

# FAITH IN A BOX

Entertainment Television & Religion 2005-2006



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# FAITH IN A BOX

## Entertainment Television & Religion

### 2005-2006

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In a November, 2006 Zogby poll, 84% of adults stated that they are not offended by references to God or the Bible on network television shows, while 51% said that entertainment networks should develop shows with positive messages and specific references to God and the Bible. A review of current television programming reveals that on reality programming average Americans frequently demonstrate their faith in unscripted settings, but scripted drama and comedy programs continue to be out of touch with the American public, regularly portraying religion in a negative light.

In this, the seventh Parents Television Council study examining the treatment of religious content on television, an entire year of prime-time broadcast programming was analyzed. The PTC examined a total of 2,271.5 hours of programming containing 1,425 treatments of religion.

### MAJOR FINDINGS:

- There were half as many portrayals of religion in 2005-2006 (1,425) as in 2003-2004 (2,344).
- In 2005-2006, there were more negative depictions of religion than positive ones (35% to 34%).
- Depictions of aspects affiliated with organized religion (clergy, doctrine or laity) were mostly negative. Negative characterizations tended to come from scripted dramatic or comedy shows. By contrast, on unscripted TV religion tended to be portrayed in a positive light.
- Fox was by far the most anti-religious network. One in every two (49.3%) portrayals of religion on the Fox network was negative. Long-time champion NBC came in second with well over a third (39.3%) of portrayals of religion being negative. Among other networks, on UPN over a third (35.4%) of depictions of religion were negative. ABC registered 30.4% and CBS 29% negative portrayals. The WB network featured the fewest negative depictions of religion (21%).
- The number of negative portrayals increased steadily with each hour of prime time. Negative treatments constituted 31.9 % of all treatments in the 8 p.m. hour, 33.9 % in the 9 p.m. hour and 44.4% in the 10 p.m. hour.
- At no time during prime time, and on no network did the positive portrayal of religion even hit the 50% mark.
- Devout laity – non-clerical individuals who profess religious faith – were treated most negatively by entertainment programs. Over half (50.8%) of all entertainment television's depictions of laity were negative. Only 26% were positive.

- Close behind in negative portrayal were religious institutions (such as particular denominations, specific religious beliefs or direct references to Scripture), nearly half (47.6%) of which were negative. By contrast, only 18% of depictions of religious institutions were positive.
- Prime time television’s portrayal of clergy was also heavily weighted, with less than a third (30.4%) of depictions of and references to clergy being positive, and another two-thirds being negative or ambiguous.
- Only in depictions of religious faith – showing individuals making a simple declaration of belief in God or a higher power, or praying – was television’s portrayal of religion largely positive. Over two-thirds (69.6%) of such portrayals were positive, with less than one-sixth (14.7%) being negative.
- The format of the program was a significant factor in the portrayal which religion received. A majority (57.8%) of the positive portrayals of religion were to be found on reality programs. By



**While most Americans have a healthy belief in and respect for God and religion, the same cannot be assumed of the “creative” professionals responsible for the entertainment media’s scripted programming, proving their disconnection from their viewers.**



contrast, an overwhelming percentage (95.5%) of the negative portrayals of religion came from such Hollywood-scripted drama and comedy programs; only 4.5% of negative portrayals of religion were found on reality shows.

With most Americans professing a belief in God and a majority asking for programming which reflects that belief, it seems a foregone conclusion that television would portray religion positively. Indeed, on reality programs – in which everyday Americans are shown voicing their own sentiments – belief in God is openly acknowledged, and is demonstrated by prayer and behavior indicative of deeply-held faith. But on scripted television such is not the case. On broadcast TV’s dramas and comedies, devout laity is overwhelmingly depicted as hypocritical, clergy as depraved and religious institutions as hopelessly corrupt. While most Americans have a healthy belief in and respect for God and religion, the same cannot be assumed of the “creative” professionals responsible for the entertainment media’s scripted programming, proving their disconnection from their viewers.

**Because Our Children Are Watching.™**

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# FAITH IN A BOX

## Entertainment Television & Religion

2005-2006

DECEMBER 14, 2006 • BY CHRISTOPHER GILDEMEISTER

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### INTRODUCTION

This, the seventh study by the Parents Television Council on the treatment of religion in prime time broadcast entertainment programming, examines the treatment of religious matters from the beginning of the fall season in 2005 throughout an entire year. Religious subject matter was divided into five categories: Faith, Clergy, Laity, Institutions and Doctrine, and Miscellaneous. References to institutions were the most prevalent, at 393 out of 1,425 mentions. References to faith were close behind, at 379 mentions. References to laity constituted 303 references, while clergy came in for 184 mentions. Another 166 miscellaneous mentions of religion also occurred. Straightforward depictions of faith (particularly by contestants on reality programs) tended to be overwhelmingly positive, while in all other categories (especially on scripted dramas and comedy shows) negative depictions dominated. Such findings imply that while most Americans enthusiastically endorse religious belief, Hollywood tolerates an indistinct “spirituality” but is deeply negative towards openly religious individuals and organized religion.

### METHODOLOGY

PTC analysts studied prime time entertainment programming on the six commercial broadcast networks (ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox, WB and UPN) between September 1, 2005 and August 31, 2006. Instances of religious content were entered into a computerized Entertainment Tracking System (ETS) database.

Within each category, depictions were classified as positive, negative, neutral, mixed or unable to

determine. A “neutral” portrayal is one which was neither positive nor negative towards religion. A “mixed” portrayal signifies an instance in which both positive and negative views were expressed (typically, one character voiced a perspective on religion while another character voiced the opposite view). “Unable to determine” means that there was insufficient information presented in the scene to make any determination.

