

**GOVERNMENT AND TELEVISION: IMPROVING
PROGRAMMING WITHOUT CENSORSHIP**

HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT
MANAGEMENT, RESTRUCTURING, AND
THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OF THE

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GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
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GOVERNMENT AND TELEVISION: IMPROVING PROGRAMMING WITHOUT CENSORSHIP

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, 1997

U.S. SENATE,
OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT, RESTRUCTURING,
AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SUBCOMMITTEE,
OF THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:07 p.m., in room SD-342, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Sam Brownback, Chairman of the Subcommittee, presiding.

Present: Senators Brownback, Cleland, and Lieberman.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR BROWNBAC

Senator BROWNBAC. I think we will go ahead and call the hearing to order, if we could, and we will do the unusual thing of starting somewhat close to on time for this hearing.

We have a number of good witnesses to testify today about a very important issue. The issue in front of the Subcommittee today is television violence and the role that the Federal Government can and should play in alleviating the negative impact that such violence and sexual innuendo and comment has on children.

I am pleased that we have three extremely distinguished panels, including Senator Mike DeWine of Ohio, researchers, medical experts, child advocates, and representatives of parent groups.

The issue of the impact of television on children represents one of the most vexing problems the country faces today. Parents across the country feel as though they are having to fight their culture to raise their children and it certainly should not be that way. It certainly has not always been that way. In the past, parents have felt that they have been supported by their culture in raising their children rather than having to fight it.

Television is the center of gravity of American culture, and arguably, even of world culture, and as such, it is critical that television have a positive influence on our culture, which is, sadly, not always current the case and many times is not the case at all today.

What can and should the Federal Government do about the decline of our culture and the negative impact that violence in television content has on our children? Well, certainly what government should not do is engage in censorship and government should not impose its standards on the broadcast industry.

As a result, we need to look at other ways that the Federal Government can have a positive influence on the television debate, and one such way would be for the Federal Government to remove the

perceived barriers, either real or artificial, to the creation of voluntary programming guidelines by the industry. This would essentially be a code of conduct for the 21st Century, setting an industry standard by the industry, a standard below which the industry would not go, taking into account the incredible amount of change that has occurred in the broadcast industry.

Some argue that there is no government impediment to the creation of such a voluntary guideline while some believe that there is an impediment, and we certainly want to make it abundantly clear that there is no impediment and we intend to remove any sort of perceived antitrust law impediment that might exist.

That is certainly why I have joined forces with Senator Lieberman, Senator DeWine, and Senator Kohl to introduce the Television Improvement Act of 1997. Our bill picks up on Senator Simon's bill that created an antitrust exemption for the industry from 1990 to 1993. However, we seek to provide the industry with a permanent exemption from U.S. antitrust laws to create a code of conduct for the television industry for the 21st Century.

The television industry must do something to alleviate the negative impact that violence and sexual innuendo in the television content currently has on our children. Government's role should be to be limited to removing any barriers that prevent the industry from engaging in this activity.

This is a most serious activity taking place, particularly when you can look around all across our Nation or you can look right in this very town of what things are taking place, what our children are doing, what is being reported in the newspaper that is happening even in the schools in Washington, D.C., and how much of an influence is television having on those sorts of activities that are taking place.

I hope our witnesses today can help illuminate some information to us of the impact of television on child activity and what we can do to help alleviate that and help renew the American culture in the process.

I am delighted that joining me today is Senator Lieberman. There will probably be some other members, as well, joining us in a little bit. Senator Lieberman, I would turn the microphone to you for an opening statement.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR LIEBERMAN

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks very much for your leadership. I appreciate the opportunity to work with you on these areas of common and broad concern.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, I was one of the original cosponsors of the so-called V-chip legislation and there has been quite a hullabaloo, which I have been part of, about the accuracy and the comprehensiveness of the ratings system that has been adopted by the television networks in response to the V-chip.

But the reality is that all that hullabaloo should not distract us from the main event here, which is that what really matters is what the folks in television put on the tube, not how they rate it, and that is what our focus, I am pleased to say, is here today.

You and I share a strong feeling, along with others, such as our colleague, Senator DeWine, that we need to recenter this debate

and to bring the television industry back, force them back to a focus on the content of what they are putting on the air and on the impact it has on our children, on our culture, and on our country.

The right kinds of ratings coupled with the V-chip will certainly help parents to do their job better, but the bottom line that I hear in Connecticut and that I know you hear in Kansas is that the public is crying out for something more than good labels on bad programming. They want television that, more often than not, reflects rather than rejects the common values that we share as Americans, as a people.

They want television to draw some lines and to say that there are some things that are just too vicious or degrading or prurient or vulgar to put on television screens and send into the homes of millions of Americans where kids are watching. In short, I think what we are all asking for here is higher standards.

With that in mind, I have been pleased and privileged to join with Senator Brownback and Senator DeWine and others in introducing this legislation that, we believe, can go a long way to enabling the television industry to address some of the public's concerns. The Television Program Improvement Act of 1997, which is numbered S. 539, would allow and encourage the broadcast and cable industries to come together to develop a set of voluntary guidelines that are aimed at reducing the negative impact television is having and producing more responsible programming.

There is a kind of "everybody else is doing it, so how can I not do it" attitude in the television industry and we are trying to say here, get together, and if you are worried about antitrust violations, we are going to exempt you from that so you can set some standards, new standards within which you can compete, drawing some lines which you, Mr. and Mrs. Television Executive, are saying you will not cross those lines, even though you could make money doing it, because it is bad for our country.

What we are really hoping for is an industry-wide code of conduct similar to the old National Association of Broadcasters television code which was totally self-drawn, no government involvement, and that is what we hope will happen here again.

We are building this, as the Chairman indicated, on work that Senator Paul Simon did with the original Television Program Improvement Act, upon which our bill is modeled and in which Senator Simon and the Congress challenged the Nation's television programmers to become more responsible in their portrayals of violence.

Much has happened in the intervening period since that legislation. Perhaps most notably, two major monitoring studies have been performed, giving us a comprehensive view of the violence flickering across our screens on a daily basis.

So today, we are going to be able to ask, what do these studies show? How well has the industry responded to the challenge Senator Simon gave them? What do parents think of the steps industry has taken to alleviate the harm done by on-air violence? And, I suppose most pertinent to our legislation, are there additional steps the industry could take, as we believe, to reduce the amount of gratuitous violence that is so easily accessible to our children and

gives them so many ideas about what is acceptable behavior and what is an acceptable way to resolve conflicts.

Mr. Chairman, I do want to note just finally that this is a very distinguished and comprehensive group of witnesses and I look forward to the testimony. I do note with regret the absence of representatives of the television industry itself, though I know that they were invited, and I find their failure to appear disappointing, at least.

I gather that they may come to our third hearing, which will focus on the constitutionality of our legislation and other such proposals, but I wish they would enter into the debate about how much violence, how much sexual content, how much vulgarity is on television and to talk about what we can do together to improve this.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to the testimony.

Senator BROWNBACK. Thank you, Senator Lieberman. I appreciate that very much and your leadership that you have shown on this topic for some period of time.

I am going to call our first panel up. It will be the Hon. Mike DeWine, a U.S. Senator from Ohio who has been a leader on this topic, as well, who has certainly interest from a subcommittee that he chairs on this issue, as well. We are delighted to have him.

We are also delighted to have Senator Max Cleland, who came in with me in this latest class. Max, we are pleased to have you here.

Senator DeWine, the floor is yours.

**TESTIMONY OF HON. MIKE DEWINE, A U.S. SENATOR FROM
THE STATE OF OHIO**

Senator DEWINE. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much, Senator Lieberman, Senator Cleland. I appreciate the opportunity to testify here today.

First, let me congratulate you for the introduction of this bill. You are tackling certainly an important problem that vitally affects the culture of our society and I believe you have done so with foresight, diligence, and genuine concern. I might also add, I think you have done it with restraint. I think you have taken the right approach.

As Chairman of the Judiciary Committee's Antitrust Subcommittee, I ought to mention that my subcommittee will be holding a hearing on the antitrust implications of this bill, and that is, of course, the third hearing that you mentioned. Antitrust, though, is not my primary concern about this legislation. It certainly is important, but when I look at this legislation and what I perceive to be the need for this legislation, I am not focusing on antitrust.

I am not focusing on it really as the Senator from the State of Ohio. I think I look at this more as a parent. I do not pretend to be an expert on television. I do not pretend to in any way match the expertise that you are going to hear later today and that we will hear in the other hearings about what goes on TV and the content of TV, but I do think I know something about kids. I do think I know something about children.

My wife and I have had eight children. They range in age now from Anna, who is turning five this week, to Patrick, who is 29. So

we have had, my wife jokingly says—and it is not a joke, it is true—we have had children in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. So we have seen quite a change.

Senator LIEBERMAN. We are close to another decade now, I just wanted you to know.

Senator DEWINE. Consult Fran about that. [Laughter.]

There has been quite a change in this period of time and we have seen it as parents, as consumers, but you look at TV differently when you have kids. We have looked at TV now for a quarter of a century as parents and there has been a tremendous change in TV, in network TV, and I think, by and large, it has not been for the good. I think it has gone, really, in the wrong direction.

The term “the coarsening of America” is used. That is certainly not original with me, but I will repeat it because I think it is a good way of describing what we see in this country. It is a good way of describing what we see portrayed on TV.

There is legitimate concern that I share with you about the amount of sex on TV, the amount of violence on TV, but I will tell you that the thing that, I guess, really bothers me as a parent is not just the violence and the sex, but what really bothers me is that TV holds up certain things as the norm in society.

TV, for many people today, becomes a reality. We live in a changing society. We live in a society where many times we do not know our neighbors, unlike our grandparents’ generation or great-grandparents’ generation. Many times, the social interaction between people has been—we have seen TV really substitute for that, and children looking at TV and looking at the situations portrayed on TV at 8 o’clock or at 8:30 or sometimes at 7 o’clock at night now, I think, see a reality or a norm that is not the America that I know.

So I think TV, instead of portraying America, I think TV portrays a different America, a different America than I accept, a different America than I see, a different America than I know, traveling the State of Ohio and meeting with thousands and thousands of people every day. To me, that is the real danger of what we see on TV today, that for many people, it becomes a reality and the reality that is portrayed on TV, I do not think is correct, nor do I think it is the right norm. I do not think it accurately reflects, certainly, the values of this country.

As parents, we certainly always try to control what our children see on TV, but we are never totally successful. Sometimes, we are not very successful at all as parents. It is a tough thing, and my wife and I have struggled with this, as I said, for many, many years.

But even assuming if parents had the magical wand and could exercise total control of what their kids see in their own home and what they see when they go visit friends and what they see sometimes when no one is there, even if you could totally control that, I think we have an interest as a society in what is broadcast on TV because it affects the entire society and it affects the world we all live in. It affects the world our children are going to live in, whether they watch it or do not watch it.

So this is a problem, frankly, that parents cannot solve themselves. It is a problem that has to be solved by society as a whole,

by the broader civil society, and the entertainment industry simply cannot take a walk on this. They have to be involved in this.

I have been seeing a steady decline in the quality of TV, really, over the last 25 years. It used to be possible to find family-oriented programming on network TV. Today, I think that situation has changed. Today, we basically are finding family-oriented shows relegated to cable.

You could make the argument that if you have cable and if you have unlimited money and if you can buy the Disney Channel and if you can select other channels, the history channel and make selections on A&E and other things, there is more diversity today in some respects than there ever has been before. That is true only if you include the entire cable spectrum.

So what we have is a situation where, yes, there is more diversity, and yes, there are a lot of choices even for family shows if you have the money, if you can afford the cable, if you can afford some of the premium stations, and if you can buy it. But for people who cannot get cable or for people who cannot afford cable, I think the options are much, much fewer today than ever before in the history of TV.

The shows that you see even on cable today, the Family Station, for example, are many times reruns of what our older children watched 15, 20, or 25 years ago. That is what they are. That tells us something about what programming is actually available out there.

I think it is simply wrong, Mr. Chairman, for the network TV to remain stuck in this downward cycle, where the bad is literally driving out the good. I believe that we, as citizens, need to look for creative ways to try to turn this around. I believe this bill is creative. I think the bill we are talking about today is an important step in the right direction.

Now, I recognize that programming is driven by competitive pressures, as Senator Lieberman has pointed out, and it is competitive pressures from different programming sources. But this bill basically calls for a cease fire among cable and networks and it calls for that cease fire in the name of American families, so that the networks and cable can try to work out industry-wide response to the demand that I hear from millions of American parents for more family-oriented shows.

I believe, in conclusion, Mr. Chairman, that this is a restrained approach. It is sort of a light approach. It is the proper approach. It says simply that if anybody thinks that there is any impediment to the networks talking among themselves, as Senator Lieberman said, talking among themselves to come up with a decent code, a code of standards, if anybody even remotely thinks that is true, this bill says it is not true.

And it also says to the networks, quite frankly, do not come to the American people anymore and use that as an excuse. Do not come and say, we cannot do it because there is some legal prohibition. The bill that you have written simply says that excuse is gone.

And it is, I think, the right approach. I would hope we can pass this legislation. I would hope we would see responsible action by the networks, frankly, not just to keep off some of the things that

we see on TV or to lessen the violence or lessen the sex but really to improve the quality of TV, particularly in shows that are aimed at families and shows that a parent can watch along with a 10-year-old child or a 13-year-old or 14-year-old child. I think this is very, very significant.

I look forward, Mr. Chairman and Senator Lieberman, to working with you and other Members of the Subcommittee on this legislation. I very much appreciate the opportunity to testify this afternoon.

Senator BROWNBACk. Thank you, Senator DeWine. I appreciate that statement and your support for this.

I think we all share the opinion that what we are after here is better programming and it is not for us to try to censor or to make something happen but to encourage an industry to allow something to happen that they can clearly do and they have done in the past, as well.

I am going to be cognizant of your time. I know you have another hearing to go to, so rather than asking questions myself, I will pass it on to Senator Lieberman, if he might have any questions or comments.

Senator LIEBERMAN. I do not, Mr. Chairman, just to thank our colleague for an excellent statement. It is great to be working with you on this children. I think the eight children makes you a certified in this area.

Senator BROWNBACk. I like the idea of there is another decade coming.

Senator DEWINE. I will convey that to my wife.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Just do not tell my wife I said that.

Senator BROWNBACk. Senator Cleland, would you have any questions?

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CLELAND

Senator CLELAND. We are just delighted to have you appear before us and thank you for putting your shoulder to the wheel on something that is of growing importance to the country and to all of us. It is quite clear that television has a massive impact on the lives of young people and I am one of those young people. It had a massive impact on my life in a positive way. Of course, I grew up in the 1950s. But, Lord knows if I was growing up today what kind of impact it would have. So we are delighted that you are here and we look forward to further testimony.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator DEWINE. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator BROWNBACk. Thank you, Senator DeWine.

I would like the second panel to come forward, Dale Kunkel, Associate Professor, Department of Communication, University of California-Santa Barbara, and Jeffrey Cole, Director of UCLA Center for Communication Policy.

Both of these gentlemen have conducted broad-based studies looking at the impact of violence and of television and what is taking place today, how the industry has improved or digressed. I think most people may have seen some of their reports from their studies that have come forward and we wanted to have them here

today to testify about those studies and what their findings are of improvements in the industry.

I might say, before we go to the two next panel members, Senator Cleland, we would like to provide the microphone to you for an opening statement, since we did not do that before Senator DeWine, as he needed to get on to another appointment. But if you would like to make an opening statement, we will provide you the time.

Senator CLELAND. We will just press right on, Mr. Chairman. We look forward to your testimony.

Senator BROWNBACK. Thank you very much.

Dr. Kunkel, would you care to give your testimony to us first? You can either submit your written statement, if you would like to, for the record, and summarize, or you can put forward your written statement, however you would like. We look forward to a lively discussion because the two of you have the best objective data of what is going on in television today and I think we have a number of questions for you to go off of. Please, Dr. Kunkel.

TESTIMONY OF DALE KUNKEL,¹ PH.D., ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA-SANTA BARBARA

Mr. KUNKEL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to testify today.

