FCC Report and Order 98-35, the original document establishing the television content ratings system, the TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board agreed to

Explore attitudes about the way in which [the content ratings] are applied to programming, conduct focus groups, and commission quantitative studies to determine whether the TV Parental Guidelines are providing useful information to parents, and consider any needed changes to them.

But in the more than two decades since establishment of the TV content ratings, the TVOMB and entertainment industry have produced nothing that objectively delivers on these promises...in spite of the fact that the Report and Order also mandated “adjustments and improvements to the [ratings] system.”

The 22-year-old TV ratings system, which was created half a generation before Google, Netflix, or the iPhone, has never been modernized or updated. It has undergone no changes whatsoever...and the entertainment industry maintains that no changes or updates are necessary. Indeed, in meetings with the FCC’s Media Bureau and in public comments posted on the FCC’s website, Hollywood lobbyists argued against making the TVOMB more accessible and transparent to the public, and against making any improvements whatsoever to the current TV ratings system.

The Parents Television Council does not claim that the TV content ratings system has become less accurate over time. Rather, we maintain that it has never been accurate, and that – despite promises made to Congress and the American people 22 years ago – the entertainment industry has done nothing to improve it.

The entertainment industry, and the TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board, are responsible for providing the American people with a TV content ratings system which is accurate, consistent, transparent, and accountable to the public. For too long, broadcasters, networks, and the entertainment industry have shirked that responsibility. Since the industry has demonstrated that self-regulation is a failure, it is time the Federal

Communications Commission, and Congress, hold hearings on the TV content ratings system; investigate the corrupt, self-serving control the entertainment industry has over the ratings; and ensure the TV content ratings system is modernized to benefit the American people -- not protect the *status quo* for Hollywood insiders who profit from an outdated and broken system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From our first research report on the TV content ratings system in 1998, to this present study, the PTC has documented the defects in the ratings system. Over those years, we have consistently called for improvements to that system, and have asked the entertainment industry to demonstrate increased concern for the viewers who rely on it. Once again, we renew that call.

If it responds to requests for improvement as it always has in the past, the entertainment industry and the members of TVOMB will make little or no effort to bring greater transparency and accountability to the TV content ratings system. Instead, they will likely do the barest minimum possible in order to placate federal officials and claim they are compliant with government requirements, while actually working to maintain as much of the status quo as they possibly can.

But while this strategy has served the industry in the past, avoidance of transparency, accountability, and actual accuracy in the ratings upon which families depend is no longer tolerable. It is long past time both the TV content ratings system and the TVOMB undergo genuine reform and be updated and modernized to serve the needs of parents and families. Bold improvements are needed; and any effort to circumvent them will prove that the existing system serves only the interests of Hollywood, not those of the American public.

The Parents Television Council recommends the following improvements to the TV content ratings system and the TVOMB:

Ratings Accuracy

A symposium of pediatricians, children's mental health experts, and child/family advocates should be convened to review the definitions of each age-based content rating (TV-Y7, TV-G, TV-14, *et cetera*) in order to ensure that each rating category definition accurately and effectively reflects contemporary knowledge. International best practices should be considered and incorporated into this review.

Because the entertainment industry stands to benefit financially when content is inaccurately rated for younger audiences, to avoid any potential conflict of interest, TVOMB industry members should be permitted to offer their opinion, but not to alter the outcome of this independent review of the rating definitions and their application.

Consistency and Public Accountability

Every exhibitor and distributor should commit to airing a minimum number of public service announcements about the content ratings system. Most parents have never heard of TVOMB, and most have no idea it is their obligation to complain to TVOMB about a rating that they may find to be inaccurate.

Public service announcements about the TV content ratings system should provide contact information and urge parents to communicate with TVOMB regarding any questions or concerns they might have. The mere existence of a TVOMB website and phone number provides absolutely zero value without public awareness.

Every effort should be made by TVOMB to bring more digital distribution platforms to the table. This would include the major independent players in the digital entertainment arena (e.g. Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hulu, YouTube, *et cetera*) as well as those that are owned or controlled by TVOMB members (CBS All Access, Disney+, Pluto TV, and others).

Transparency

TVOMB should expand its member composition to create a more balanced weighting of industry, health experts and parental groups.

Entertainment industry “front groups” which currently hold a number of the family advocate seats should be removed.

Formal terms, and term limits, should be applied to Board members, to ensure that fresh perspectives are represented.

Board member qualifications should be provided to the public.

Meetings should be regularly scheduled and announced to the public.

Meetings should be open to the public and to the press.

How to file a complaint about a program’s rating, and the TVOMB’s subsequent adjudication process, should be clearly explained.

It is time for the TV content ratings system to reflect the realities of today’s entertainment media technologies and cultural landscape. Bold, positive and comprehensive improvements to a 22-year old system are needed to bring it into the 21st century.

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