### OVERVIEW

- There were 1,425 depictions of religion – from a brief mention of God to extensive dialogue or entire scenes concerned with religion – an average of one mention per every 1.6 hours of television.
- Of all treatments of religion, 34% were positive while 35% were negative. 27% were either neutral or mixed in treatment. Four percent of incidents contained insufficient context for making a determination.
- The ABC network had by far the most treatments of religion, averaging a little over one incident per hour of programming. NBC averaged almost exactly one treatment of religion per programming hour. Fox averaged one treatment every 1.8 hours, WB one every 3.6 hours, and CBS one every 3.7 hours. UPN featured the fewest treatments of religion, only one in every 5 hours of programming.
- CBS was the network with the highest percentage of pro-religious incidents, with 47% of its treatments of religion being positive. WB followed with 41.3% positive treatments and ABC with 37.7%. NBC (27.8%) and Fox (27.2%)

nearly tied, while UPN (19.3%) had the lowest percentage of positive religious portrayals.

- Fox had the highest percentage of anti-religious depictions, with 1 of every 2 depictions of religion – almost exactly half (49.7%) – being negative. NBC closely followed, with 39.3% of their depictions of religion being negative, while 35.4% of UPN depictions were negative. 30% of ABC's portrayals were negative, followed by 29% of CBS' and 21% of WB's.
- 8 p.m. was the time slot with the highest percentage of positive depictions of religion. However, negative depictions outweighed positive on Fox and UPN even then.
- In the 10 p.m. timeslot, negative portrayals of religion outweighed positive on every network.
- On Fox, negative portrayals of religion outweighed positive ones in every time slot.
- The percentage of negative portrayals of religion rose steadily across all networks with each hour of prime-time: 31.9% negative at 8 p.m., 33.9% at 9 p.m. and 44.4% – almost half – negative by 10 p.m.
- Faith was the category most often portrayed positively, with over two-thirds (69.6%) of such incidents shown in a positive light.
- Laypeople and institutional religion were most often portrayed negatively. Slightly over half (50.8%) of all portrayals of laity were negative, while nearly half (47.6%) of the depictions of institutional religion were.
- Depictions of clergy were split three ways, with a third (33.7%) being negative, slightly under a third (30.4%) being positive and slightly over a third (35.8%) being neutral or ambiguous.
- Program format was a heavy determinant of the portrayal which religion received. Of all negative treatments of religion, 95.5% occurred on scripted drama and comedy programs. Only 4.5% of such negative treatments occurred on reality programs. Furthermore, 57.8% of positive treatments of religion also occurred on reality programs, while only 42.2% of positive portrayals occurred on scripted programs.

## CATEGORIES

### FAITH

**This category denotes instances in which individuals manifest their religious belief or lack thereof, either through a simple declaration of belief or the act of prayer.**

#### **POSITIVE – (69.6 %)**

Cindy Teas, who started a summer camp for handicapped children, states: "I thought about how many times I felt like God held my hand and walked me through this walk of faith...and there were all those little hands I've had the opportunity to hold."

**(ABC, *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* October 16, 2005)**

Dunstin, who is suffering from cancer, says: "I just trust in the Lord to take care of my children and family...Sometimes you wonder, why me? But then...you give thanks to the Lord, pray, and move on."

**(ABC, *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, March 19, 2006)**

P. Miller says: "You gotta pray and you gotta thank The Man up above for just givin' you the opportunity to do some of the things that you wanna do." Miller and his dance partner Ashly are shown holding hands in prayer before their dance performance. Both say "Amen" at the conclusion of their prayer.

**(ABC, *Dancing with the Stars*, January 27, 2006)**

Danni leads her group in prayer to Jesus, giving thanks for their meal.

**(CBS, *Survivor: Guatemala*, October 13, 2005)**

Mandisa tells Simon Cowell that she has forgiven him for his rude remarks about her weight because of the grace she was given through Jesus Christ.

**(Fox, *American Idol*, February 15, 2006)**

Melony states: "I've been blessed to still be alive this year, and God gave me life. He gave me another chance, and I'm going to live and live it healthy!"

**(NBC, *The Biggest Loser*, January 4, 2006)**

Carly, who was diagnosed with a brain tumor when she was four-years-old but recovered, says: "A lot of people prayed for me and I think that really helped me."

(NBC, *Three Wishes*, September 30, 2005)

The Weaver family prays and asks God to keep them safe. Mrs. Weaver is heard in voice-over stating that it was the family's relationship with God that enabled the family to get through her husband's death. Throughout the episode Mrs. Weaver prays for help in accomplishing her tasks.

(CBS, *The Amazing Race: Family Edition*, September 27, 2005)

President Allen is informed that North Korean warships are preparing to attack an American vessel trying to rescue trapped sailors. Allen says, "Maybe we should say a prayer." The President, her husband and her Chief of Staff join hands and pray.

(ABC, *Commander in Chief*, January 17, 2006)

Simon prays before his wedding: "Help me today and tomorrow and every day after that. Because God, I think I got myself into something I'm pretty sure I can't handle. I don't know, maybe all grooms feel that way. But please make sure I'm doing the right thing."

(WB, *7th Heaven*, May 1, 2006)

**NEGATIVE – (14.7 %)**

At a church fundraiser, two men play a game called "Halo Toss," in which they must throw rings around the heads of statues of saints. One man states that "It's all a big scam." The second man asks, "The game?" The first man replies, "No, religion in general."

(Fox, *The Simpsons*, March 19, 2006)

House tells a religious patient that the patient is either psychotic or a scam artist for believing that God speaks to him.

(Fox, *House M.D.*, April 25, 2006)

Larry tries to call a woman friend, but dials a wrong number. Larry: "No thank you, I don't want to accept Jesus Christ as my personal Savior."

(Fox, *The War at Home*, April 16, 2006)

A young patient, Justin, requires a new heart but feels guilty that another child had to die. A priest tells Justin: "God wants you to live. That's why He sent you the heart. Justin replies: "I'm not stupid, okay? God didn't send me the heart. There's no such thing as God."