I am one of several researchers who head the National Television Violence Study. The NTVS project was commissioned by the National Cable Television Association to deliver a series of three annual reports assessing the state of violence on television. It involves researchers at four universities and the project is headquartered at Santa Barbara, where we perform the content analysis, looking at the entire landscape of television programming. We study 23 channels, cutting across both the broadcast and cable networks. They encompass the vast majority of the most frequently viewed channels by the American public.

Although the NTVS project is industry funded, the study is scrupulously independent and free of any influence from industry sources. An advisory council oversees the research project and ensures its scientific integrity. That council includes representatives from such organizations as the American Bar Association, American Medical Association, American Psychological Association, National Education Association, and the National PTA, among others.

Each year, we examine over 100 hours per channel on each of the channels that we study, which means that, collectively, each year a total of more than 2,500 hours of programming is monitored.

The content study carefully categorizes each violent portrayal on the key contextual features which have been demonstrated by scientific research to either enhance or diminish the risk of a harmful effect on the audience, and in particular, on child viewers.

Scientific research has established unequivocally that children's exposure to TV violence can pose a risk of three types of harmful effects: The learning of aggressive attitudes and behaviors, desensitization to violence, and increased fear. There are many dif-

¹The prepared statement of Mr. Kunkel appears in the Appendix on page 87.

ference ways in which violence can be presented on television. Some of these approaches increase the risk of these harmful effects while others diminish it.

For example, violence that is committed by an attractive role model, that is rewarded or goes unpunished, or that includes no visible pain or harm cues to the victims, all have a much greater risk for encouraging aggressive behavior in child viewers than would a portrayal that omitted these contextual factors.

I think one of the most important contributions of the NTVS project is our development of a list of key contextual features that are associated with violent depictions, identifying for each one the risk it contributes to the three effects I just mentioned. My formal written testimony provides more detail on this point.

Across the 2 years of research we have conducted to date, the most important finding from the NTVS content study is that most programs on television contain violence and that most of the violence on television poses some risk of harm to the audience. Violence on television follows a pattern that is highly formulaic and emphasizes both sanitized and glamorized depictions.

By sanitized, I mean that the violence is devoid of realistic harm to victims. Pain and suffering by victims of violence is shown in less than half of all the violent scenes that we observed. More than a third of violent interactions depict harm to victims in unrealistically mild terms, understating the severity of the injury that would occur in the real world.

By glamorized, we mean that violence is performed by attractive role models who are often acting in a justified fashion and who suffer no remorse, criticism, or penalty for their violent behavior.

Finally, our most significant finding from the second year report that has just been released a few weeks ago, is that there has been no meaningful change in the overall presentation of violence on television during the past year. Across more than 18,000 violent interactions that we have classified in each of the first 2 years of the study, the degree of consistency in the context measures surrounding these portrayals is striking.

That consistency clearly implies that the portrayal of violence is highly stable and formulaic, and unfortunately, that the formula for presenting violence as sanitized and glamorized is one that enhances the risk of harmful effects for the child audience.

Much of the focus in the policy debate about TV violence in the past year has shifted to the controversy about how to properly rate programs for the coming V-chip technology. That issue is an important one, but last Friday at a conference that was held at University of California-Santa Barbara, former Senator Paul Simon explained the need to refocus the violence debate.

From Senator Simon's perspective, it is far more important to reduce the level of harmful violence on television than it is to argue about V-chip ratings because many families will simply never use the V-chip technology. The V-chip is a tool for active parents who want more information to guide their children's viewing, but it is not a panacea for all of the problems associated with TV violence.

That is why the NTVS study that has just been released issued recommendations that call upon the television industry to be more responsible in the ways in which violence is presented. Our rec-

ommendations include specific comments—I will not have time to go into detail now, but they are in my formal testimony—specific comments about approaches to portrayals of violence that can be practiced by the industry that would diminish the risk of harmful effects without necessarily taking violence out of the programming. More specifics are included in our full report, as well.

These recommendations are important because our data show that the risk of harmful violence on television does not appear to be diminishing. The industry’s previous self-regulatory code did, in fact, address specific aspects of the presentation of violence, limiting certain approaches that were thought at the time to be particularly harmful. Today, with a much larger accumulation of scientific knowledge, we have a better understanding about what types of context factors add to the risk of harmful effects and what types of approaches to presenting violence can actually minimize the problems that occur.

If the industry was willing, that type of knowledge could certainly be integrated into a set of guidelines to encourage programmers to shape any violent portrayals in more responsible fashion.

A leading television producer, Arthur Seidelman, also reported at the UCSB conference last week that his programs are now reviewed more stringently than ever before for their violent content. That may be true. I do not doubt his word. But the fact is that the action that appears on the screen, and that is all that we code in our study, does not yet appear to reflect any meaningful levels of reduction in the violence that is consistent with this rhetoric of greater responsibility.

For any reduction to be palpable, it must be practiced at a widespread level throughout the industry. It must affect the choices of what programming is rebroadcast as well as what material is newly created. It does not matter at all to a child viewer who is watching violence on the screen whether that violence comes from a first run prime time program broadcast on one of the networks or in an ancient rerun that is presented on another channel.

The Television Improvement Act would provide an opportunity for the industry to take strong and meaningful action to address the problem of TV violence in a collective fashion. It deserves serious consideration as a tool to both encourage and assist the industry in focusing its efforts to present violence on television in more responsible fashion.

Senator BROWNBACK. Thank you very much, Dr. Kunkel, and I appreciate the study and the work that you have done and the statement you made. I think there will be a lot of questions.

Mr. Cole, we would like to turn the podium over to you now to testify, Director of the UCLA Center for Communication Policy, who has also done study in this field. Please enlighten us with your findings.

TESTIMONY OF JEFFREY I. COLE,¹ DIRECTOR, UCLA CENTER FOR COMMUNICATION POLICY

Mr. COLE. Chairman Brownback, Senator Cleland, and Senator Lieberman, thank you for the opportunity to talk about our work

¹The prepared statement of Mr. Cole appears in the Appendix on page 100.

on television violence and the larger issue of television programming and content issues.

There is probably no issue in social science that has been studied more over the past 30 years than television violence. We did not get into this issue merely to produce another study that would end up in some obscure academic journal. We believed a unique opportunity existed to do something unusual, constructive, and highly effective. Events over the past 3 years have shown that such an opportunity really did exist, and I feel we have taken full advantage of that opportunity.

What attracted us to this work was the fact that the broadcast networks who we worked with were tied to the monitoring process. Through an annual public report and discussions throughout the year, we believed we could address this important issue in a new and potentially effective manner.

At our first meeting with the four broadcast networks, after securing an ironclad guarantee in the contract for our independence—as you will note, all academics always insist on independence—we further insisted upon regular meetings with each of the networks to discuss our findings. Free and open communication between the broadcast networks and UCLA was essential if our work was to have any real effect on the content of television programming.

If we found problems with a particular program in September of 1996, we did not want that problem to compound itself until the next report was released a year later. Instead, regular meetings ensured that the problem would be raised soon after it aired and that broadcasters would have an opportunity to deal with it almost immediately.

We also believed that the television industry was finally serious about dealing with the violence issue. While there were many polls demonstrating what parents felt about television violence and how to deal with it, there had never been a thorough survey of those who make decisions in the film and television industry to see if their views were parallel to those of the public.

In early 1994, we conducted such a poll with U.S. News and World Report of decision makers in the film and television business. What we found, published in the May 9, 1994, issue of U.S. News, convinced us the time was right for the study we were about to begin.

While a majority of those surveyed felt the industry rather than the government should deal with the violence issue, leaders of the industry acknowledged there was a problem, that some media needed to clean up their programming, and that they felt their industry should take the lead in this effort. They felt this way not only because they did not want to see the government intrude into their industry but also because they felt they were the ones who understood television best and would know how to deal with the problem. The poll clearly demonstrated that the industry was concerned about violence and wanted to do something about it.

We believe that the broadcasters, as well, have come to recognize the value of an outside monitor. Though they did not fully agree with all of our findings, they were willing to discuss any aspect of television programming. In some areas, such as on-air promotions,

which we were particularly critical of in our first year, they fully reviewed their policies and created internal changes, such as new policies, reporting relationships, or additional personnel. This year's report demonstrates that these changes effectively dealt with the on-air promotions issue. Other programming areas will be slower to change and are discussed in detail in our most recent report.

Never once, however, did we find any of the four networks unwilling to examine any part of their programming or to make any member of their staff available to answer our questions. For example, in this on-air promotion area, I spent a day at each of the networks' offices in Southern California looking at how they dealt with on-air promotions, advertisements for the shows they run, and met with their staff. They made everyone available.

At some of the meetings with the broadcasters throughout the year, as many as 18 network executives, from the president of the company or the network to the heads of all the departments, attended the discussion.

Throughout the year, we also received calls from at least a dozen producers of television programs that were identified in the report as raising concerns. In only one instance did those producers call to complain about the way their show was evaluated. In all other instances, the producers felt that because we named specific shows and dates and issues, they could understand the basis of our criticism and agreed with it. Several mentioned that our analysis of their show mirrored internal production discussions and several producers felt the criteria of the report were clear enough to begin to incorporate them into their own production process.

I am pleased to see that this hearing is entitled "Government and Television: Improving Programming Without Censorship" because that describes our goal and philosophy from the first day we got into this issue.

Important changes are occurring in the world of television. The audience of free broadcast television continues to erode as that of cable increases. Earlier this month, the FCC began the era of digital television, that while improving the quality and number of television signals is sure to cause much confusion among viewers as their television sets will become obsolete and they migrate to digital signals and sets.

V-chips and television labeling systems, which I talk about at greater length in my comments which I have submitted, V-chips and television labeling systems, whether simple or complex, will further complicate the television environment. The government can play an important role and contribute an important voice in the middle of all of this confusion by injecting much-needed light into a heated debate. Thank you very much.

Senator BROWNBACK. Thank you, Mr. Cole. I appreciate your testimony.

I will just start off with the striking different tone and content of your statements, if I could. I think I understand why the difference. Dr. Kunkel, you have looked at basically all television, cable and the networks, in your examination. You come to the conclusion there has been no improvement on violent presentations on television, is that correct, over the past year?

Mr. KUNKEL. Yes, it is, and could I elaborate?

Senator BROWNBACk. Please.

Mr. KUNKEL. I think one important distinction between the two studies is that our study takes the view that the biggest threat from television violence does not come from a particular show, nor does it come from a child imitating a single act that they see on television. That does occasionally happen, and, of course, it gets headlines, and we do need to be concerned about that.

But the more pervasive worry about the effect of television is the accumulation over long periods of time of exposure to violence.

Senator BROWNBACk. This is normal behavior, because they are seeing it constantly, then.

Mr. KUNKEL. There is a real analogy here between the influence of TV violence on the viewer and the influence of cigarette smoking on the smoker. You cannot figure out what is the risk that comes from smoking one cigarette. In fact, I am not sure it would be useful to look at the difference between one brand of cigarettes and another brand of cigarettes. One might have a little more tar and nicotine. Another might have a little less.

But the problem is, if you are smoking all the time or if you are exposed to violence over a long period of time, and you are watching all the channels on television, not one channel or one program, then you are going to have that risk accumulate.

Our concern with violence is a cumulative effects issue, and I think from that perspective, when we designed our study at the outset, we said that we can have the greatest impact and provide the most useful data by looking at all of the programming on all of the channels that are most frequently viewed.

Senator BROWNBACk. Mr. Cole, please?

Mr. COLE. May I just contrast that? I agree with almost everything Dale said. We agree with cumulative effects. The difference was, we wanted to fix television right now, right here. That is what the broadcasters asked us to help them do and the only way we really felt we could do that was to say, here are the problems. These are the shows. Here are the examples why these things are a problem and let us talk about how to fix them.

We issued recommendations. We had discussions. I agree, there are long-range effects of all these things, but the way to fix this thing we thought was to sit down right at the moment and try to deal with them.

The only thing I would add to that is while we focus on broadcast television, because that is whose ear we have the most, we do look at cable television. We looked at eight different cable networks. We looked at syndication, local television, public television. We also looked at home video and video games.

Within broadcast television, we did almost no sampling, however. We looked at, literally, every television movie that appeared the last 2 years, over 200 of them. We did not want to generalize. We did not want to have a composite or sample week. We looked at every theatrical film, film made for Hollywood shown on television. We looked at every series. We looked at every television special. So there is very, very little sampling in the broadcast world. We did sample. We looked at 2-week samples of all those other areas that were not in our primary scope.

Senator BROWNBACk. Mr. Cole, Dr. Kunkel stated that this would be a useful tool to the industry to deal with the issue of violence on television and that, in his opinion, there is no dispute that the cumulative violence on television hurts the attitudes of our children towards violence. I understand you to agree to that.

Mr. COLE. I would agree only to the cumulative certain portrayals of violence. I think some violence can be essential to story telling. The Bible is filled with violence. Disney animated classics are. But certainly, if we are talking about what our report tried to find, and I think Dale's did, too, the glamorized, inappropriate portrayals, clearly, we are in agreement.

Senator BROWNBACk. That that is harmful on children and on child rearing?

Mr. COLE. Yes.

Senator BROWNBACk. Do you view this as a useful tool to allow the industry to enter into agreement on setting a base standard amongst themselves below which they would not go?

Mr. COLE. I am not an antitrust lawyer, so I am not going to deal with those issues at all. It is difficult to be against codes. Codes are good things. They are like the flag. They represent everything that can be good and right.

It is an unusual situation where the government is offering anti-trust exemption to an industry that is not asking for it. I am not sure there is a precedent there, and it is sort of an unusual—

Senator BROWNBACk. It struck me as odd, too.

Mr. COLE [continuing]. Sort of a very unusual situation. I am not overly optimistic that a code will do what you think it will do. I certainly would not oppose it. The NAB code was so generic, and in the areas of violence, I think anybody would immediately agree there should be no gratuitous violence on television. The broadcasters' 1993 standards in December agreed to that.

I think the question is not, could you agree there should be no gratuitous violence on television, but how would you enforce it? What would the penalties be? I would be very nervous about First Amendment violations there. And I would also be concerned that who is going to interpret this?

Clearly, we saw just a month or so ago that at least one member of Congress was outraged at the airing of "Schindler's List" on television. I think we would be completely in agreement that "Schindler's List" is the kind of programming, with proper advisories, that belongs on television. I would hate to see someone claiming that is a violation of a code.

While I do not think anyone criticizes specific programming at times more explicitly or directly than we do, we also find some violence on television, an "NYPD Blue", a "Law and Order", to be commendable in how they deal with all of these contextual factors we both look at.

So there is some nervousness in all of this, but clearly, the concept of trying to create standards is not a bad one.

Senator BROWNBACk. And that is why we are talking about the industry creating standards and not the body of Congress setting what those standards might be.

Are either of you familiar with any studies in the past when the code of conduct existed and the impact of television on children's violent attitudes then? Are either of you familiar with—

Mr. COLE. Surely many studies were conducted during the life of the NAB code. I do not think they pointed specifically to the code, since it was so general.

Mr. KUNKEL. I think it is difficult to measure the impact of the code because what you are dealing with in a content analysis is an end product, a program that airs and the impact that it likely exerts for a child viewer. You cannot know what was considered and amended along the way in the production process. So I think it would be rather difficult to find a study that would pin that down.

Senator BROWNBACK. Senator Lieberman.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you both for very interesting testimony. Obviously, as the Chairman indicated, there seems to be a significant difference between the two of you, at least in the headline descriptions of the reports that you did.

But let me ask you this question to see if I can frame this. As Senator Simon's initial efforts began in 1990, bottom line, do you think that those efforts have had a positive effect in reducing the threat posed by violence on television? Or perhaps more than cause and effect, maybe I should ask you, is there less violence on TV today than there was in 1990?

Dr. Kunkel.

Mr. KUNKEL. I cannot answer that question directly on the basis of the data that we have in the study because our study began in 1994.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Right.

Mr. KUNKEL. There were many studies that preceded these two projects that did track violence over time and I think the biggest shortcoming is that many of those studies considered all violent acts as equivalent to one another. Both of these studies try to step away from that model and to take the position that context matters and that some violence poses a much greater risk than others.