(ABC, *Grey's Anatomy*, December 11, 2005)

Bright tries to console Hannah, saying that although bad things do happen good may ultimately result. Hannah disagrees: "If there were no God, man would surely have created one. You either believe God exists and everything else came after, or you believe we were all so freaked out by everything that came

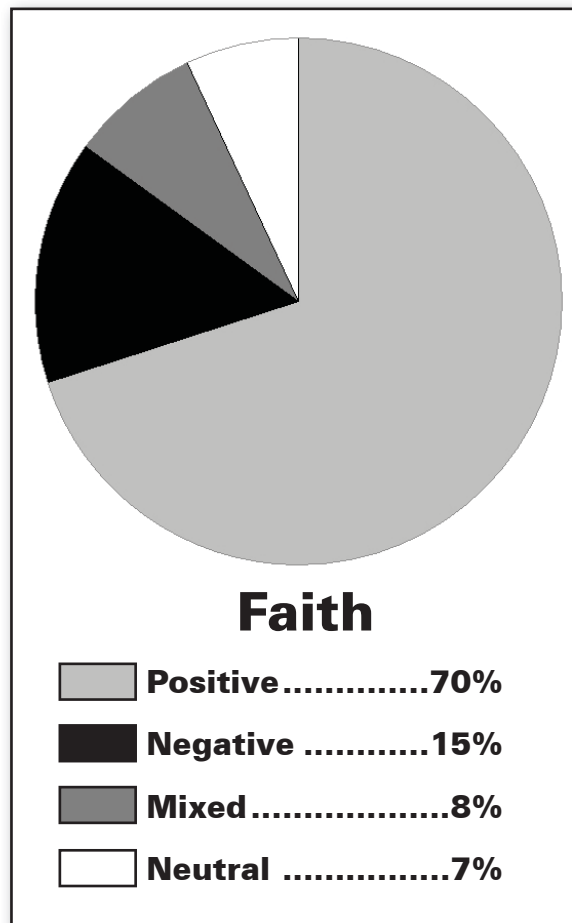
after that we invented something bigger than we could explain, so we wouldn't have to explain it."

(WB, *Everwood*, November 10, 2005)

**MIXED – (7.6 %)**

Dr. Burke explains his personal beliefs to Cristina: "With all medical realities being equal, why does one patient live and another die? I believe there is a mind-body-spirit connection." Cristina responds: "Let me get this straight. You don't just celebrate Christmas, you actually believe in Santa Claus?"

(ABC, *Grey's Anatomy*, December 11, 2006)



Gideon speaks to a troubled girl, who asks him if God punishes bad people. Gideon replies that during Hurricane Katrina, some people said that the city got what it deserved because of all the drinking and partying that took place there, but that others said that the storm proved God's love and protection because the levees didn't break until the storm was over and thousands of lives that could have been lost were saved.

(CBS, *Criminal Minds*, November 30, 2005)

### **NEUTRAL – (6.6%)**

Van is excited by his new television set and exclaims: "Oh, thank the Lord! This is the best thing that's ever happened to me."

(WB, *Reba*, January 27, 2006)

## **INSTITUTIONS AND DOCTRINE**

This category refers to mentions or depictions of specific religious denominations or beliefs, and to Scriptural references.

### **POSITIVE – (18 %)**

David tells the judges about his faith and love of dance: "I'm a modern Orthodox Jew auditioning for a dance competition...Sometimes I'll be in synagogue praying and I'll just, y'know, bust a move and people will start giggling." A judge introduces David's routine by saying: "Representing the Orthodox Jewish community..." Dave enthusiastically exclaims: "That's right!"

(Fox, *So You Think You Can Dance*, May 25, 2006)

Eric tells the youthful Sam and David the history of St. Nicholas: "Nicholas' parents died when he was just a little boy. But he inherited all of his parents' wealth, and even when he was still just a young man, he used all of his money and everything that he'd

been left to help other people. And he dedicated his life to serving God...People started giving in his name just as he had given in the name of Christ. And Nicholas is still celebrated in the form of Saint Nick, or as we call him, Santa Claus."

(WB, *7th Heaven*, December 12, 2005)

Ty and his crew build a worship/prayer room into a Hindu family's home. Ty states: "We have learned a lot about Hindu religion this week, and we wanted to make certain we honored that in your house." The family is shown removing their shoes and chanting, kneeling and bowing in prayer before a statue of Kali. One daughter says: "Our religion is everything to us. That's what got us through."

(ABC, *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, May 7, 2006)

### **NEGATIVE – (47.6 %)**

Jesus Christ is depicted as a teenager arguing with St. Joseph: "Up yours, Joseph! You're not my real dad!" Jesus phones Heaven, where God the Father answers while lying in bed with a woman. God hangs up on Jesus and leers at the woman, who holds up a condom. God responds: "Oh, come on, baby. It's my birthday."

(Fox, *The Family Guy*, November 20, 2005)

God is shown passing gas and lighting the gas on fire. Peter explains that this is how God created the universe.

(Fox, *The Family Guy*, May 14, 2006)

Ned Flanders complains to his minister about evolution being taught in the public schools: "They're telling people we're descended from a pack of apes! There's nothing about that in the Bible!" Ned's pastor holds up a Bible and says: "You've gotta take this thing with a grain of salt." When the pastor's wife tells him that the controversy could attract new members, the pastor considers: "Our membership HAS been dwindling since the Episcopalians put in those vibrating pews."

(Fox, *The Simpsons*, April 15, 2006)

Homer visits India and is told he is a god. Homer says: "God has a white beard and invented the DaVinci code." A Hindu tells Homer: "In our system



of beliefs there are many gods." When his wife and children arrive they find Homer in a temple being worshipped as a god.

(Fox, *The Simpsons*, April 9, 2006)

An aide tells candidate Santos before a political debate, "You can't let this communion thing bother you. Most Catholics are pro-choice. How do bishops expect politicians to do what they can't even do in their own church?"

(NBC, *The West Wing*, October 30, 2006)

Shirley Schmidt defends a fellow lawyer who attacked a priest with an axe. She cross-examines the priest: "You knew your parishioner was a pedophile...If a pedophile killer confesses his crime, you'll protect that secret." The priest protests: "I cannot break the confessional seal. It's canon law." Shirley sneers: "Is that stupid?...Has the Catholic church earned some special exemption when it comes to pedophiles? Do we trust them more in this area?...Do I dare ask where those three fingers had been prior to my client chopping them off?"

(ABC, *Boston Legal*, December 13, 2006)

Young Jake prays that his teacher catches anthrax. His father Alan asks him where he learned about prayer. Jake tells him: "This guy on TV, Reverend Don. He talks to God." Alan asks if Reverend Don told him to ask God to strike down his teachers. Jake replies: "No, activist judges. But I figure, why can't it work on Miss Stanley? And you know what else? If I send Reverend Don money, God will make me rich."

(CBS, *Two and a Half Men*, November 21, 2005)

Detective Conti has tracked down murderer Darryl. In a flashback, Darryl is shown kneeling in

prayer over a dead elderly couple and drawing an Orthodox cross on the dead woman's forehead in blood. Conti remarks: "Good churchgoing boy that he was, he felt so guilty about the murders that he made a cross on Mrs. Terzian's head."

(ABC, *Injustice*, February 3, 2006)

**MIXED – (22.4 %)**

House remarks on a Christian patient with an STD:

"Yeah, the hand of God reached into the kid's pants and made him have sex... he's just another liar and manipulator." Dr. Wilson responds: "It is possible to believe in something and still fail to live up to it, y'know."

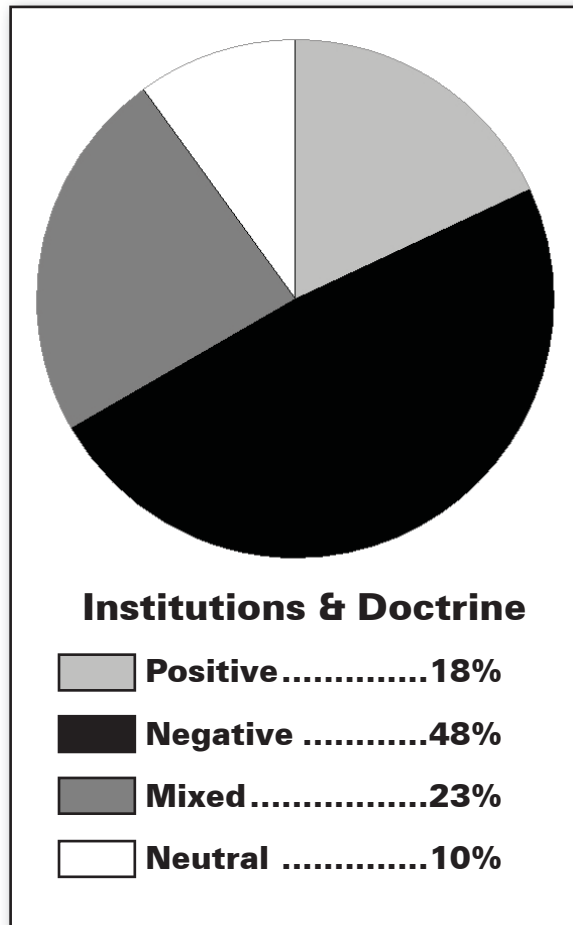
(Fox, *House M.D.*, April 25, 2006)

Veronica, hoping to catch a drug dealer, plants a hidden camera and microphone in a confessional, then tells the priest that she is going to Hell because she sometimes does bad things to expose criminals. The priest quotes from Romans chapter 12: " 'Vengeance is mine. I will repay, sayeth the Lord...Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.' That might be something for you to think about."

(UPN, *Veronica Mars*, February 1, 2006)

Lee and Dan state that they will not be attending work as they will be observing Rosh Hashanah. Lee says: "I will be going to synagogue to pray. I definitely have my team in mind during the whole holiday...I'm saying a special prayer for them." But co-worker Lenny is irritated: "This is (bleeped) stupid!...I'm Jewish like other guys but I didn't use it as an excuse not to work."

(NBC, *The Apprentice*, March 13, 2006)



Bones discusses voodoo: "Voodoo healing is quite effective. No crazier than acupuncture or exorcism." Booth protests: "Hey, go easy on the Catholics, okay?"

(Fox, *Bones*, April 19, 2006)

Hassan greets Charley at a Christmas party: "Congratulations on the day of the birth of your savior. Not my savior, but we can agree to disagree."

(ABC, *Hope & Faith*, December 13, 2006)

### **NEUTRAL – (9.7%)**

While searching the Wolfowitz home, Catherine picks up a menorah and says: "Shabbat Shalom." Brass replies: "Jewish?"

(CBS, *C.S.I.*, February 9, 2006)

Contestant Cheryl points out that her entire church is in the audience. Host Howie asks: "The whole church is here? They're all dressed the same." Cheryl replies, "They're all dressed the same because that's my church choir."

(NBC, *Deal or No Deal*, February 27, 2006)

## **CLERGY**

### **POSITIVE – (30.4 %)**

Lindy returns home as a single mother. She feels she has shamed her family and fears that her father, a Baptist deacon, will reject her. Lindy's father preaches on Sunday from a pulpit: "Darling, I love you...And when that little girl that you gave us was born, she brought more joy into my life than I can imagine. She put a smile in my heart that will never fade, and I just want to tell you that there's never been a time I was ashamed of you."

(NBC, *Three Wishes*, September 30, 2005)

The crew builds a new home and chapel for the family of deceased Rev. John White. White's widow Dana remembers him: "He really was a missionary to the broken-hearted. He wanted to be there for hurting people. That's what a pastor does."

(ABC, *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, March 12, 2006)

Assistant pastor Lucy talks to her father Eric, a senior pastor. She reveals that she's afraid because the congregation is relying on her to make important decisions. Eric comforts her: "We're not super-reverends. We're just people, people who rely on life (Eric looks heavenward) to show us the way – so that we can show others." Lucy gazes up to Heaven and replies: "I need to remember that...I know You're there for me, so bring it on!"