So I am not sure. There are two ways you could address the question. One, is there more or less violence today than a few years back? The other is, is there more or less violence that ought to cause us grave concern today than in the past?

Senator LIEBERMAN. How about the last question?

Mr. KUNKEL. In the latter area, I have no reason to believe that programming changed from 1990 to 1994, when we started our study.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Right.

Mr. KUNKEL. That is based on my own subjective observations, not any quantitative analysis. My data tell me clearly that since 1994 up through the past TV season, that there is no change at all in the risk that is posed by the overall presentation of violence on television.

Senator LIEBERMAN. In fact, am I reading it right to say it might have gotten slightly worse?

Mr. KUNKEL. I would underscore the term slightly.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Yes.

Mr. KUNKEL. We are going across such a large number of observations that, statistically, the shift is not meaningful.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Mr. Cole, how would you respond to that? Do you think there is less consequential violence on television than there was in 1990?

Mr. COLE. Well, first, we think the fact there are two studies is good, and somewhere in the middle is probably the truth—

Senator LIEBERMAN. So do I.

Mr. COLE. Anyway, your first question asked, is the amount of violence, and as Dale pointed out, we are not really very concerned with the amount of violence because that forces one to get into questions whether—

Senator LIEBERMAN. Yes. I understand.

Mr. COLE [continuing]. Weighing the consequential violence—

Senator LIEBERMAN. Yes.

Mr. COLE [continuing]. What we call violence which raises concerns, the violence that we think in its context is inappropriate, is much more graphic than it needs to be, does not show consequences, is not punished, is glamorized, is longer than it needs to be. I feel very comfortable answering that question in the area we focused on directly, the four broadcast networks, and yes, we found there was some modest or small improvement in a couple of areas and there was some larger improvement in a couple of other areas.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Why don't you describe that briefly, if you can.

Mr. COLE. The five areas we looked at in the first and second report were television series, made-for-television movies, theatrical films, once again, the films made for the movie theaters shown on television, on-air promotion, and children's television. In the second report, we added a sixth category which was insignificant in the first year and caused serious problems for us in the second, television specials. It happened to be these reality specials about animals attacking and, in some cases—

Senator LIEBERMAN. So which got better?

Mr. COLE. We felt series improved modestly. We felt television movies improved modestly, and we list all of these and go through them. We felt that theatrical films showed slightly better than modest improvement. We found that in the first year, there were about 43 percent that contained these inappropriate portrayals. I remind you, we looked at, literally, every single one, no sample. In the second year, we found it had come down to about 30 percent. On-air promotions, we found a considerable improvement—

Senator LIEBERMAN. By that, you mean an advertisement for another show that comes on?

Mr. COLE. An on-air promotion is everything from an advertisement within a show for another show, previews at the beginning of a show, what is going to be in that show, previews at the end of the show for the following week, all the in-house produced stuff. In kids' television, we found very modest improvement, very minor improvement.

Senator LIEBERMAN. So the smallest area of improvement was in kids' television?

Mr. COLE. Probably the very smallest was television movies, followed by children.

Senator LIEBERMAN. I guess your study asked different questions, but I cannot resist asking you how you respond to this report, because in broad terms, you have said things are about as bad as they were before. Mr. Cole does not say there is a tremendous improvement, but says in these areas that he has enumerated there is some improvement.

Mr. KUNKEL. I think one of the differences between the two approaches is that you might consider our analysis based on a public health model, whereas you might consider Professor Cole's analysis based more on incorporating some artistic judgments.

For example, in his study, there is a determination made about whether violence is problematic or objectionable based on whether or not the violence was integral or relevant to the story. We would never make such judgments. We are interested in looking at what is on the screen and the risk that poses for a child viewer regardless of whether or not it has artistic merit and so forth.

So we are identifying violence that, when seen by a child viewer, causes concern, or should cause concern for parents as well as for policy makers.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Have either of you, or do you know whether your sponsoring organizations have shared the results of your surveys with sponsors of television shows?

Mr. COLE. In my case, absolutely. They have invited sales people to the briefings we do on a regular basis. I, last week, spoke at the Advertising Research Council. The broadcasters have encouraged us to spread our message about both the problems we had discussed and what we see as some improvement as widely as possible, not that either one of us needed those kinds of proddings or invitations.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Right. How about you?

Mr. KUNKEL. It is interesting that you suggest that, because just this last week in a telephone conversation, someone else indicated that they felt that I should call the Business Roundtable and try to present this information to some of the Nation's top corporations.

Senator LIEBERMAN. I think it would be extremely helpful, because I have found in some of the work we have done here, when the television industry has not responded—this is on the trash talk TV shows—that the sponsors, once identified publicly, really did respond because they do not want to be identified with the worst of this stuff.

Thanks very much. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Senator BROWNBACk. Thank you.

Senator Cleland.

Senator CLELAND. Your discussion here about the power and impact of television takes me back to the early 1950s when the first television show I ever saw, actually, the first television I ever saw, television program, was "The Lone Ranger". I stuck with "The Lone Ranger" for a long time. I thought I was the Lone Ranger for a while. [Laughter.]

Senator LIEBERMAN. Hi, ho, Silver.

Senator BROWNBACk. Kimosabbe.

Senator CLELAND. And to this day, Clayton Moore is a personal friend and a personal hero, along with Roy Rogers and Gene Autry and all the rest.

I came of age when television first came about and they, in effect, showed the old westerns of the 1930s and 1940s where the guy gets to kiss the horse and get the girl. I am not suggesting that we return to the days of the 1950s, but I look back now at those, in effect, those old "Lone Ranger" videos. Every one was a morality play that, in effect, I internalized as a youngster, where, in effect, there were good guys and bad guys and the good guys were supposed to win and the good guy had certain restraint, especially in terms of weapons and the use of weapons. I internalized all that.

Lord knows, nowadays, I feel sorry for youngsters growing up with their heroes as the Mutant Ninja Turtles. So the world has come far apace.

There is no doubt in my mind that television violence also begets violence. Mr. Kunkel, I do not guess you would be surprised that teachers tell me that in terms of their students, the more the kids watch, in effect, television, the more propensity that they have, really, for violence, and it does not matter what the socio-economic background or race or whatever. But the better students limit their TV watching and spend time studying. Does that surprise you, that the teachers seem to feel there is a link out there?

Mr. KUNKEL. No, it does not surprise me at all. What it reflects is a consistent perspective that matches what we know from the research evidence. They are the people who are on the front lines dealing with the children.

I do have one comment related to your review of old television programming. We have a measure in our study that assesses whether or not a program contains an overall anti-violence theme. We do a lot of microscopic analysis of these violence issues and we look at who is striking who and we call that an interaction. Then we have some contextual measures we apply at the scene. But to try to balance the microscopic measures, we also have a couple of measures at the overall program level. One of them asks if the program has, as a whole, an anti-violence theme. We have four specific criteria that would fit that and they include providing strong emphasis on alternatives to violence, having strong remorse or resistance to committing violence on the part of people who might ultimately behave violently.

One of the programs that we use to train our coders on that measure is actually a very old episode of "The Rifleman". I do not know if that is quite the vintage of Zorro, but Chuck Connors, who is the star of that program, is teaching his son about violence. This entire episode is devoted to teaching his son how, while occasionally one must act violently, there is a strong theme throughout that violence is inappropriate, has tremendous social costs, and so forth.

That message, in the judgment of the coders, then, overwhelms the other message. That is a case where taking into account context is very meaningful and very helpful and we do not get carried away with just looking at microscopic depictions.

Senator CLELAND. I do not know. I think we lost something when the National Association of Broadcasters dropped that informal agreement in 1983. How do we get either something like that, or

what should be its new form. Obviously, we are not trying to impose some artistic or other standard here, but we are trying to show concern. How do you recommend that we go about this difficult task of allowing broadcasters certainly their right and yet the fact that they have public airways as a certain public or social responsibility, shall we say. How do we encourage them, shall we say, to “do the right thing”?

Mr. KUNKEL. Well, we all see the world through our own eyes and the way I see the world is that the contribution from my work and this project is to try to convey some sense of accountability, to hold the industry accountable for what they are doing. I believe these data do that, that they indicate the risk that is posed.

I think that the role of the Congress is to give a voice to studies like these so that the public can be informed, and I think, ultimately, that the industry has to make a judgment on its own grounds, but I think that the industry will be influenced by the concerns of the Congress, by the concerns of researchers, and by the concerns of an informed public. I think what you are doing today is contributing to that process to allow the public to understand the issue better and to convey their concerns.

Senator CLELAND. Thank you very much for your testimony. It is fascinating. Please keep us posted as you continue further studies.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator BROWNBACk. Thank you, Senator Cleland.

Would both of you agree with the statement that there is too much consequential violence on television?

Mr. KUNKEL. By consequential, you mean—

Senator BROWNBACk. I am talking about the type of violence that is harmful to a child’s behavior, that would encourage violent behavior in that child.

Mr. KUNKEL. I would absolutely agree.

Senator BROWNBACk. Mr. Cole.

Mr. COLE. We said in our conclusion we thought we had seen some improvement. Much work needs to be done. Clearly, much work needs to be done. Yes, we would agree.

Senator BROWNBACk. So you would agree with that conclusion, while this is harmful, the level of violence, and I continue to use the word consequential violence, being cognizant of what you are saying that context does matter, but that we have got to work to reduce that or encourage an industry to continue to reduce that consequential violence.

Mr. COLE. I think both of our projects are committed to working with their respective industries to reduce the inappropriate portrayals of violence.

Senator BROWNBACk. Just one final question. Do both of you have children? Mr. Cole, do you have children?

Mr. COLE. No, I do not.

Senator BROWNBACk. Dr. Kunkel.

Mr. KUNKEL. I have two godchildren who I am very fond of, but I do not have natural children.

Senator BROWNBACk. The only reason I was asking, I was going to see if you could enlighten us as to how you treat your children

and the TV, probably being a couple of the foremost experts in the country on what is on the tube. What would you do?

Mr. KUNKEL. It is easier said than done, I know quite well.

Senator BROWNBACk. I have three children, so I know about the doing versus saying. But what would you try to do?

Mr. KUNKEL. You try to teach them to make television viewing an active choice, not an experience where you go to the television set and merely watch whatever someone decides to put in front of you as you flip the dials randomly. You make informed decisions. You look at the TV Guide. You think through what is available and what value it has to you and what are the tradeoffs involved in terms of other ways of spending your time.

Mr. COLE. I agree with all of that, and even as a busy U.S. Senator, you occasionally get up on a Saturday morning at 6 o'clock and you watch your children watch television. You obviously do not have time to do this all the time. You do not need to do this all the time. You need to see how they are processing the messages. If they are watching violence, even if you are not able to control it, you see whether they are excited by it or whether they are not excited by it.

You try to produce a countervailing message. You try to introduce your own values so that you can reinforce in them the values you want to see them develop. And whatever they see, whether it is violence on a schoolyard or somewhere else where you cannot control it, it tends to reinforce values you have instilled. You spend time with your kids watching television, not a lot of time, but some time.

Senator BROWNBACk. I was just curious. We have taken to watching "Touched By An Angel" as a family and in talking through some of these items, but I am sad to say, there just are not a whole lot of shows that I feel comfortable sitting there and, by my sitting there, tacitly approving of what is going on on the TV by virtue of us watching that as a family. Maybe there are a couple of others, but that is the only one I have really found that I feel comfortable about.

Mr. COLE. One thing about that, Senator, you probably know enough about the television business to know that every year, there is generally one show that is so successful or comes into its own that it influences so many others. Last season, that show was "Friends", which produced so many clones of "Friends". This year, that show was "X-Files". Next season, that show will be "Touched By An Angel".

Senator BROWNBACk. That is good.

Mr. COLE. "Touched By An Angel" has done well and the message has gotten across. Audiences are interested in this kind of programming and you are going to see, at last count, eight or nine different variations. Whether they will be as good remains to be seen, but that is the show of the moment that is inspiring new programming.

Senator BROWNBACk. Good. Senator Lieberman.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thank you. That is good news.

I just want to make one statement and then ask one question. Sometimes when we are in these debates about the impact about television, the folks in the industry, particularly on sexual content

and language, ask, how do you know it really has an effect on behavior? Well, there are fewer studies, I gather, on those questions than there are on the impact of violence, but the conclusions are clear about the impact of violent television on behavior, as you testified today.

I hope the social science develops in these other areas. It is hard to imagine that there is not an effect. Common sense says that if watching violent television has a tendency to cause problems, make you more violent, that you get the same kinds of messages about sexual content and vulgarity if you are watching.

The argument I always fall back on when all else fails is that the last number I saw was something like \$46 billion was spent on advertising in various media and they do it because they assume that what we see affects what we do, in this case to consume.

You have a very powerful line here, Dr. Kunkel, which is the most important finding from your study is that most programs on television contain violence, 58 percent in 1994 and 1995 and 61 percent in 1995 and 1996, and that most of the violence on television poses risks of harm to the audience. That really ought to resonate in our ears as we go forward.

Did you want to say something?

Mr. KUNKEL. Well, the fact that some people are surprised by that, to me, I think, reflects how desensitized we have become to violence on the screen.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Right.

Mr. KUNKEL. I know it is there. I have worked with the coders very carefully, and as I have started over the last several years to watch television a lot more critically, focusing on violence, you find it in genres where you do not always expect it, everything from children's cartoons, which can actually pose very serious issues of violence, through even sitcoms and certainly dramas and so on.

Senator LIEBERMAN. So if we have a society that is still a lot more violent than we want it to be, we have to look to this as one of the causes.

Here is my question. You started to answer it a little bit before, which is if the TV industry or the cable industry came to you and said, OK, the Senate has passed this bill and we no longer can say that we are worried about an antitrust suit if we get together and adopt a code of standards. So, Doctor, what should our code contain? What would you say?

Mr. KUNKEL. It would be based, I believe, on the recommendations that are included in my testimony and in the report, specifically, that whenever violence is presented, that steps should be taken to try to maximize the punishments or negative consequences that befall perpetrators of violence that is likely to be seen by children, and to put those consequences or punishments in close time proximity to the act itself so that for younger children who cannot link cause and effect within an hour show, they do not lose the linkage between the violent act and the punishment.

That we need to show more realistic depictions of harm. When you have a super hero movie and someone who is like an Arnold Schwarzenegger type throws someone off of a third floor building, out a window, and they land on the ground, that person should not just get up, dust himself off, and go back in and rejoin the fray,

that sends an inaccurate message about the consequences of violence, that we need to be much more realistic in our depictions of violence.

There are a number of other elements, but those are examples where the portrayal can be presented in a more responsible way.

Senator LIEBERMAN. I presume the logical extension of that is that they should cut down on the amount of violence that is on TV—

Mr. KUNKEL. Yes. That is there, as well.

Senator LIEBERMAN [continuing]. That does not have those kinds of consequences shown.

Dr. Cole, do you want to offer—

Mr. COLE. The one area where our studies overlap the most are in the detailing of the contextual criteria, as Dale just mentioned them. I think we are almost identical in how we lay out those contextual criteria and what distinguishes appropriate from inappropriate violence.

I do think those standards are in the standards that were accepted in December of 1993, so allegedly, there is a code on the books at the moment designating that there shall be no gratuitous violence, no effort to shock or stimulate the audience. So I am not sure how useful it will be at a practical level, but I think those would be the exact standards we both agree on and which anyone should seek to implement.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Because, clearly, the reality is not reflecting those standards.

Mr. COLE. I am not sure that the code would do any more to cause programming to reflect those standards.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thank you.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Senator BROWNBACK. Thank you very much.

I was struck, too, by the numbers in your study, Dr. Kunkel, 18,000 violent incidents in a sample of more than 2,000 hours drawn from 23 channels. That is nine per hour in your study of violent instances. Just the quantity made me think of what Colin Powell says, that we see so much of it anymore that we have lost our ability to blush. It hardly strikes you anymore. You have got to really do something in this society anymore to strike somebody enough to make them blush in a very—

Mr. COLE. Senator Brownback, may I add one more comment?

Senator BROWNBACK. Yes.

Mr. COLE. If you are developing some leadership on this issue, and your Subcommittee clearly is, I think our studies are scientifically valid, but I would strongly urge you to do more than rely on us, to make sure that you and your staffs watch as much television as possible. I know that is not possible all the time with your schedules, but get a sense of what is on air for better or worse so that you understand the full implications of what it is that we are studying.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Don't we meet every afternoon around 2 o'clock? [Laughter.]

Senator BROWNBACK. Thank you very much. You have been very illuminating.

I would like to bring in the third panel. Helen Liebowitz is a member of the National PTA Board of Directors. Whitney Vanderwerff is with the National Alliance for Non-Violent Programming. Dr. Michael Brody is with the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. And David Walsh is the Executive Director of the National Institute on Media and the Family.

This is an excellent panel of people who are knowledgeable and deeply concerned in this field about what takes place on the TV and its impacts on our overall society and culture. Each of you bring a set of qualifications that are very impressive that have been included in the overall packet for this hearing.

I think we will go in the order of the panel in which I called you forward, if we could. Ms. Liebowitz, that would mean you are leading off, if you would not mind, unless the panel has agreed on a different—

Ms. LIEBOWITZ. No.

Senator BROWNBACK. You have not agreed differently. Please feel free to, if you would like to, to summarize your statement. If you want it in the record, that would be fine. We will look forward to a lot of good engaging questions and discussion.

Ms. Liebowitz.

TESTIMONY OF HELEN K. LIEBOWITZ,¹ MEMBER, NATIONAL PTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ms. LIEBOWITZ. Thank you. Senator Brownback and Senator Lieberman, thank you very much for inviting the National PTA to present this testimony.

The National PTA is comprised of over 6.5 million parents, teachers, and other child advocates concerned about improving the quality of television programming for children. We thank you again for the opportunity to present the views of parents nationwide who have been frequently frustrated in their attempts to influence children's television programming while not wishing to cross the fine lines of First Amendment freedoms.

For the many years that National PTA has testified before Congress related to improving children's television, we have always noted that the danger in industry resistance to providing better programming could be a national inclination toward outright program censorship. First Amendment rights can only be protected through responsibility.

At the same time, we believe that government can play a major role in concert with voluntary efforts by the industry to improve the quality of television. Obviously, the more the industry is willing to provide for children's programming on a voluntary basis, the less government intervention will be required.

The National PTA has played a major role in the following telecommunications areas: Support of limiting advertisements during the times that most children watch television; support of rules that regulated unfair and deceptive advertisements targeted at children, such as sugar cereals, tobacco, and alcohol products; opposition to the FCC deregulation of children's programming in the 1980s, which served to increase TV violence; ads targeted at children and

¹The prepared statement of Ms. Liebowitz appears in the Appendix on page 122.

program-length commercials using popular TV characters and stories to sell products; support of the Children's Television Act of 1990; support the provisions in the Children's Television Act that requires the industry to broadcast at least 3 hours of children's programming per week; and support of the V-chip provisions in the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

Frequently, the industry has fought against any Federal regulation which would require them to meet their obligation to children's interests, and at the same time, resisted the option for voluntary self-regulation at improving television programming for children throughout the TV Violence Act. Cries of censorship, denial of freedom of the press, severe economic burden, and unconscionable meddling "by those national organizations who do not represent real parents" have all been justifications by the industry to maintain the status quo.

In fact, real parents flooded the FCC with comments during the recent comment period related to the V-chip. Permit me to read several of those comments for the record.

"I am not pleased with the language and situations which dominate many of the television shows which are on the air today. My first preference would be to eliminate the material, but as that does not seem likely in the near future, I feel the very least that can be done for families is to allow intelligent decisions." That is from a mother in Kingman, Texas.

"My husband and I both feel there is too much sex, violence, and trash on the TV and find it difficult to find programs that are suitable for the whole family to watch together." That is from a mother and father in Montgomery County in Maryland.

And the last one, "I am not an advocate of censorship but I do believe that one of the most crucial duties of our society is to make sure that the best values of our culture are given to our children, not the worst. We cannot be in the room at all times when our children watch TV. Often, I come back into the room to find that channel surfing has ended up in an inappropriate place." That is from a father in Gorham, Maine.

From our members, we have learned that there are few single issues that preoccupy parents more than the poor quality of children's television. Particularly disturbing to our members are findings of research studies which show three possible effects of viewing television violence on young people.

According to Rand researchers, television violence can create the following effects. Children may become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others. They may be more fearful of the world around them. And, they may be more likely to behave in an aggressive or harmful way toward others.

According to several recent studies, television violence has not diminished despite the passage of the 1990 Television Violence Act, the Children's Television Act, and the V-chip provision in the Telecommunications Act. Other people on the panel this afternoon will address and have addressed most recent studies related to violence on television. Needless to say, despite all of the demand for reduced violence on TV, these studies suggest little change has taken place.

More parents and grandparents are now complaining not only about violent program content but also about violence in pro-

motions and advertisements, as well. A UCLA report found that promotions raise serious concerns, particularly because they feature violence out of context. The study concludes that violence is used in many ways in promotions as a hook to draw viewers into the programs.

While the National PTA is concerned about issues of censorship, let us be clear that we do not equate government action in the telecommunications area with censorship. The combination of purposeful Congressional policies and voluntary industry efforts are essential as we discuss a telecommunications framework that will work for children and creative artists, alike.

There is no panacea that will eliminate TV violence overnight, but the greater industry resistance is to change, the greater Congressional action must be to pressure them to do so. For instance, the National Cable Television Association with Cable in the Classroom and the National PTA has designed the Family and Community Critical Viewing Skills Project to provide parents and teachers with information and skills to help families make better choices in the television programs they watch and to improve the way they watch those programs.

To compliment this project with a reduction in TV violence, a meaningful implementation of the Children's Television Act, and descriptive content-based ratings and industry voluntary self-regulation would be ideal.

In testimony before the Senate Commerce Committee on February 27, 1997, National PTA President Joan Dykstra told the Senate Commerce Committee, which was holding a hearing on the progress of the V-chip rating system proposed by the industry, the following. "The decisions that will be made by the FCC and the television industry during the next several months will determine whether parents and the industry can coexist and strike a balance without further government activity or whether parents and the Congress will resort to legislative action that will go far beyond the V-chip, venturing into the constitutional quagmire of safe harbor resolutions."

"What lies in the balance is nothing more than the First Amendment. Our parents want the First Amendment to work for them, as well as for the industry, which often hides behind free speech protections and threats of protracted lawsuits as delaying tactics in responding to any means that would decrease violence on television."

Senators Brownback and Lieberman, you now ask whether the National PTA would support S. 471, the Television Improvement Act of 1997, to allow broadcasters, free from antitrust restrictions, to once again come together to develop a National Broadcasters Code of Conduct, similar to a code that was enforced prior to the decisions in the *United States v. National Association of Broadcasters*. This proposed law is similar to the Television Violence Act of 1990 that the industry basically squandered away in blatant disregard for Congress and parents.

We testified in support of the Television Violence Act and will support this similar measure. In the absence of antitrust laws, the broadcasters could come together without legal impunity. S. 471 removes the legal consequences that might otherwise be barriers as

the broadcasters take action to address TV violence. The problem is that the bill does not compel the broadcasters to agree or to implement anything. We will not support this bill by reducing support for the Children's Television Act and the V-chip provisions, but can support this legislation as an example of Congressional permissiveness, not Congressional coercion. Ultimately, decisions to reduce or address TV violence would not be a result of government mandate but through the private arrangements of the broadcasters.

However, the National PTA has vivid recollections of how the industry failed to take advantage of the last antitrust exemption they received as a result of the Children's Violence Act of 1990. While that bill had a 3-year sunset, it did provide adequate time for the broadcasters to meet and agree on a national code, but they never did.

As each of these efforts fail, I can tell this Subcommittee that this Nation comes ever closer to the day when the American people will demand that Congress take arbitrary action to curtail TV violence if voluntary action once again fails.

We have a number of suggestions that the broadcasters might want to take a look at that could create a code, and if you would like to hear about those either now or later, I would be happy to discuss them with you. However, waiting in the Congressional wings is safe harbor legislation which the National PTA will support as a last resort in the event the industry is incapable of reducing violent programming.

Parents want safe schools and safe communities and they want safe home environments. Safety is not a Republican or a Democratic issue. It is not an issue of gender. Ultimately, the airwaves belong to the public, and given the public's intense opposition to violence on television and an industry that deliberately chooses not to hear public outcry, there just may be a time when the public will wish to take the airwaves back.

I thank the Subcommittee for this opportunity to present the views of the National PTA.

Senator BROWNBACK. Thank you very much. I appreciate that testimony and I look forward to some interaction and questions.

Ms. Whitney Vanderwerff of the National Alliance for Non-Violent Programming. I look forward to your statement. You can either summarize or read it, whatever you would choose to do.

TESTIMONY OF WHITNEY G. VANDERWERFF,¹ PH.D., EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR NON-VIOLENT PROGRAMMING

Ms. VANDERWERFF. I will be brief. Thank you, Chairman Brownback and Senator Lieberman.

The National Alliance for Non-Violent Programming is a network of 10 national not-for-profit organizations. It was created solely to address the issue of media violence in communities in the country. The fact that we exist and the fact that we persist is very pertinent to our being here today.

We are the vision of the late Marjorie Powell Allen of Kansas, who convened this network to work at the grassroots. She felt that

¹The prepared statement of Ms. Vanderwerff appears in the Appendix on page 134.

it was urgent to address the issue of violence that is glamorized and presented as entertainment.

The National Alliance for Non-Violent Programming now represents more than 2 million people in 3,000 chapters locally. We are working at the grassroots in broad-based community initiatives. We are honored to be the delivery system for excellent materials that the PTA has developed, that David Walsh has developed. We are finding all over the country that addressing the impact of television galvanizes people.

The gap between five decades of research that you asked about, Senator Brownback, the research on the effects of televised violence and public knowledge, that gap has finally narrowed. People everywhere are confirming that television is a powerful, pervasive educator. It shapes the attitudes and behaviors of our children and our young people.

We acknowledge the responsibility of the consumer.

But the American public is also beginning to understand the public interest obligation of the broadcasters.

The FCC recently cleared the way to award an additional six megahertz channel to each incumbent broadcaster. If sold at auction, these licenses would have raised an estimated \$20 to \$35 billion for the U.S. taxpayer. Instead, the FCC was directed to award these licenses for free. In order for the American public to receive a fair return on this valuable public resource, broadcasters must update their public interest commitment to be commensurate with the opportunity that they have received.

The American public is entitled to ask: Is it too much to ask broadcasters to provide reasonable amounts of quality children's educational programming? Is it too much to ask broadcasters to limit the amount of commercial information presented during programming designed for young children? Should not the television industry pay close attention to the proven effects of television violence and provide programming that is good for kids?

The proven effects of television violence on many young viewers, five decades of solid research, include increased anti-social behavior and aggression, increased fearfulness—that is the “mean world” syndrome that we all see in our children—desensitization, and increased appetite for more violence.

About violent content, I want to reiterate the National Television Violence Study that you have heard from today very quickly the findings, because you heard them in great detail. Hear them again very simply. There has been no meaningful change in violence on television since last year. Violence on television is still frequently glamorized. Most violence on television remains sanitized. It is typically shown with little or no harm to the victim. Only 13 percent of violent shows portray long-term negative consequences of violence, such as physical and psychological suffering.

Our organization works at the grassroots and we hear from the grassroots. Across the country, parents are asking not just for a V-chip, not just for ratings, not just for the tools they need to choose programming that is appropriate. They are asking for something *to* choose.

Here are some voices from the grassroots to add to Helen's. These are people involved in media literacy initiatives all across

the country. These comments echo what Dale Kunkel has said to us about the cumulative effects of all the violence on television.

From a mother of two in Augusta, Georgia, "Wake up, America! A whole generation is learning that respect comes only to those who hit the hardest, who carry a weapon, or who talk the meanest."

From a student in Thibodaux, Louisiana, "I am just trying to learn. I cannot understand why they will not make television better."

From a Boys and Girls Clubs teen mentor in Greensboro, North Carolina, "I see what is happening with the young kids in my group. They see violence on television and they think it is OK for an argument with words to turn into a fight with weapons."

From a parent educator in Kansas City, Kansas, "Television is desensitizing our children. Of course, it is not the main cause of violence in society, but it is the cause of lack of respect."

How do you teach your children? How do you work with your children, you asked, Chairman Brownback. Does that show, is it permeated with respect? How do those people relate to each other? Those are the questions to be asked.

In our pilot program in Kansas City 50 organizations are working together now, including the PTA. Their statement is, they see the desensitization as the main effect of television violence and that this is causing a lack of respect all across our country.

From a physician in Salt Lake City, "Our children are spending more time learning about life through television than in any other manner."

And from a teacher in Salinas, California, "Do not tell me kids are not affected by all the violence on television. I see it all the time."

We heard from a mother this morning in Columbia, South Carolina, who said, "I have two stepchildren. My work is hard enough without my little boy thinking that the way to resolve an argument with his sister is to kick her a lot because of a certain program that he sees on television where kicking is made to seem glamorous and entertaining and funny."

Senators I submit to you that after decades of mindlessly absorbing television, of being asleep at the switch and careless at the controls, many Americans have heard a wake-up call. We are looking at television with new eyes. And after decades of fierce and energetic competition to reap a fulsome financial harvest, the television industry is also hearing this wake-up call.

For the industry to collaborate on voluntary guidelines to mitigate television's negative impact on our children and to promote better programming is not such a radical idea.

For there is another kind of network. John Gardner writes that in order to restore cohesion to our society, leaders from various segments must come together in networks of responsibility to seek to resolve the larger problems of community, region, nation, and world.

How about it? How about promoting and supporting a voluntary television industry network of responsibility to provide quality programming and to serve the public interest?

People are working together on television issues at the grassroots all across the country. We will receive that network in a sense of shared responsibility for the health and well-being of our children and society.

Senators when we work at the grassroots on these issues, we are not bowling alone. Thank you.

Senator BROWNBACK. Thank you very much. That was well put, Ms. Vanderwerff. We appreciate that very much.

Dr. Michael Brody, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. Welcome to the panel. We look forward to your presentation.

TESTIMONY OF MICHAEL BRODY,¹ M.D., AMERICAN ACADEMY OF CHILD AND ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRY MEDIA COMMITTEE

Dr. BRODY. Let me say right off that I watch television and I am not like those people who say that they are watching while they are cooking a pheasant or waiting for their DNA experiment to incubate. I watch television. I have cable. I have Direct TV. I have a satellite. I like going to TV land. Senator Cleland, I like watching reruns of "The Lone Ranger". I cannot get enough of the first story when Dan Reed is ambushed by the Butch Cavendish Gang.

TV is educational, it is entertaining, and, of course, an escape. I can watch because I am an adult and have that choice. I have the right of consent. Children do not and should not, and this is our hardest job as a parent, to know how much control/consent to give up to our kids. Do we measure their ability to assume consent by age or behavior? We certainly have to factor in risks, physical and mental. That is why our children cannot drive cars, as opposed to planes, in most States, until they are 16 or drink until they are 21. As a society, we have determined these ages of consent.

Now, children are not small adults. Piaget has shown that children progress cognitively in stages, from illogical thought to concrete concepts, the ability to make groupings and categories, and finally to a stage of formal operations where there is the ability to manipulate these groupings mentally.

Until they have reached this last stage of cognitive operational thinking, they will have trouble with the seductiveness of TV and its imitation and modeling possibilities. Yet, we expose our children to 22,000 hours of TV before they complete even 12,000 hours of formal schooling.

As a free society, we have to balance our freedoms with responsibility to all our children. I again am not speaking of adults. As adults, we have the right to watch "Die Hard" and "Broken Arrow" as many times as we want. We also have the right to drink, smoke, and, yes, even buy high-tech stocks. We have consent. But, as I said before, our children do not and should not.