(WB, *7th Heaven*, October 17 2005)

Mr. Eko recalls his brother Yemi, who was a priest. Eko forced Yemi to smuggle drugs on a Christian relief flight. When soldiers approached to capture Eko, Yemi leapt in front of him, took the bullet meant for Eko and died. Yemi's heroic action inspired Eko to reform and become a priest himself.

(ABC, *Lost*, January 11, 2006)

### **NEGATIVE – (33.7 %)**

Sister Olivia confesses that she assisted in assaulting a black man: "He begged me. And I stared at him right in the face and I said, 'What are you looking at, nigger?' and then I kicked him in the face."

(NBC, *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*, October 23, 2005)

Dwight asks Shirley to represent him in a divorce, stating that he committed bestiality by having sex with a cow: "It's not what you think...I've been a good husband for 23 years. I'm a deacon at our church!"

(ABC, *Boston Legal*, November 8, 2005)

Sara pretends to have a "clergy fetish" in order to get Rev. Diddum to agree to her terms in a lawsuit. She asks Rev. Diddum to remove his clerical collar. After sniffing it sensually, Sara demands they have sex on the desk. Rev. Diddum agrees, saying: "Maybe what you're feeling isn't the product of a fetish so much as two of God's children desirous of coming together...It's what God wants."

(ABC, *Boston Legal*, October 11, 2005)

Episcopalian bishops Bertram and Bea have been having an affair with one another, Bertram cheating on his wife to do so. Bertram speaks to Bea: "I have given this a great deal of thought, and I've decided that our happiness – yours and mine – it's more important than our vocation." Bertram proposes to Bea. She indignantly refuses to marry him, but makes it clear she is willing to continue their affair.

**(NBC, *The Book of Daniel*, January 20, 2006)**

Fr. Daniel takes prescription medicine for his headache. Bishop Bea demands a pill. Daniel warns her of their strength, but the bishop persists: "I lived through the Sixties. I doubt you could bring me down. What have you got?...Oooh, I like codeine. Gimme!" Later Daniel catches Bea rifling his desk for more drugs and warns her: "These can be tough on your liver." Bishop Bea replies: "Yeah well, so can brandy. But I figure, at my age how much more damage can I do, right?"

**(NBC, *The Book of Daniel*, January 6, 2006)**

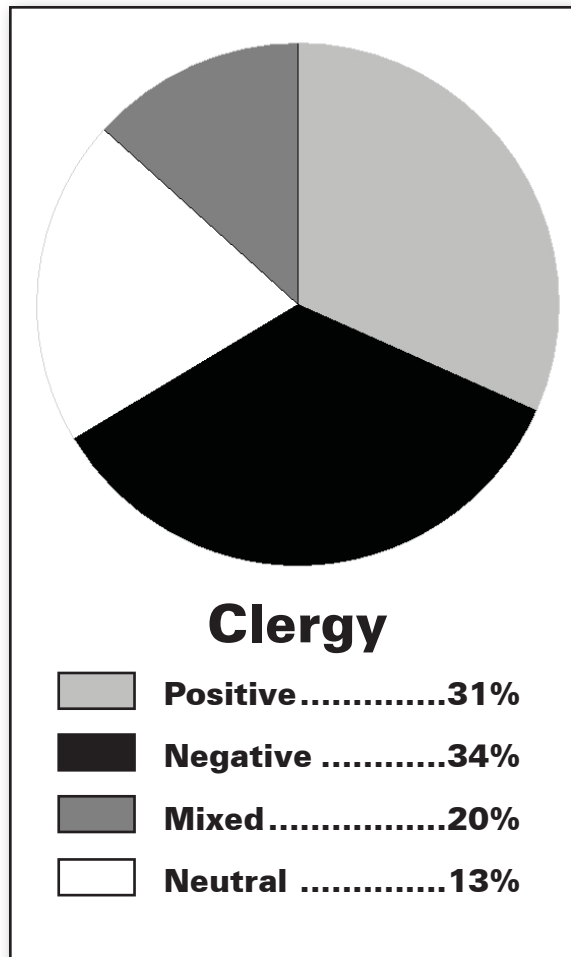
Members of a synagogue believe that their Chamash, a copy of the Torah used in prayer, has been saved from the Nazis and has been sacred for generations. The Chamash is desecrated and a man is murdered. When a man is about to be convicted for the killing, a rabbi comes forward and states that he has lied about the Chamash, admitting that he bought it in a used bookstore. When McCoy asks him to account for his deception, the rabbi replies: "The Bible is full of stories that may be apocryphal. Do we believe that Methuselah lived 900 years? Or that Moses parted the Red Sea?"

**(NBC, *Law & Order*, December 7 2005)**

Rev. Lovejoy needs to pay a toll and takes money from the offering plate, saying: "Don't worry, this one's on Jesus." When his dashboard-mounted Jesus figurine appears to glare at him, Lovejoy says: "Oh, just be cool for once."

**(Fox, *The Simpsons*, January 8, 2006)**

**NEUTRAL – (19.5 %)**



Police officers stand over the dead body of a priest in a church. A nun sits talking to a woman who saw the killer.

**(CBS, *Criminal Minds*, March 22, 2006)**

A minister comes to see Rodney after parents complain about Rodney's Sunday school teaching. Rodney tells his wife: "Take off your shirt so he thinks it's a bad time!"

**(ABC, *Rodney*, October 4, 2005)**

**MIXED – (13 %)**

Sr. Theresa and another nun argue about sheltering prostitutes at the church. Sr. Theresa protests: "Their pimps come looking for them, it's a menace. This is not our mission." The other

nun replies: "It's our Christian duty."

**(NBC, *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*, October 23, 2005)**

## LAITY

This category concerns depictions of individuals who profess religion and consider it a strong or central force in their own lives. It encompasses both overtly religious words and deeds and secular conduct.

### **POSITIVE – (26 %)**

After winning the \$100,000 prize for best home video, Karen tells the host: “God provided this money for us because of an answer to a prayer I had put in. We’re going to donate some to the church.”