I also say to you, and this is the hullabaloo that Senator Lieberman was talking about, as I have said to Mr. Valenti, who has been quite opposed to a content-based system, that would be most helpful to parents similar to their being able to identify the actual ingredients in their kids' favorite cereal. Parents want more

¹The prepared statement of Dr. Brody appears in the Appendix on page 138.

information and less judgment! No government or censorship, just information!

Now, in the early 1970s, I evaluated every child here in the District of Columbia that murdered another child. I could not possibly do that today because of the overwhelming numbers. As crime rates have decreased overall, the population of young serious offenders increases at an alarming rate.

Now, of course, the media is not solely responsible. There are too many privately owned guns, I think 200 million of them in our country, drugs, fragmented families, poverty, racism, and, of course, inferior schools. But over 4 or 5 decades of research and over 2,000 studies, including the ones presented here today by Jeff and Dale, have shown that TV does have an impact. This is why the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry is waging a national campaign against violence and feels that the violence in the media is a public health problem.

Now, murder is extreme, but as a child psychiatrist, I also wonder about the whole effect of the blitz of media junk and violence on a kid's fantasy life. Stories, like play, are a very serious matter to me. This is why I watched television with my own two children when they were younger. Stories for kids should inspire, promote curiosity, and help solve problems. Yet TV story lines and fantasy have become more and more homogenized, similar to pornography, prepackaged for those too lazy to think up their own fantasies. This is hindering imagination, as TV has the same chases, the same rescues, the same jagged narratives and stereotyping with the same goal, to arouse physiologically.

When I was in medical school, I was hooked up so that my heart rate was monitored with a cardiogram. It was almost like a lie detector test. Then I was shown episodes of "Gunsmoke" and "Have Gun, Will Travel", and there was no doubt as the violent scenes came on, I had a physiological response to them with faster heart rate.

This is done so that kids will pay attention and they will be more stimulated to buy more and more products. This constant selling, and this is what drives the market, this is what drives the violence, is robbing our young of their souls and converting them to little bit more than super consumers. It is no wonder that David Denby in his New Yorker article sees our kids being buried alive by media junk. They now use a "toy system" instead of toys. They eat at Mickey D's instead of at home. They consume large quantities of easy programming instead of literature, and yet remain in a constant state of non-gratification, looking for or surfing for the next quick fix.

To get a little psychiatric, our young children's egos, their tools to deal with reality, rests in all our hands, and this is not just an issue of improved programming without censorship but one of trust.

Senator BROWNBACK. I look forward to asking you some questions, particularly on your statement of the D.C. study that you had previously done and your inability to do that today and some of the troubling things. This same panel will hold a hearing tomorrow on education in the District of Columbia or lack thereof, and I want to ask you some on that.

David Walsh is Executive Director of the National Institute on Media and the Family. Mr. Walsh, welcome to the Subcommittee.

**TESTIMONY OF DAVID WALSH,¹ PH.D., EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON MEDIA AND THE FAMILY**

Mr. WALSH. Thank you very much, and thank you for the opportunity.

I find myself agreeing with so many of the other comments that I would like to make a couple of comments that hopefully will complement rather than repeat.

A particular area of interest that I have had in the last couple of years is to link the explosion that is going on in the area of brain science or neuroscience with the impact of media, and there is truly an explosion going on. The 100 billion neurons in a child's brain or in any of our brains with 100 trillion possible synaptic connections literally form a virtually infinite number of neural networks that get formed. Neural scientists now estimate that the possible number of neural network connections or neural network configurations exceeds the number of atoms in the known universe and all of that happens within the developing mind of a child.

I think my mother and possibly some other mothers misled us, not harmfully, when they told us that fish was brain food because, although fish is probably very good for us, it really is not brain food. But there actually is a substance that is brain food and it is glucose. In recent neural science research, what they have discovered is that the rate at which the brain metabolizes glucose peaks at the age of seven. From the age of seven to the mid-teenage years, that rate of glucose metabolism levels out and then it starts to decline, and lo and behold, it declines for the rest of our lives.

Now, that does not mean that beginning in the mid-teenage years we start to get stupid. What it means is that we are starting at that point with the mature brain to use all of the neural networks that have been formed during those early years of our lives.

A lot of time when we think of brain or neural network development, we think of it in terms of the problem solving ability, cognitive development, the ability to speak and understand language, both verbal and written. What we need to remember is that the same process that leads to those cognitive abilities is the neural network foundation for the development of attitudes and values. The development of attitudes and values is as much a brain function and a neural function as many other things.

The networks that are formed in the mind of a child are formed by the countless experiences that child has. Each experience stimulates the building of neural connections between brain cells. The stronger and the more repetitive the experience is, the stronger the connections become. In a sense, the nature of those experiences serves as the major determinant of a child's brain's "software".

This process of neural network development has been going on for as long as there have been children, but it is now happening in the midst of an incredible revolution. Whether we call it the digital age, the telecommunications revolution, the world in which our children are forming these neural networks is very, very different.

¹The prepared statement of Mr. Walsh appears in the Appendix on page 141.

My daughter and I were holiday shopping several months ago and one of those Hallmark greeting cards caught my eye. It is the kind where you can record your own voice and give it to a friend. They take the card, open it up, and they hear your greeting in your voice. It is amazing. It sold for \$8.95 this last holiday season.

There is more computing power in that single Hallmark greeting card than existed in the entire world prior to 1950. Our kids are playing Sega Genesis video games which have more computing power than a Cray supercomputer that was manufactured just 20 years ago, in 1977. So our children are growing up in a very, very different world.

Now, the focus for our discussion today is one of those voices of the digital age, television, and television has become for many children the largest occupier of time in their waking life. By the time that a typical American child graduates from high school, as Dr. Brody alluded to, that child will have spent twice as many hours watching television as he or she will have spent in the classroom. In a typical week, and this is based on studies which have just come out in the last 6 months, in a typical week, children will spend twice as much—excuse me.

By the time they graduate from high school, they will have spent twice as much time watching television as in school. In a typical week, they will have spent 11 times as much time watching television as they will have spent in communication with their mother, not being in the same house, but communicating. They will have spent 14 times as much time watching television as they will have spent reading. And most regrettably of all, they will have spent 56 times as much time watching television as they will have spent communicating with their fathers.

Therefore, television has become a very, very powerful teacher in our children's lives. Whoever tells the stories defines the culture. That fact is not new. It has been true for thousands of years. But since World War II, we, as a society, have delegated more and more of the story telling function to mass media, and in terms of children, as we have seen from these statistics, the dominant form that that takes is television.

Although it is not the only harmful effect, we focused on violent entertainment. What I would like to kind of allude to, to make my remarks complementary, is the formation of attitudes. I am the co-author of the American Medical Association Physicians Guide to Media Violence and one of the points that I try to remind myself of when I talk about that is probably the most harmful effect of the steady diet of violent entertainment that our kids have seen on television screens is not the violent behavior.

In my opinion, the most harmful effect is that what it has done is that it has created and nourished a culture of disrespect. When we think about it, violence is the end point of disrespect. For every kid that is picking up a gun and shooting another kid, there are thousands of kids who are not doing that, but they are pushing, shoving, hitting, putting one another down with increasing frequency.

Whoever tells the stories defines the culture. The media has taught our kids to replace the norm of "have a nice day" with "make my day".

We talked a lot today about violence. We could easily have similar discussion of other content areas. Sexual, we have alluded to that. A study that was done in the last 3 years shows that 94 percent of the situations depicted in daytime program television, the people that were portrayed in a sexual encounter were not in a committed relationship—94 to 6. Think of all of those neural networks that are developing as they start to form an opinion about what the world is like.

A natural temptation when things are not going well is to look for a scapegoat. Things are not going well with our children. We have a homicide rate among kids that is eight times greater than the next closest industrialized country, the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in the industrialized world, declining reading scores, and the search for scapegoats is on. Parents get blamed. Politicians get blamed. Teachers get blamed. Schools get blamed. The media gets blamed. There is enough blame to go around for everyone.

What is clear is that what we have to all do is join together and start to figure out what some solutions are, and I think that what you are trying to do in Congress is an important step in that direction.

A Cree Indian elder once said, children are the purpose of life. We were once children and someone took care of us. Now, it is our turn to care. The definition of caring for children is changing because we are living in a very changing world. The definition of caring for children now means that we have to become responsible media consumers and producers. Parents, producers, programmers who respond to this challenge will be maximizing one of the great benefits of media, creating a healthy society and promoting the common good.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to be here today.

Senator BROWNBACK. This is a great panel. It is not very encouraging, but a great panel. When he said the purpose of life, I look at it and I think love is the purpose of life. Love your God, whoever that might be to you, and your fellow man, but we sure do not see a lot of that on TV.

We are going to have a vote, I guess, in about 10 or 15 minutes, so I will do a few minutes of questions and then, Joe, go to you.

Dr. Brody, I cannot help but ask you about the question of in the District of Columbia schools, yesterday was reported an incidence of sexual activity amongst fourth graders in the school. I do not know if you saw that story in the paper. Is there any connection between what goes on on the TV and that, or is that just the state of decline that this culture has succumb to, that kids younger than my fifth grade daughter are having sex in school in the fourth grade?

Dr. BRODY. Well, when I was doing this work of evaluating children who murdered other children in the District, I was also a consultant for pupil personnel services for the Board of Education here in the District of Columbia and I saw many things, but this was the early 1970s. Again, I think there has been great deterioration in not only the services in the District but, I think, unfortunately, with how the school system is run. I do not think it is a great accident that we now have a general running the school system here in the District of Columbia.

Kids see behavior on television. I think one of the greatest things that television does has to do with modeling and imitative behavior, and as I said, kids do not particularly understand some of the things that they are actually watching, and you used the term consequences before. I do not think they understand the consequences of actions.

But there is plenty of sexual acts seen on television. There are plenty of sexual acts seen on television that kids could look at, and those are the kids that I am really concerned about. When it was asked before, the other Senator mentioned that he had eight children, I believe, and you asked the two researchers if they had children. If they did have children, or the Senator's children or people's children here, I am concerned about them, but as a child psychiatrist, I am not really concerned.

I am really concerned about those kids that you were talking about that were involved in this incident in the District. I am concerned about the vulnerable population of kids where their parents are not interested in what they are watching. They may not be available for them, and this leads to behavior, that you just mentioned.

You said the purpose of life is love. These are young children. I do not think they were looking to do something bad. I do not think that they were looking to get some sexual gratification. It may be that what they were looking for was a solution to their deprivation of love, that they would be together with somebody. It is a dangerous way to do it.

It does not portend prognostically for what is going to happen to those kids when their glands kick in and they could procreate. Maybe one or two of them are actually at that stage now, but maybe they were looking for love, too, and as a society, I think it is pretty pathetic that this operates right in what I consider a closed environment of a school. But I think things are a lot different than, as I said, in the early 1970s in evaluating kids who murdered people. It would be overwhelming. That is all I would do.

Senator BROWNBACK. It is a lot worse than—

Dr. BRODY. Oh, yes. Just the way the mental health services are a lot worse with the inundation of crack, there are a lot more problems and the way these problems are portrayed. You watch the news. The news is completely different than the way we used to have local news on here in Washington. The news is completely different. It is filled with stories like that, violent acts, children being abused, kids harming each other in a physical way.

To me, it is an outstanding statistic that between 1979 and 1992 in our country, 50,000 kids have died as a result of acts of violence. That is as many as young people died in Vietnam. I mean, that is an outstanding statistic.

Again, as I said, I do not think the media is responsible for all of this. The media may be reflecting society. But there is no doubt, and the research has shown over and over again. Of course, it is a favorite type of research. It is a favorite type of social science research to do research on the media. Graduate students love this kind of research. They get to watch television. They get to ask questions about television. They like it. But we have all of this re-

search and all of this proof and all of this evidence and yet we seem to be immobilized to do something about it.

Senator BROWNBACK. You would all support this bill as a very minimal effort, is what I am hearing all of you say. I would encourage you also to submit to us, if you have not in the written statement, at least later, what you would actually do then. I mean, if this is the minimal bar, we are setting a bar at six inches high, where would you put it up?

Senator Lieberman.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

This has been an excellent panel, very informative and really out in the field working. It puts a heavy 2-by-4 to at least one of our regular critics, who described this concern about television as a Beltway issue. I was going to ask you about it, but I think it is pretty clear from what you have said and the constituent organizations that you represent that this is a genuinely felt issue out there.

Second, it was interesting, there was a reference by Dr. Cole in the earlier panel, just to clarify, and I think one of you said it, too, under the previous legislation on violence, the industry did adopt what might be called standards, but they are barely known, they are very general, and they do not amount to a code, certainly not one where there is any apparatus to hold them accountable for.

Then the other point, which I think Ms. Liebowitz made—

Ms. LIEBOWITZ. Yes.

Senator LIEBERMAN [continuing]. And you are quite right when you said you support this legislation but it is not a substitute for all the other things we are doing, and we do not see it that way, either.

To pick up on what the Chairman said at the end, just briefly, I think you made reference to the fact that you do have some ideas about what a code on violence might contain. Just highlight a few of the points.

Ms. LIEBOWITZ. Special recognitions for programs that are violence-free. Identification of sponsors that do not sponsor violent programming or violent commercials. When violence is presented, provide greater emphasis on strong anti-violence theme. Broadcast anti-violence public service announcements that focus on such events as gang membership, alternatives to violent behavior, and then address that behavior.

Violence that is broadcast, it has to be in the context of the story rather than gratuitous. I mean, if somebody has to be shot sometime once, you do not have to empty the gun and then watch the blood run down the street. That just is not necessary and we see that repeatedly. There are times when you channel surf, on the evening, it can be, 9 o'clock particularly, in that 9 to 10 o'clock framework, and parents tell us this all the time. There is not one program on the network that is not violent.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Right.

Ms. LIEBOWITZ. Over and over again.

Senator LIEBERMAN. And it is the way in which the violence is portrayed.

Ms. LIEBOWITZ. Exactly.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Senator Cleland and I are from the same generation, and obviously, there are some people who would say that all those cowboy shows we watched were violent, but it was, somehow, a very different kind of violence. It was not graphic at all and it had a morality element to it.

Ms. LIEBOWITZ. Parents are telling us, and this is really the first generation of parents that grew up with television as young children, they are telling us, hey, this is not what I saw.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Right.

Ms. LIEBOWITZ. I see my child acting out in a behavior that I know came from the television because I heard it while I was sitting there watching a Saturday program with them and I see them exhibiting that same behavior toward me. That did not happen when I was watching television as a young person.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Dr. Walsh is one of my heroes. He got involved in this professionally and then is doing it more or less full time now. We worked together on video games, so his group has done some great work. As I teased him, he did such good work, he got me sued.

Mr. WALSH. And myself, as well, Senator.

Senator LIEBERMAN. But Senator Kohl—this is a warning to you to be careful about associating with Dr. Walsh—Senator Kohl and I were dismissed from the suit, but Dr. Walsh is still a defendant.

Mr. WALSH. But I am not a Senator.

Senator LIEBERMAN. I will stick with him. Anyway, do you have any comments about what components you would add to a code of conduct here for television?

Mr. WALSH. One of the things that we have been working on for the last 2 years is to try to identify what are the particular features, and one of the things that we did is we surveyed parents across the country and we also had a concurrent parallel process where we also interviewed the experts, the people who have been studying this, the researchers, for years.

The amazing thing is that there was an amazing amount of agreement between the experts and the parents. They were not looking for different things. And it is many of the things that were mentioned in the previous panel's testimony. Those things can all really be translated into kind of evaluative statements or some kind of standards. There is always going to be some kind of subjectivity involved in these things—

Senator LIEBERMAN. Sure.

Mr. WALSH [continuing]. But we can wring a lot more subjectivity out of it than we think. We are never going to remove it completely, but we can wring a lot more out of it.

Senator LIEBERMAN. So this argument that is sometimes made, and Dr. Cole mentioned "Schindler's List", the folks in television always come up with some kind of example, such as "King Lear" was violent. How are you going to determine it? But really, it is not so hard to establish a code which embraces most people's common understanding of what—

Mr. WALSH. A lot of it is—are there going to be things where there is disagreement? Absolutely.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Sure.

Mr. WALSH. One of the things that we found is that when we developed these standards and then we tested them on 600 parents across the country, there was an incredible amount of agreement. So it is not rocket science. I am not saying it is easy, but it is also not rocket science.

Senator LIEBERMAN. The other thing is, we are not talking about a law here that we are going to arrest anybody for violating. We are talking about a code that people will attempt to reach on their own.

Thanks very much to all of you. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Senator BROWNBACK. And we are talking about liberating an industry. I like the way Senator Lieberman put it. It is our plea to the industry. It is a plea. We know you can do better. We absolutely know this and we are pleading with you on behalf of the children and the families of this country and the future of this Nation, help us and do better, because who tells the story does define the culture.

You folks have been a wonderful panel. This is a relatively new issue to me but certainly illuminating. I just applaud you all for your effort. Keep it up, and we are going to keep pressing forward, as well.

Thank you all for attending. The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:03 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

GOVERNMENT AND TELEVISION: IMPROVING PROGRAMMING WITHOUT CENSORSHIP

THURSDAY, MAY 8, 1997

U.S. SENATE,
OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT, RESTRUCTURING,
AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SUBCOMMITTEE,
OF THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:23 a.m., in room SD-342, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Sam Brownback, Chairman of the Subcommittee, presiding.

Present: Senators Brownback and Lieberman.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR BROWNBACK

Senator BROWNBACK. We will begin the hearing this morning. Thank you all for joining us. Sorry we're starting a little bit late. There is a vote scheduled at 10:30 which I believe is going to take place at that time.

What we're going to attempt to do is both of us do opening statements, go to our witnesses, and then we may run a relay here back and forth to the Floor where one of us will go and then the next, trying to keep the hearing going through the full time, so we don't have to take a recess in the hearing.

This, as we noted at the press conference, is not a Republican-Democrat issue at all. This is an American issue, and it's one that we really want to get at.

Good morning, this Subcommittee will be holding the second in a series of hearings entitled Government and Television: Improving Programming without Censorship.

Today's hearing will focus on the impact that sexual content in television programming has on our children. The first one was focused on violence.

We'll hear from researchers, medical experts and advocates who have analyzed the affect of the sexual content of programming on the behavior of children. Most of the research and most of the debate concerning the negative impact of television programming has focused to date on violence. Studies have shown that violence on television has de-sensitized children to violence, and permitted violence to have a more acceptable role in our culture than it should.

Today we'll try to determine whether the level of sexual content in television programming is having a similar effect. Excessive amount of sexual themes and situations involving sex that permeate prime time television is clearly troubling.

As we just heard at the press conference, almost 31 percent of shows aired between eight and nine—the traditional family hour—referred to sex. And reference to sex outside of marriage outnumbered references to sex within it by a ratio of 3.6 to 1, during the family hour.

Many in Hollywood argue that this merely reflects the desire for sexual content that is sought by television consumers. I disagree. I think that Hollywood and free over-the-air television in particular have a captive market.

Many in Hollywood also argue that those who criticize the level of sexual content in programming are infringing upon the independence of Hollywood's creative community. Well, I hope that this hearing flushes out these and other issues.

If there is a correlation between the level of sexual content in television programming, and such problems as teen pregnancy, and a problem certainly exists, I hope that the industry will seek to solve the problem.

Senator Lieberman and I introduced our bill, the Television Improvement Act of 1997, because we're concerned about the impact that programming has had on our culture and on our ability to raise children in this country.

If the conclusion of this hearing is that the level of sexual content in today's programming has led to an increase in out of wedlock births and has changed the manner in which children perceive sex, then I hope that the industry would come forward with voluntary guidelines to reverse this problem.

I hope that this hearing gives us an opportunity to explore these issues, and moves towards a solution to what I consider to be a very, very troubling cultural problem.

[The prepared statement of Senator Brownback follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR BROWNBACK

Good morning. Today, this Subcommittee will be holding the second of a series of hearings entitled "Government and Television: Improving Programming without Censorship." Today's hearing will focus on the impact that sexual content in television programming has on our children.

We will hear testimony from researchers, medical experts, and advocates who have analyzed the affect of the sexual content of programming on the behavior of children. Most of the research and most of the debate concerning the negative impact of television programming has focused on violence. Studies have shown that violence on television has desensitized children to violence and permitted violence to occupy a more acceptable role in our culture than it should. Today we will try to determine whether the level of sexual content in television programming is having a similar effect.

The excessive amount of sexual themes and situations involving sex that permeate prime time television is troubling. As we just heard at the press conference, almost 31 percent of shows aired between eight and nine referred to sex. And reference to sex outside of marriage outnumbered references to sex within it by a ratio of 3.6 to 1. Many in Hollywood argue that this merely reflects the desire for sexual content that is sought by television consumers. I disagree. I think that Hollywood, and free over-the-air television in particular have a captive market.

Many in Hollywood also argue that those who criticize the level of sexual content in programming are infringing upon the independence of Hollywood's creative community. Well, I hope that this hearing flushes out these and other issues. If there is a correlation between the level of sexual content in television programming and such problems as teen pregnancy, then a problem certainly exists that I hope that the industry will seek to solve.

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culture and on our ability to raise children in this country. If the conclusion of this hearing is that the level of sexual content in today's programming has led to an increase in out-of-wedlock births and has changed the manner in which children perceive sex, then I hope that the industry would come forward with voluntary guidelines to reverse this problem. I hope that this hearing gives us an opportunity to explore these issues and moves towards a solution to what I consider to be a very troubling problem.

Senator BROWNBACK. With that, I want to turn the microphone over to Senator Lieberman, who has been an outstanding advocate—a warrior—in these issues that are directly attacking our children. And I would call him a defender of the children of American.

Senator LIEBERMAN.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR LIEBERMAN

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's been wonderful in this 105th Session of Congress to—if we are at war, and I believe we are—to be marching forward with you at my side. And I appreciate your leadership on this very much.

I am going to abbreviate my opening statement because we've said much of what I wanted to say at the press conference. But just thinking, looking back three decades ago, a sexual revolution was launched in this country, and as we look around at our culture today, I'm afraid we can conclude that sex has won. The gamut of all sorts is so saturated with innuendo, provocative images, vulgarities and increasingly graphic displays of overtly sexual acts, ranging from the teasing headlines on the covers of teen girl magazines, to the bizarre activities featured daily on the daytime trash talk TV shows, to the kind of soft porn or hard porn that is appearing on television, including the family hour, to the awful sexually abusive pornographic descriptions that are heard repeatedly in gangsta rap music—the cumulative effect of this on our culture and on our children has got to be destructive.

I suppose that someone can say that we ought to be proud of the free expression that all this represents, but I think in a free society, particularly, we have to ask what's the price we're paying for this, what are the consequences of it, how are these unrelenting and provocative statements and messages affecting our attitudes and our behaviors and our values—especially those of our children.

And that's really what we want to begin to answer to day. It was interesting to me in looking back that way back in 1982, the National Institute of Mental Health concluded that television in particular had become an "important sex educator."

So imagine today what exactly our kids are learning from Jerry Springer and Melrose Place and the rest of the perverse sex educators that dominate the television tube today.

As the Chairman has indicated, these are questions that have gone largely unanswered in our public discourse, not only unanswered, but in many ways unasked. In part that's due to the predominant question, and the primary question that we have focused on, as a society, which is the threat of violence in the media.

But it's also a result of the relatively limited amount of social science research done on the effects of sexual content, and I think that's because in recent years what has really changed about tele-

vision is the enormous infusion of sexually inappropriate, provocative, destructive material.

The violence in some sense has plateaued. It's not at an acceptable level, but it's plateaued. What's changed is the sexual content that we've described, and that's why Senator Brownback and I have taken the steps that we have and reached the conclusion that we have.

What's at work here is unfortunately something broader which assaults our common values. And I think by common values we mean our shared commitment to protecting our children from harmful influences. That, I think, is a value that everybody in our society, except for the most perverse, regardless of who or where or what their politics or ideology or anything else, would share.

And we also mean our shared understanding that there are certain forms of behavior that are simply unacceptable in a civil society, and most important to our discussion today—and let me be really blunt about this—our shared recognition that it is wrong and dangerous for young children to be engaged in sexual activity and it's wrong and dangerous for adults to encourage them to do so. But that is exactly what too much of television does today.

I mean, to test whether these are, indeed, common values, ask any parent how they would feel if they were to discover that their 8-year-old, 10-year-old, or 12-year-old, or, obviously in a lot of families in American, their 14, 16, or 18-year-old was having sex.

But it is exactly that message that is given to millions of our kids, including the youngest ones, every afternoon and every evening on television. It's all part of a kind of anything goes society in which ultimately by increasingly tolerating the intolerable, everybody loses.

So this is a very important hearing today, which we hope can add to the public discourse and lead to the kind of response by the television networks that we want.

Individually when you talk to these folks, these are good people. They have families. I've had conversations with television executives who tell me that they feel badly that they can't watch television with their kids in the evening the way they used to watch with their mom and dad.

But that's their fault. And in pursuit of what I can only call profit without restraint they have lost their way. And it's our hope that with these appeals and the information that will come forward from the witnesses we have today that they will assume some of the responsibility, find their way, and help the rest of society find our way back to where we ought to be.

Mr. Chairman, again, I thank you, and I look forward to the testimony of the witnesses today.

[The prepared statement of Senator Lieberman follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR LIEBERMAN

Mr. Chairman, one of the great mantras of Madison Avenue is that sex sells, and judging from the products coming out of Hollywood today, our culture seems to be in the midst of a going-out-of-business special.

The gamut of movies, music, television, magazines, and advertising of all sorts are growing saturated with innuendo, vulgarities, provocative images, and increasingly graphic displays of overtly sexual acts . . . ranging from the teasing headlines on the covers of teen girl magazines, to the bazaar of the bizarre featured daily on day-

time trash TV talk shows, to the pornographic descriptions often heard in gangsta rap records.

With all this evidence, no one can doubt that sex sells, but we have to ask; what price? What are the consequences of all this? How are these unrelenting and provocative messages affecting our attitudes and behaviors and our values, especially those of our children? As far back as 1982, the National Institute of Mental Health concluded that television in particular had become a “important sex educator”—so what exactly are our kids learning today from “Jerry Springer” and “Melrose Place” and the rest?

These questions have not only gone largely unanswered in our public discourse but in many respects unasked. That’s in part due to the predominant attention we’ve paid to the very real threat of media violence and the relatively limited amount of social science research done on the effects of sexual content. But it’s also due, I believe, to the uncomfortableness we as society feel in discussing this subject and the broader concerns over morality, which too often gets sidetracked by arguments over “whose values” and accusations of censorship.

Senator Brownback and I, along with a growing number of experts and parents alike, believe that we cannot afford to ignore these questions any longer, and that is why we believe this hearing is so important. I’ve seen enough to conclude that the cumulative weight of these messages is having a significant impact on the health and well-being of our families and our communities, and that they are in part responsible for the fact that 80 percent of Americans in a recent poll said they believe this Nation is in a moral crisis and that our common values are disintegrating. And we fear that things will continue to deteriorate unless we engage in and hopefully inform this dialogue.

Let me be more specific about what we’re talking about here. By our common values, we mean our shared commitment to protecting children from harmful influences, our shared understanding that there are certain forms of behavior that are unacceptable in a civil society, and most pertinent to our discussion today, our shared recognition that it’s wrong and dangerous for young children to be engaged in sexual activity and it’s wrong and dangerous for adults to encourage them to do so. To test whether these are indeed common values, ask any parent how they would feel if they were to discover their 8-year-old or 10-year-old or 12-year-old was having sex.

Yet that is exactly what is going on in our “anything goes” society, where in the name of open-mindedness and personal freedom we’re increasingly tolerating the intolerable. For instance, one of the most alarming trends we’re witnessing today is that more children are engaging in sexual activity at ages far younger than those of previous generations. This trend was given a human face here locally by a recent incident at a D.C. elementary school, where several fourth-graders engaged in oral sex behind a locked door outside a classroom and the principal first responded by describing the activity as “consensual.”

In the wake of this incident, the Washington Post recently ran an eye-opening story in which several local child development experts, educators and students said this case is sadly not all that unusual. A child psychologist at Virginia Tech proclaimed, “I have lost count of 12-year-old girls who are having sex.” One of those said 12-year-olds, in replying to a question about whether an 8-year-old child can have consensual sex, was quoted as saying, “Yes! Yes! I know people younger than 8 who decide. I know five 8-year-olds who have had sex. I have even seen one.”

What is driving this trend? Given the omnipresence of sex in our culture, and the way the culture celebrates casual sex without mentioning its consequences, it’s difficult not to conclude that the media is playing a significant role. Just exactly what kind of a role is one of the key questions we hope to begin answering with this hearing today. We have assembled some of the most distinguished experts in the Nation on this subject, and I am eager to hear their testimony.

They will be focusing on television in particular because television is the most powerful force in our culture. If anyone still doubts the enormous hold the small-screen has on our society, I would refer them to a front page article that ran in the Post this week, which reported that television is in the process of invading every last nook and cranny of our daily lives, from bank teller lines to airports to doctor’s offices and even to elevators.

I suspect that what our witnesses have to say will open the eyes of many about the gravity of this situation and the risk posed to our children in particular. I am just disappointed that no one from the major television networks or production studios will be here to listen and speak. I am also a little puzzled One has to wonder why a group of people who feel so free to talk incessantly about sex on the air are so loath to talk about it in a public forum like this. Maybe their absence says more than their presence would.

Nevertheless, Mr. Chairman, I look forward to another constructive and informative discussion.

Senator BROWBACK. Thank you, Senator Lieberman.

We will have a vote here before too long. What I would like to do is let's go ahead and get started and see if we can do this and keep it rolling. Otherwise we'll have a short recess in between.

Our first panel is L. Brent Bozell, III. He's chairman of the Media Research Center. And the second participant will be Dr. David Murray. He is a cultural anthropologist, and director of research for the Statistical Assessment Service.

Gentlemen, thank you for joining us. Mr. Bozell, the microphone is yours. We will take the written testimony, if you like, into the record, and if you'd like to summarize, or if you'd like to present your written testimony, the choice is yours.

TESTIMONY OF L. BRENT BOZELL, III,¹ CHAIRMAN, MEDIA RESEARCH CENTER

Mr. BOZELL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. No, you don't want to hear my written testimony twice, so I will submit it for the record.

But thank you for the invitation, Mr. Chairman, to address this Subcommittee and, Senator Lieberman, I repeat, thank you on behalf of millions of parents who either know what you're doing or ought to know what it is you're doing to try to defend the family, which is ultimately what we're talking about here.

There is no question, Mr. Chairman, that the family hour has an extraordinary impact on the culture, and that television has an extraordinary impact on the culture. I would ask you to bear in mind two studies, and I don't have the actual sources of it. I could get them for you if you would like.

One study was done of youngsters, asking them to name their role models. I think this was the Girl Scouts of America survey that was taken. Not one percent named their own parents. Not one percent named teachers. For good or ill, not one percent named Members of Congress, but 67 percent named celebrities.

Celebrities are the super heros. They are the role models for America's youth.

The second statistic: By the time the average youngster is graduated from high school, he or she will have spent more time in front of a television set than in front of a teacher. So who in the final analysis is the teacher in American society today and what is being taught?

When you have 1.5 million unwed pregnancies every year among teenagers, there is cause and effect going on. When you have the kind of violence we have in our streets, there is cause and effect going on.

When these are the lessons that are being taught by the role models to the children, you're going to get what you have in America's cities today.

Now, I have tried to explain this to people in the industry. Some are receptive to this. Off the record they will be. Publicly they will never be. However, it is distressing to me to see the finger pointing that goes on.

¹The prepared statement of Mr. Bozell appears in the Appendix on page 144.

When people like Senator Lieberman try to do what he does, censorship is the red herring that's thrown up, which is nonsense. And to me it becomes almost insulting that over and over and over again you must remind people of the word, voluntary, as if to be defensive about trying to do something for families. I think it's high time that those attacks ended.

There is the finger pointing where people blame the advertisers. And to be sure, I would hope this Subcommittee would address its comments also to the advertising industry, because they play a role in this. But they're not the only ones involved.