(ABC, *America’s Funniest Home Videos*, December 11, 2005)

Kaysar states that he came on the show to represent Muslims and to break down stereotypes and bias against them. He says he has difficulty with the competition because it involves lying and scheming, which is against his religion. Kaysar is shown kneeling and praying on his prayer mat.

(CBS, *Big Brother 7: All Stars*, July 20, 2006)

The foreman of a construction crew quotes Psalm 127 before beginning work: “The Good Book says, ‘If the Lord doesn’t build the house, in vain do the builders labor.’” The crew later donates \$300,000 to Beverly to help with her children’s education.

(ABC, *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, May 21, 2006)

Sandy tells Ruth that the Camdens spend Christmas Eve day every year volunteering, because helping others is the true meaning of Christmas. The Camden children are shown giving gifts to a needy

family, visiting a nursing home and volunteering at a hospital.

(WB, *7th Heaven*, December 12, 2005)

### **NEGATIVE – (50.8 %)**

Alyssa invites Chris to join her at a Young Republicans meeting: “We perpetuate the ideal that Jesus chose America to destroy non-believers and brown people.”

(Fox, *The Family Guy*, April 30, 2006)

Annabeth interrogates Cindy, who is covered with blood and manically reciting Bible verses. Cindy states that she spoke to the Lord, that God told her to kill her husband and that God’s hand guided hers as she stabbed her husband to death. Cindy says that she knows that murder is against the law, but that she answers to a higher authority.

(CBS, *Close to Home*, October 25, 2005)

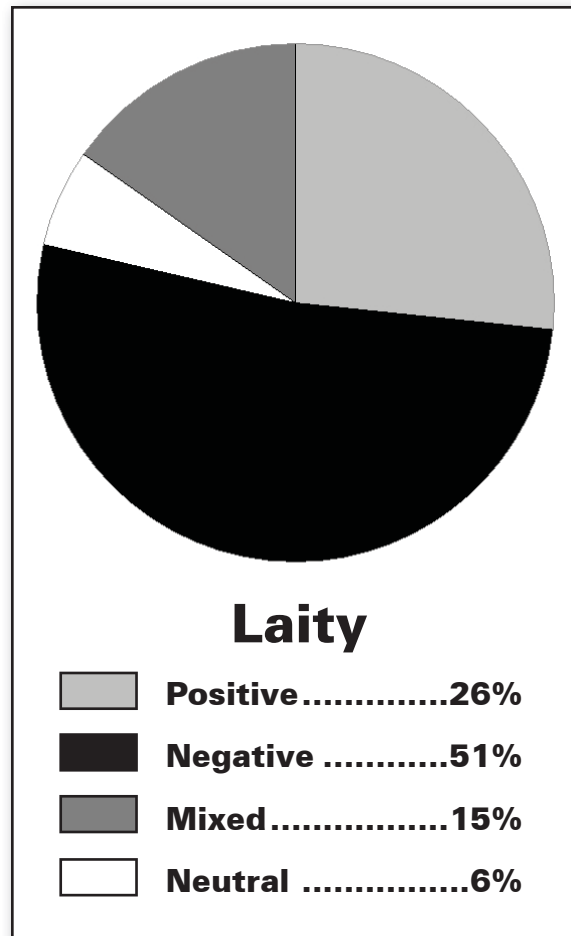
JT briefs the team on Lars: “When our MPs arrested him, he calmly explained that he was on a holy crusade to kill Muslims. These are the Holy

Crusaders – a fundamentalist group formed by Lars Vogel.” Later, Lars shrieks at his Muslim hostages: “You Muslims aren’t the only ones who know how to blow things up!”

(NBC, *The E-Ring*, November 16, 2006)

Gabi goes to confession and lies to a priest, telling him that Sr. Mary is having an affair with her husband. After gloating at getting Sr. Mary transferred to Alaska, Gabi slaps Sr. Mary and pushes her into a rack of candles, setting her on fire.

(ABC, *Desperate Housewives*, January 22, 2006)



Eric complains to the detectives about his synagogue's Torah being desecrated. Eric is in a strip club receiving a lap dance at the time: "The rabbis say 'A happy husband makes a happy marriage'." It is revealed that Eric himself ordered the Torah destroyed in order to swindle the rabbi.

(NBC, *Law & Order*, December 7, 2006)

Freddie talks about his sister's list of 'Things To Do Before I Go To College': "There was a big check next to 'Lose Virginity'. It was right between 'Make Sexy Mix Tape' and 'Apologize to Christ'."

(ABC, *Freddie*, October 19, 2005)

Gabi has had sex with teenager John. John tells her: "Me and my friend Justin had this bet to see who could lose their virginity first this summer at Bible camp. Guess I beat him to the punch."

(ABC, *Desperate Housewives*, May 21, 2006)

Jason asks Bernie for permission to date his daughter Vanessa: "I won't go into a girl's house if her parents aren't home. I believe in hands-free kissing and I only date in groups. I'm a Christian. I know a lot of people say that, but it's important for me to walk the walk." Bernie later catches Jason necking with Vanessa in his car.

(Fox, *The Bernie Mac Show*, March 31, 2006)

Maya and Darnell argue over whether to go to Darnell's Episcopal church or Maya's Baptist service. They ask young Jubari to decide. Jubari tells them to do what they always do. The family drives straight to a restaurant to arrive "before all the church folks show up."

(UPN, *Girlfriends*, December 12, 2006)

### **NEUTRAL – (5.6 %)**

Rod and Todd Flanders play a game of "Christian Clue."

(Fox, *The Simpsons*, March 19, 2006)

### **MIXED – (14.5 %)**

Nick accidentally puts \$100 in a collection plate. Realizing his mistake, he tells J.T. to take the money back when the plate comes to him. J.T. asks him: "You gonna steal from Jesus?" and refuses to help.

(UPN, *Eve*, February 16, 2006)

Rose and Simon discuss their wedding plans. Rose says: "I hope you don't think we have to get married in a church." Simon replies: "We absolutely have to get married in a church!...I've been going to that church my whole life. And my father is the minister there, and I want him to marry us."

(WB, *7th Heaven*, February 13, 2006)

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

### **POSITIVE (12.6 %)**

A woman tells military widow Katie: "God bless you. I'm extremely sorry for your loss. It's my loss, too."

(NBC, *Three Wishes*, October 28, 2005)

Lisa Rinna explains her performance: "Some higher power came in and started dancing through me."

(ABC, *Dancing with the Stars*, January 27, 2006)

At the inauguration of President-elect Santos, Cardinal Doherty leads a prayer and a choir sings America the Beautiful: "God shed his grace on thee."

(NBC, *The West Wing*, May 14, 2006)

A tombstone reads: "Heavenly Father, bless this Unknown Boy."

(NBC, *Law & Order: SVU*, November 8, 2005)

### **NEGATIVE – (26.5 %)**

God descends from Heaven in the form of a shapely woman. Steve asks to see God's "boobs." God shows Steve Her breasts.

(Fox, *American Dad*, November 13, 2005)

Looking at a Christmas nativity scene, Will mentions that his friend Jack "put the Wise Men in a three-way."

(NBC, *Will & Grace*, December 8, 2005)

President Bartlett states: "Mozart's father believed his son to be a miracle from God. He was so convinced of this that he forced young Wolfgang to play all over Europe. His father felt it was his duty, in a world where no one believed in miracles

anymore, to show them God’s latest...it pretty much screwed him for the rest of his life.”

(NBC, *The West Wing*, October 16, 2005)

Dr. Melon shows off his wife’s breast implants: “Never again will a woman be stuck with what the Almighty gave her.”

(NBC, *Las Vegas*, November 7, 2005)

A woman gives Dwight a glass of wine and says: “It’s alright. Jesus drank wine.”

(NBC, *The Office*, November 22, 2005)

Jon has been trying to track down a witness: “I’ve got a lead on the drummer. You wouldn’t believe how many Christian rock labels there are out there. Hundreds. Maybe thousands.”

(ABC, *Injustice*, March 24, 2006)

**NEUTRAL**  
**(46.4 %)**

Freddie points out a nativity scene: “Please welcome the entire Christ family!”

(ABC, *Freddie*, December 14, 2006)

Margarette arrives at the Filsher family’s home and sees a star-shaped figure on the wall. The star represents astronomy, but Margarette mistakes it for a satanic symbol.

(Fox, *Trading Spouses*, November 2, 2005)

Police question a man. A woman states that the man talked to her about the Book of Mormon. The Book is shown lying on a car hood.

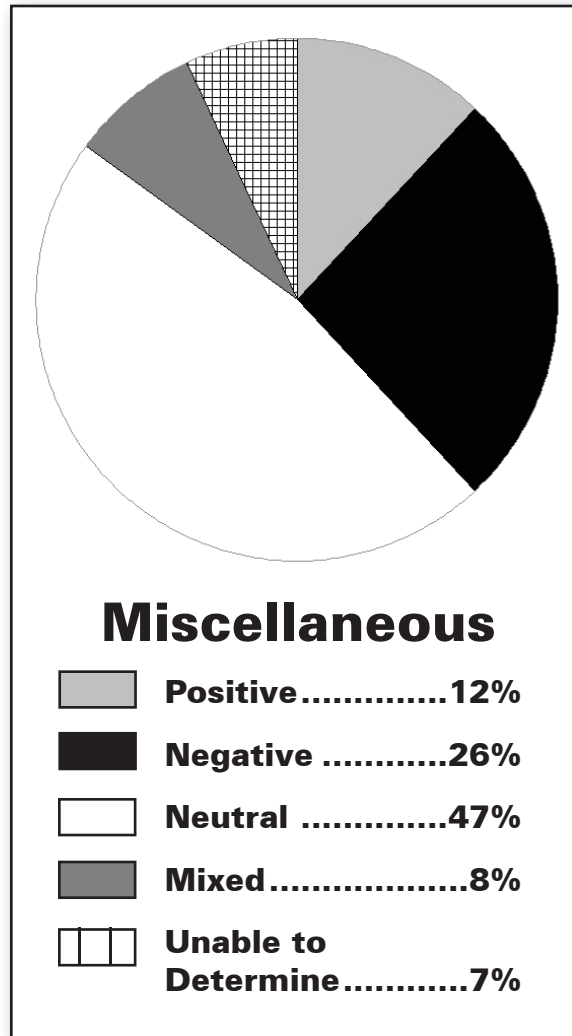
(Fox, *Cops*, June 9, 2006)

Clark (Superboy) begs Jor-El to help him save Lana. Jor-El responds: “Our powers are extraordinary, Clark – but we are not gods.”

(WB, *Smallville*, January 26, 2006)

A murder suspect tells a detective: “What a little pagan you are. Don’t you know that the secret of luck is never to trust it?”

(NBC, *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*, October 14, 2005)



**MIXED – (7.8 %)**

During a nativity play, a little girl is shown walking up from the audience and taking the Baby Jesus doll out of the manger. Tom Bergeron quips: “It’s good to find Jesus. It’s bad to find Jesus and take Him back to your seat.”

(ABC, *America’s Funniest Home Videos*, December 2, 2005)

**UNABLE TO DETERMINE – (6.6 %)**

Karen tells Grace: “You’re going to have a Jewish black baby!”

(NBC, *Will & Grace*, March 16, 2005)

Joan states that she and Quagmire will be married in a church.

(Fox, *The Family Guy*, March 12, 2006)

## CONCLUSION

On May 18, 2005 CBS president Les Moonves canceled *Joan of Arcadia*, a program that portrayed God appearing to the teenaged Joan and confronting her with moral questions; and replaced it with *Ghost Whisperer*, a show about a spiritualist medium who talks to ghosts. Although this cancellation of a popular program produced an outcry from many viewers and a campaign to save the show, Moonves defended his move with the statement, “Ghosts skew younger than God” — implying that God and organized religion are unpopular and obsolete. This incident serves as an excellent illustration of the difference between Hollywood’s attitude toward religion and that of the American public.