It is the finger pointing that goes to parents. Well, parents ought to take care of this. As we pointed out before, no parent can analyze 96 programs. And there's one thing a parent could do, which is blow up the television, but that is not the solution.

In short, there are many aspects of society that we ought to be looking at. Everybody ought to be playing a role, including our elected officials, which you gentlemen are doing.

But in the final analysis the television industry has to recognize two things: One is that if it concerns itself only about market, there's something very sad going on there. However, there is a good market for this, as *Touched by an Angel* has shown. There is a market for this kind of good programming.

And, second, if it concerns itself at all with the impact that it has, it cannot simply say it is reflecting society. It is having a huge impact on creating society. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator BROWNBACK. Thank you very much, Mr. Bozell, and also for all your work that you've done. I look forward to some good exchange and dialogue.

Dr. Murray, thank you as well for joining us today. We can take your written testimony in if you'd like to summarize, or you can read from it. The choice is yours. Welcome to the Subcommittee.

**TESTIMONY OF DAVID MURRAY,¹ DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH,
STATISTICAL ASSESSMENT SERVICE**

Mr. MURRAY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Senator Lieberman. I am honored to be here, and I appreciate the leadership you both have shown in this very critical issue. It is a good sign, perhaps, of change in awareness, and I recognize the difficulty you both face crossing between two potential evils of government involvement, the heavy hand of censorship, as opposed to the desire to protect ourselves from the moral environment that is becoming increasingly problematic, and the hope that we all share that there will be a self-governance, responsibility internalized once again in an industry that has great creativity and great power, that they will come to a realization of the important role that they play.

I have to mention since I'm here, and look over, I am, as you know, a somewhat short notice substitute witness, and I'm very delighted to be here. But to allay the fears of the wider public about other developments in science recently, this is not a result of cloning.

The two of us sitting here represent a very common sort of visage. It's accidental, I assure you.

¹The prepared statement of Mr. Murray appears in the Appendix on page 147.

I do have a statement that I was working on last night. Let me share it with you, and I can interrupt at any point.

I like sex. I'm very much drawn to it, and images of the unclothed and splendid female form. I am drawn to it as a moth to a flame.

I tend to agree with the writer, Florence King, who explained male channel surfing behavior as being driven by the unquenchable hope that somewhere on some channel there is a naked female dancing.

I have been that man, and yet still I am very troubled by what has become of sex in America on television. It is possible to know, as I do, as a cultural anthropologist, the variety of ways in which this id appetite can express itself and still be very disturbed by what we have become in this modern age.

In all cultures, in all times, from David delighting in the image of Bathsheeba, to Orpheus descending into Hell itself to reclaim Euridice, the noble Roman Anthony, besmitten with the unequaled Cleopatra, or the polymorphous Kama Sutra of the 60s, to the tawdry Melrose Place of today, sex not only sells, it enchants, it arouses, it makes us pliant, makes us vulnerable, and opens the human personality.

We seek it. We pay for it in both senses of the term, we learned today. And we are monkey-curious about just what its limits might be.

Sex is animal in the first instance, housed ironically, as the poet Yates lamented, in the place of excrement. And yet it is also, simultaneously, god-like. It is our divine share in the role of procreation.

As a cultural anthropologist, I have studied the varieties of cultures and found one essential message: Sex and reproduction are the very engines of social change and social dynamism. Each utopian, each revolutionary seeks to grasp the levers of sexuality to change society through this powerful drive, to harness it to his or her social agendas and purposes.

Sex is powerful because it has an appetital function, and because of its product, the human infant.

The anthropologist in me who has visited and dwelt among exotic aspects of human appetites, who was weaned on Margaret Mead and her bare-breasted, sexually playful Samoans, on to Gilbert Herdt's homoerotic Sambia, wants to present to you briefly here a portrait of two very exotic cultures, indeed, and contrast them.

In the first, according to a 1994 University of Chicago study, called the Social Organization of Sexuality, we find a normative world of relatively sexual restraint and healthy expression.

In a survey of 3,500 adults, we discovered that sex strangers, the casual affair, was, indeed, very, very rare. Less than 25 percent of long term relationships among partners had started with sex, even during the first year.

The casual pick up, while exciting, proved emotionally sterile and a dead end.

Sex in this culture was not with erotic strangers. It was comprised almost overwhelmingly of people who were very socially, educationally, racially and religiously similar to ourselves.

The General Social Survey, by Tom Smith, also at the University of Chicago and NORC, in a Kaiser Foundation report showed that

within this culture only 3 percent of adults reported having an affair during the past year, and only 16 percent of adults reported ever having had an affair.

Indeed, throughout their lifetime, over 90 percent of wives in this culture, and 75 percent of husbands were faithfully monogamous.

Senator BROWNBACK. Where is this culture?

Mr. MURRAY. Hmmm. Indeed, sir, hold on for a moment, and I will spring my trap.

Eighty-nine percent of those surveyed said they had either one or no sexual partner in the previous year. Seventy-two percent said they had one or no partner in the previous 5 years.

Only 5.6 percent of all couples were living together outside of marriage, and most of these would later marry themselves—and so forth and so on.

Now, let us contrast that culture. I'm going to call that Rube World. It turns out to be contemporary America, live as lived today, as the sociologists study our actual behavior.

Let's contrast that with Tube World, the other America, in which we simultaneously live. It is the culture of hyper-sex. This culture is nearly the polar opposite of the first, and according to my colleague, Dr. Robert Lichter, of the Center for Media and Public Affairs, here are the following characteristics.

It is replete with incest, homosexuality, sadism and masochism, with rape, with bestiality, with necrophilia, with onanism, with every form of deviance and perversion, and casual premarital sex on a regular basis.

Here are some numbers that have come from studies that have been done by the center and others about where hyper-sex takes place. On soap operas, 94 percent of all sexual encounters were amongst unmarried people.

According to a media content analysis conducted by the center, prior to 1969, fewer than one instance of extramarital sex was coded for every 30 shows that they observed. But during the 1970s, extramarital sex started to increase. Suddenly it was one out of every eight shows.

Since the mid-1970s, the ratio has dropped to one in six, and continues to narrow as standards of sexual morality have also changed just as dramatically.

Prior to 1970, 38 percent of the shows coded presented extramarital sex as wrong. That proportion has changed. Now, only seven percent, after 1970, have anything to say disapprovingly about extramarital sex on the tube.

In the 1980s, 41 percent of prime time shows viewed recreational sex as acceptable without qualification. Thirty-three percent made no moral judgment whatsoever.

It's not just that sex has changed in the proportion of its being presented on TV. It's that we now have the notion that it is to be condoned, it's accepted, it's normative, it's standard. In fact, it is advocated and encouraged.

A 1987 study by Planned Parenthood concluded that there are 65,000 sexual references a year on television during prime afternoon and evening hours. Hourly averages of ten sexual innuendos and between one to two references to intercourse and deviant or discouraged sexual practices—every hour, every day.

The average American television viewer now sees between 14,000 to 20,000 instances of sexual material every year. As Mr. Bozell has just mentioned, the high school graduate will have spent roughly 15,000 hours in front of a television set, as opposed to 11,000 hours in classroom instruction.

One intrepid team of researchers found a sexual act or reference every four minutes during prime time. The Center for Media and Public Affairs found 220 prime time scenes that dealt with sex between unmarried partners, and fewer than one in ten of those concluded that having sex would be wrong or inappropriate for any reason.

In two out of the three, the script explicitly endorses the desirability of sexual relations, be they adolescent, heterosexual encounters, or teenaged Lesbianism.

So, let me summarize here: For the adolescent being socialized, coming along—I have an 11-year-old girl. And I have two older children who have been through phase. I've watched it happen.

They have two choices, two cultures out there. The lived life of fidelity, commitment, involvement, the lived life of reproduction, that is monogamous and faithful and encouraged through a family and community investment in the future; and a virtual world, a hyper-sex world, a digitized world, a shadowy world of figures that are heightened with arousal.

Which one do you suppose they choose, increasingly? They are being socialized into the tube world, as the normative space for their yearning and their aspiration, as the measure against which they should hold up their own lives and their own performances.

The disparity between the lived life of marriage and attachment versus the imagined and commodified and insistently grasping world of ceaseless and polymorphous gratification establishes a space of disillusionment for them, and a growing preference for the virtual over the real, a learning from the digitized shadowland of fulfillment, as superior to the world of their own consequences.

Television is a Promethean fire. It is at the service now of two masters: Profit or commodification, and the moral crusades and social agendas of the intellectual elite. It arouses us, and as we are aroused we can be impressed with social messages of all sorts.

The fear we now face is that our children are as straw beneath which we are holding this approaching flame.

One of these Americas reflects the world view, the tastes, the values and the aspirations of really what is a very small and very distinctive subset of American culture—an intellectual elite that is now dominant in this medium whose ideas and values and tastes with respect to sexuality and whose agenda for the future are at enormous variance with the wider public expectation.

They now dominate this medium, where they both reflect the world that has been and the world that has never been, and where they seek increasingly to call for through their influence the creatures that we shall become.

Let me end with that. I share with you the sense that this is an enormously consequential battle. It is not a trivial issue. It is not simply a matter of the flickering shadows in our living room. It is a pervasive alien that is somehow landed in our midsts, some 40

some years ago, emanating a flavored radiation that each of finds almost impossible to avoid.

What consequences it's having in our lives, we're only now beginning to fully appreciate. We cannot do without it, but we must find some way that we can comprehend and encompass its force within our lives in such a way that it is not longer as destructive as we are learning that it has been.

Senator BROWNBACK. Thank you, Mr. Murray for your testimony. I think Senator Lieberman and I will banter back and forth here for about seven minutes, each interval. These are very interesting witnesses that we have.

Dr. Murray, you talk about history and sex and cultures and sex. This is not a new issue from that standpoint, for as far as it's been permeated in cultures before.

Have you studied cultures that have gotten to the point of sex dominance that our culture has gotten today. Or am I miscalibrating that, that we're not at that point, from what you're describing, the one culture versus the hyper-sex culture today. Yet that's what some are trying to drive us towards.

That's two parts. You've looked at other cultures, and what holds out there in the future for where this one is being driven.

Mr. MURRAY. I understand your point, Senator, and I think it's well taken. It is, of course, a human eternal problematic from the Garden of Eden on. This is the engine of concern for us, is how we encompass and regulate sexuality.

There never has been a culture that I know of. We are the lead lemming off the cliff, as it were here in American life, with respect to things such as teenage extramarital sex, teenaged pregnancy, illegitimacy and those rates. They are stunning.

Senator BROWNBACK. You mean you cannot find another culture prior to the level of what we are now on that teen sexual activity?

Mr. MURRAY. It's unprecedented, Senator, and we don't really know what lies ahead. We now have this tendency, we want to put on the brakes. I'm not sure that we are convinced any longer that the brakes are attached to anything, as we keep pushing down on the floorboards and heading towards some sort of cliff on social change.

What we have found in other cultures in the past is there has been comparable obsessions with sexuality, but it's usually restricted to a relatively small subset of the society, perhaps. An intellectual elite. Perhaps a powerful group, in the shadows some place. Perhaps the netherworld or the underworld of prostitution and drug abuse.

What's happened in America is the mainstreaming of this as an institutional norm. So it is possible to have simultaneously these two worlds because of a generational difference. The world of our fathers and our grandfathers, and the world of our parents and our own marriages, perhaps, that was fostered in a different climate. And then the world of the children coming along behind us, now becoming young adults, who are experiencing a rampant sexuality, a loss of marital commitment, a sense of the absolute freedom and desirability of every form of sexual expression, without constraint.

These are simultaneous in America now. And as the future generation comes along, increasingly that is the path where they are being led by the insistence of the television outreach.

I am not particularly persuaded when someone says to me that television just reflects what people want. I mean, we have been led by our own appetites into areas that have been counterproductive for us certainly.

At the same time, I know, as my 11-year-old watches TV, there are inducements planted there for her. We can constrain what she watches. She is very self-governing and mature. She tries to stay away from material that would be problematic for her.

And yet these advertisements come. The television's—they put their own little land mine into the relatively safe shows, to seduce her, to make her aware of a forbidden world that she might come to when we're not around.

That's an insistent proselytizing, and I'm afraid it's having more and more effect.

Senator BROWNBACK. The television shares a major responsibility with the sex obsession of this culture. Is it the dominant responsibility that they share for the sex obsession and the sexual activity of our children?

Mr. MURRAY. I'm not sure, Senator, and I don't know that studies can definitely say what is cause and what is effect, or what is simply correlation. There have been many, many social changes, from changes in the gender roles of male and female, the entry into the work place.

We sit in a circumstance unprecedented. Also, in the degree of freedom we have. American freedom is so extraordinary that our capacity of explore any of our appetites and drives is both a positive and a negative simultaneously.

So to have sexuality be free as it in our society, coupled with changes in the family, technological changes in society, and this wonderfully psychologically powerful medium that can shape a virtual world and make it so desirable for. It's created a powerful flame.

At the same time, it seems to me, we are institutionalizing television's capacity, because it is a product not. That is, it's an industry. And that's relatively unprecedented.

There was erotic literature, there was the Kama Sutra, there were erotic carvings or perhaps private displays of some sort of line drawings in ancient China. But now it is an industry. Senator, you represent Kansas. You know what we've done to agriculture, once we industrialized this, and turned it into a marketplace.

We now have a marketplace of sexuality. Adult products are on the New York Stock Exchange. It has become somehow geared up with the capacity to penetrate and be pervasive at a level I don't think we have ever anticipated.

Mr. BOZELL. But if I may, the difference between television and erotic literature of a bygone era was that that erotic literature or that erotic art was not marketed to children. This is being marketed to children, with shows that are then having a G or PG label put on their to attract children, with adolescent story lines that are not attractive to adults, that are not of interest to adults. It is to bring in children. And then they get those messages.

So that is a remarkable difference I think.

Senator BROWNBAC. Dr. Murray, you have no doubt, though, that if the television would back up and say, we're going to stop marketing sex to kids, like we're trying to get television advertisers to stop marketing cigarettes to children, that this would have at least a slowing down and stopping the harmful effect.

It'd be nice even if they would show restraint in a positive fashion having a positive effect.

Mr. MURRAY. Indeed, Senator, I believe we can have a positive effect. This is a power for good and for ill. Every culture has its distinctive, symbolic place where it expresses its aspirations.

In the Medieval world, it was the cathedral. Today the most creative in terms of capacity to write, to envision, to impose the catharsis and yearnings of drama on us, that's the television world. The world of Hollywood is a world of great capacity and creativity, with an enormous amount of money.

The dollars that are spent on this make the television commercial, the television program almost the equivalent of the cathedral in the Medieval period, an expression of our culture at its symbolic most important and invested moment.

That is a power for good or for evil. Unfortunately it seems to have been set up with an incentive to move, because of the market place, and perhaps because of social agendas as well, towards what many people perceive as a libertarian or liberating aspect.

Divest ourselves of the social constraints. Eliminate repression of sexuality. This was supposed to be a positive force, to give us the full expression of our appetites. It hasn't really yielded that product for us, as we now look upon the generation that has been brought up under that.

Perhaps television can assume its responsibility to speak to the soul, to the mind, to provide the kind of education that we require for ourselves to both find our liberties, but also to govern ourselves internally. It can be a power to do so.

Senator BROWNBAC. Thank you. Senator Lieberman.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks to you both for really superb and provocative testimony here. And I appreciate the tone in which we're speaking, because obviously as you said, Dr. Murray, the sexual drive goes back to the Garden of Eden, and it hasn't been discovered in its manifold expressions in the 1990s with television.

And so we've always struggled throughout human history with our ability to channel and control in a constructive way use this impulse, which, as you say, is also life giving.

What strikes me about this, I think you are absolutely right, and Senator Moynihan has commented on this, that the numbers on teen age pregnancy, children born without their parents having been married, without two parents in the house, to young, poor women, they are unprecedented in history, as far as we can see.

But I think it's also true, and I believe I'm catching this in what you are saying, and I want to ask both of you, that a distinguishing factor here is, in fact, the pervasiveness of television. The mode of communicating these messages.