The vast majority of Americans hold religion to be of deep personal importance, and for many it is the center of their lives. Most Americans treat religious beliefs with respect and reverence and would like to see the entertainment industry do so. In a November 2006 Zogby poll, a large majority (84%) of adults stated that they are not offended by references to God or the Bible on network television. Half (51%) of those responding expressed a wish for more network shows with positive messages, and even for specific references in programs to God, the Bible and religion. These sentiments are echoed by the overwhelming enthusiasm shown for

religion on reality TV. On such programs, average Americans openly acknowledge the importance of religion and frequently demonstrate their belief in God by words, actions and prayer.

This stands in stark contrast to Hollywood’s “creative” elite, which demonstrates its contempt for religion — and for its own viewing audience — by deliberately portraying God as subject of ridicule, and followers of organized religion as oppressive, fanatical, hypocritical and hopelessly corrupt. In television’s “creative” circles, calling a program “irreverent” is the highest praise. Mockery of God is commonplace on comedies like *American Dad*, *Family Guy* and *The Simpsons*, while such dramas as *Boston Legal* and *C.S.I.* viciously caricature religious individuals and beliefs and put diatribes against religion into the mouths of their lead characters.

It is past time that television networks abandon their long-standing opposition to religion, and begin to treat it — and the American viewing public — with the respect they deserve. As poll results and the popularity of the networks’ own reality programs show, doing so would only increase television’s popularity. At a time when broadcast television is losing ever more viewers to cable, such a move could benefit both their viewers’ sensibilities — and their own bottom line.

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# STATISTICAL APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1:

### STATISTICAL BREAKDOWN BY NETWORK & TIME

NETWORK and TIME (#)			POSITIVE % (#)	NEGATIVE % (#)	NEUTRAL % (#)	MIXED % (#)	UNABLE % (#)
ABC	7	(9)	11.1 (1)	22.2 (2)	55.5 (5)	11.1 (1)	0
ABC	8	(313)	39.3 (123)	27.5 (86)	17.9 (56)	13.7 (43)	1.6 (5)
ABC	9	(117)	38.4 (45)	30.7 (36)	16.2 (19)	11.9 (14)	2.5 (3)
ABC	10	(125)	35.2 (44)	38.4 (48)	16 (20)	9.6 (12)	0.8 (1)
CBS	7	(0)	0	0	0	0	0
CBS	8	(29)	62 (18)	3.4 (1)	27.5 (8)	6.9 (2)	0
CBS	9	(86)	47.7 (41)	31.4 (27)	16.3 (14)	3.5 (3)	1.1 (1)
CBS	10	(19)	21 (4)	57.9 (11)	10.5 (2)	10.5 (2)	0
NBC	7	(0)	0	0	0	0	0
NBC	8	(75)	41.3 (31)	30.6 (23)	17.3 (13)	6.6 (5)	4 (3)
NBC	9	(165)	34.5 (57)	35 (58)	16.9 (28)	10.3 (17)	3 (5)
NBC	10	(151)	14 (21)	48.3 (73)	21.8 (33)	10.6 (16)	5.3 (8)
Fox	7	(18)	11 (2)	50 (9)	22 (4)	11 (2)	5.5 (1)
Fox	8	(113)	23.9 (27)	54.8 (62)	10.6 (12)	7 (8)	3.5 (4)
Fox	9	(104)	33.6 (35)	43.2 (45)	8.6 (9)	8.6 (9)	5.7 (6)
Fox	10	(0)	0 0	0	0 0		
WB	7	(0)	0	0	0	0	0
WB	8	(39)	48.7 (19)	23 (9)	12.8 (5)	10.2 (4)	5.1 (2)
WB	9	(36)	33 (12)	19.4 (7)	25 (9)	19.4 (7)	2.7 (1)
WB	10	(0)	0 0	0	0 0		
UPN	7	(0)	0	0	0	0	0
UPN	8	(16)	18.75 (3)	37.5 (6)	31.25 (5)	12.5 (2)	0
UPN	9	(15)	20 (3)	33 (5)	6.6 (1)	33 (5)	6.6 (1)
UPN	10	(0)	0	0	0	0	0



## APPENDIX 2: STATISTICAL BREAKDOWN BY DEPICTION

<b>CATEGORY (#)</b>	<b>POSITIVE % (#)</b>	<b>NEGATIVE % (#)</b>	<b>NEUTRAL % (#)</b>	<b>MIXED % (#)</b>	<b>UNABLE % (#)</b>
Clergy (184)	30.4 (56)	33.7 (62)	19.5 (36)	13 (24)	3.3 (6)
Laity (303)	26 (79)	50.8 (154)	5.6 (17)	14.5 (44)	3 (9)
Faith (379)	69.6 (264)	14.7 (56)	6.6 (25)	7.6 (29)	1.3 (5)
Doctrine (393)	18 (71)	47.6 (187)	22.4 (88)	9.7 (38)	2.3 (9)
Misc (166)	12.6 (21)	26.5 (44)	46.4 (77)	7.8 (13)	6.6 (11)



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## ABOUT THE PTC

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

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

Through its comprehensive database of network prime time programming, the PTC makes available to sponsors and viewers an exhaustive list of network television shows that are considered socially responsible; that are uplifting rather than denigrating; that display positive role models; and are devoid of blatant sex, graphic violence, and profanity. With its powerful national coalition of more than 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 more than 36 chapters nationwide and growing, the PTC can, at a moment's notice, send a torrent of information to constituents across the country to address and respond to broadcast decency issues. These "feet on the street" carry the PTC message to their community; to local television affiliates; to national and local advertisers; and to local, state and federal officials.

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

PTC Family Guide uses a concise system of "red light," "green light," and "yellow light" to rate television shows for foul language, sexual content, and violence. Families need only to log on to [www.parentstv.org](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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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The Parents Television Council (PTC) 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.

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