We have never lived—I use a homely example, but maybe it's not. Maybe it's overstated. When we discovered nuclear energy, the question was would we use it to our benefit or to our destruction.

In some measure, the telecommunications revolution presents us with the same choices, and never have people lived in a society before where so many millions were focused on the same material coming out.

So that those who decide what's on television have a power to affect our culture and our values more than really anyone has ever had before. Is that a fair conclusion? Is that part of what we're seeing here, Dr. Murray?

Mr. MURRAY. Senator, I think that's a very insightful realization. That we are an unprecedented technology, an unprecedented form of communication, that turns out to have very few pinnacles or gate keepers, so that we have a tribal-like culture, as Marshal McLuhan used to say, at one point, the electronic village, is increasingly possible, where we can be sharing the same emotions, the same narratives, on the same time period, and, as it were, coordinate and emotional—and a values world by watching together at the television.

And yet only a few people who are able to basically direct and channel and shape, and they may not be necessarily representative of the mainstream desires, religious values, attitudes and aspirations of the majority of Americans.

And what Christopher Lash called the revolt of the elites. We end up with a potential difficulty of a real bifurcation of the values system, where those who are shaping us through the media are not necessarily grounded in the lives as lived in the broader part of America.

It also strikes me, Senator, that the other change that's taking place that's given power, even more so, to television, has been the relative disintegration of alternatives in our lives. That is, there's been a nuclear or atomization of the family. And of community.

So that the child who is born at high risk to a single parent, in circumstances where there are little other alternatives, where it may not be safe to play in the street, where the family is no longer the embedded context, or the little New England village is not there, where the Lions Club or the Shriners are not available in that child's life, where the school may not be a haven at all, but in fact a threatening and disintegrating place where no real learning takes place.

And yet there is this tube that's available, a kind of anodyne, a television in front of the couch that can be turned on and into a retreat.

For a child such as that, I suspect there's an incredible vulnerability to the messages that come through, that they don't have counteractive forces of their parents, of the world of the library, of the world of the school, to give them the reinforcement that could give them a mature judgment about how to take the television.

And I think it may run away with them.

Senator LIEBERMAN. That is so true. In pursuit of this value of freedom, which we all hold so dear, and distinguishes us. But when it leads to places it's led to here, there are victims, and these chil-

dren you describe are the most pained, in my opinion, victims that we have.

Doctor, I take it from what you said that you have no doubt that this avalanche of sexual messages is contributing, is affecting actual sexual behavior of those who receive the messages.

Mr. MURRAY. As a social scientist, one always wants to say, of course there's doubt. Where are the definitive studies. This is not a laboratory science. The correlations and relationships are so strong and so striking. Just being a parent, how can one doubt?

We are divided creatures, each of us, Senator. You and Bill Bennett have talked this way yourselves in various other panels. Our heart is divided between a dark and a light side, in a kind of contest.

And somehow this television and its sexual can take that power in our heart that is—we're not even sure how we control it ourselves, and we perhaps are somewhat distressed by it, our own appetites—but it gives it more magnitude in the contest with the better angels of our nature, as we try to control it.

My impression is that young kids coming along are not only seeing the images, but hearing an overtone and a commentary that this is not only desirable, but good, fine, normative, expected, regular, patterned, without consequences, and they're learning scripts or templates for their future lives.

They are learning narratives that they will enact in their own sexual expression when they become young adults.

Senator LIEBERMAN. And in fact, if they're not sexually active early on, some thing is wrong with them.

Mr. MURRAY. According to the University of Chicago study a critical feature in the lives of young kids is whether they have an episode early in life, too early in life, that, quote, eroticizes them. If something happens in their lives that eroticizes them, they become receptive and available.

And they start exploring and behaving in ways that are really quite counterproductive for their personality development. Television is an eroticizing agent in the lives of many kids where the parents aren't available to protect them or to translate its meanings.

Mr. BOZELL. Senator, can I make a point on that.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Please.

Mr. BOZELL. A few good people are frankly causing an awful lot of bad things to happen. A small group of people could cause an awful lot of good as well in society.

We are talking as if 20 years ago you didn't have violence on television, you didn't have sex on television. In fact, there was more violence on television 20 years ago and there was just as much sex on television 20 years ago, but with this difference.

In the days of the Hays code, and when the spirit of the Hays code was still being honored thereafter, you had, whether it was on a Western, you had—look at Nickelodeon some time, and look at any one of those Westerns, and look at how many people got shot up on every single episode, which children watched.

On "Happy Days," it dealt with sex, the whole episode dealt with sex. Why was it that parents could allow and encourage their children to watch "Gunsmoke" and "Happy Days"? Because you had a

morality play. There was always right, and there was always wrong.

And, most importantly, Mr. Chairman, and Senator, you had consequences taught. That if you do it, this is wrong and this will happen. And therefore television was a force for good. It taught good things.

So no one is suggesting that there ought not to be any kind of art on television. We are suggesting, use television, go back to what it once was, which was a force for good in a very troubled time.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Well said, and amen. My time is up. Thanks to both of you.

Senator BROWNBACK. That's very well put. Mr. Bozell, in your work, in your research that you're looking at, you are showing sexual innuendo and sexual content on prime time work. You've seen some progress, but it's still way too high, off the charts, and on prime time.

In any of your private conversations with the industry, are they telling you, we're going to change?

Mr. BOZELL. You would be surprised what, in my private conversations with them, they say about this Subcommittee.

Senator BROWNBACK. Don't use vulgarities here. We're trying to get away from those. [Laughter.]

Mr. BOZELL. The attitude that some have in the industry is, yes, there is a problem, yes it has to be corrected.

Now, a minority of that group will say, yes, and we're going to do something about it, the best we can. The majority will have a handcuffed—my arms are handcuffed attitude. I can't do it because a) the market wants it, b) the advertisers want it, c) the writers want it, d) the executives told me to write this. Et cetera, et cetera.

The attitude is that there is a sense that there is something wrong with it. Michael Medved, the film critic, has an interesting theory about this. It sounds crazy at first until you hear the whole thing through.

Los Angeles has had a series of Moses-like plagues put on it. Whether it is mud slides or—I guess the volcano was a movie. But the fires and the rains—all that. And the last one they had 3 years ago was the LA riots.

What Beverly Hills saw, what the people in the homes on the hills overlooking Los Angeles saw at the time of the riots was the physical disintegration of their city. They saw the products of a culture that's gone haywire, that they could no longer escape it and live in their lands of make believe, because they do live in lands of make believe up on the hills of Beverly Hills.

They saw what was happening to the culture. Michael Medved believes it had a terrific impact.

And the second thing that's happening is that a lot of these executives in the networks have children who are now hitting 10, 11, and 12 years old. And it's interesting to me that Tony Danza, the actor, was commenting in an interview that he sat down with his daughter 1 day to watch a show—his own show—and realized he couldn't let her watch it.

That's when it hit him how bad television had become. His own show he couldn't show his own daughter.

So there is kind of a wake up call going on in Hollywood.

Now you have two forces. You have a force that wants to push the edges of the envelope as much as possible. You've got the Stephen Bosco's who have said they want, and will not stop at anything short of full nudity on television. They want that.

And they are going to continue pushing, pushing, pushing. And in the other direction, you have Martha Williamson, and Touched by an Angel. And her tremendous success. And it's the most pro-faith show I think in history, and it's very successful.

Senator I don't know which way this one's going to go. But I think what's going to happen, if people like you can continue raising public awareness of the problem, and offer the constructive solutions, they'll go over the cliff, and this side will win.

Senator BROWNBACK. That's the scenario we're playing out in this morality play. Thank you very much both of you for joining us, and for your tremendous work. We deeply appreciate it.

The next panel will be Dr. Jane Brown, professor at University of North Carolina School of Journalism and Mass Communications; Dr. Laurie Lee Humphries, M.D., Professor, Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Department, University of Kentucky College of Medicine; Dr. Mary Anne Layden, Director of Education, University of Pennsylvania Center for Cognitive Therapy.

You can each choose to read from your written testimony, or you can summarize and submit your written testimony for the record. The choice is yours. What Senator Lieberman and I most appreciate is the chance to have some dialogue back and forth, and for each of us to jump in.

You know what we are posing on the issue of television and looking at sexual innuendo and its impact on the overall society. Dr. Brown, we welcome you to the Subcommittee, and the floor is yours.

TESTIMONY OF JANE BROWN,¹ PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA-CHAPEL HILL SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION

Dr. JANE BROWN. Thank you. I would like to submit a longer piece that I have written summarizing what we know about the impact of sex on television and other media.²

Senator BROWNBACK. Good, without objection.

Dr. JANE BROWN. Thank you. I've been studying the effects of television on children, especially adolescents, for more than 20 years, and I believe that television and other media today are important sources of sexual information for our children. I'm going to speak today primarily as a social scientist interested in public health.

Unfortunately, too frequently, the sexual information offered is not what our children need to make responsible, healthy decisions about their own sexual behavior.

The media are important sex educators in this culture because our traditional channels of sexual education are offering our children too little, too late. In a recent poll, one half of the 13 to 15 year olds said they had learned the most about sex from their par-

¹The prepared statement of Dr. Jane Brown appears in the Appendix on page 156.

²"Sex and the Mass Media," appears in the Appendix on page 171.

ents and school, but the other half said they had learned the most from their friends and entertainment.

In contrast to the just-say-no-till-marriage prohibitions most frequently offered by parents and schools, the media offer an accessible and compelling portrait of sexual behavior.

The current portrait of sex provided by the media can be characterized in three phrases: No commitment, no contraceptives, no consequences. Sex on television is frequent, unrealistic and potentially harmful to the health and well being of our children.

You have just heard about one of the most recent studies of sexual content on television. Most of the research we have is only about the content. We don't have very good effects studies right now, and I'll talk about that in a minute.

You've already heard about the family hour. There's another recent study of the family hour that found similar results, sponsored by the Kaiser Family Health Foundation.¹

They found that three-fourths of the shows on the major networks contain some sexual content. In the average hour you will see eight and one half sexual interactions. Most of these interactions are only kissing and flirting, according to that study.

But another study of situation comedies in prime time—that's 8 to 11 p.m.—found that almost half of the sexual behavior fit the legal definition of sexual harassment—unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature.

We know that sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, are now epidemic among teenagers, but on prime time a viewer will see 25 instances of sexual behavior before he or she sees one mention or depiction of the use of a contraceptive, or the need to defend against pregnancy or disease.

Despite this frequent and unprotected sexual activity, babies and small children rarely appear on television. On television, real men always are ready for sex, women's bodies are sexual objects to be ogled and lusted after, and sex is a form of recreation, or is linked with violence.

Rape is the second most frequently discussed sexual activity on soap operas.

Now, does this content make a difference in the lives of our children? Currently we have less documentation about effects of television viewing of sexual behavior than we do about other kinds of portrayals—especially violence.

But I believe we can draw from the strong evidence we have about the negative and direct effects of violence viewing. The same mechanisms are at work here. The research is clear that the frequent and unpunished violence on television causes increased aggression in young viewers.

We know less from research about how the portrayals of sexuality affect viewers. But I believe it is reasonable to assume, given the frequent portrayals, the lack of negative consequences, and the lack of alternative models and sources of information, that television and other media play an important role in the sexual socialization of children and adolescents.

¹The study entitled "Sex, Kids and the Family Hour, A Three-Part Study of Sexual Content on Television," appears in the Appendix on page 159.

The few studies we have suggest that even young children understand the sexual conversation on television. They understand the sexual innuendo. And a few studies have found the link between exposure to sexy television, and early initiation of sexual intercourse. I have done some of those studies myself.

One experimental study, for example, found that teens exposed to a small set of music videos were more likely to agree that premarital sex is OK.

We don't have a lot of data here, but these social scientific studies suggest that it's tending in the same direction as the effects of violence on television.

We need more research to show how the sexual content in the media is used and interpreted, and how it contributes to patterns of sexual behavior. Children often interpret this content much differently than adults do.

This is difficult research to do, especially because we are reluctant to talk with our children about sex. We are very restrictive about what researchers can discuss with children and adolescents about sex.

In the meantime the television industry should be asked to examine their standards for portrays of sexuality. Since the media are including such frequent portrayals of sexual behavior, let's make sure these portrayals contribute to, rather than detract from, the sexual health of our youth.

I am a member of the board of an organization here in Washington called Advocates for Youth. They have had an office in Los Angeles that has worked with Hollywood producers for a number of years, trying to get them to produce more responsible portrayals of sexual behavior.

They have come up with a code of standards that they've used in talking and working with the industry. I think it is a reasonable set of standards that could be a nice starting point for discussions with the industry.

I will list them here: Television could contribute to the sexual health of our youth if it recognized sex as a healthy and natural part of life; showed that not all relationships result in sex; discussed or showed the consequences of unprotected sex; showed that the use of contraceptives is essential; recognized and respected the ability to say no; avoided linking violence and sex; showed rape as a crime of violence, not one of passion; and encouraged parent and child conversations about sex.

That's a good set of guidelines we could begin to use in discussions with the industry. Television can be an ally in our common commitment to produce images of sexuality that will lead to healthy behavior among our youth.

Senator BROWNBACK. Good. Thank you very much, Dr. Brown. We'll look forward to some discussion and dialogue.

Dr. Humphries, thank you for joining us.

**TESTIMONY OF LAURIE LEE HUMPHRIES,¹ M.D., PROFESSOR,
CHILD AND ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRY DEPARTMENT, UNI-
VERSITY OF KENTUCKY COLLEGE OF MEDICINE**

Dr. HUMPHRIES. Thank you, Senator. I'm Laurie Humphries, and I'm a child and adolescent psychiatrist, and a member of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

I appreciate the opportunity to be here before the Subcommittee to discuss the impact of television on children and adolescents. And I appreciate your continued examination of this issue, which I think is very vital to the future of this country.

In preparing for this testimony, I thought about myself when I was 9 years old, and I remember enjoying my favorite TV shows—"Fury," "Victory at Sea," and "Omnibus."

Senator LIEBERMAN. You had a good upbringing.

Dr. HUMPHRIES. And I really enjoyed the latter two with my parents. I remember those times fondly. And I also remember how I identified with the content of those shows. And I remembered as I prepared for this testimony that the attitudes and behavior were very important to my development over many years—not just in my childhood and my adolescence, but in my young adulthood.

Senator BROWNBACK. Growing up in Kansas—now you've got me started on that point. We always watched Gunsmoke on Saturday night, from Dodge City, and Mat Dillon standing tall. Go ahead.

Senator LIEBERMAN. We even did that in Connecticut.

Senator BROWNBACK. Did you? [Laughter.]

Dr. HUMPHRIES. Now, you have answered my question, do you remember your influence, the influence that it had on you. I think you do. I think you wouldn't be chairing this Subcommittee if you didn't.

The issue is that we know in child psychiatry that children's development cognitively is very much connected with a concrete period in which they look at and imitate the behaviors that they see.

Now, I've been asked to respond about the issue of sexual behavior on television. Do you recall Mat and Miss Kittie ever having intercourse?

Senator BROWNBACK. No.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Unthinkable.

Dr. HUMPHRIES. Now, if you were a 9-year-old today—

Senator BROWNBACK. I was not sure she had knees. [Laughter.]

Senator LIEBERMAN. Certainly never saw them.

Dr. HUMPHRIES. If you were a 9-year-old today I estimate you would at least have seen 4,000 instances of sexual intercourse.

Senator LIEBERMAN. A 9-year-old?

Dr. HUMPHRIES. From the time you started to view television until you reached nine.

Now, what is the effect of this? This is not just one time. It's 4,000 times. One is just the context in which they see the act. Often this is short, it's brief and it's put in the context of love.

Children have difficulties understanding concepts sometimes, and they see these exposures. They really get things very mixed up, and the consequences are not positive ones.

¹The prepared statement of Dr. Humphries appears in the Appendix on page 203.

Parents would like the ability to be informed about what their children are watching, and they would like to have the ability to control their access to adult sexual behavior.

I think the V-chip is a step in the future in the right direction. But it's incomplete without an accurate, content based rating system, and a family safe haven for viewing.

Let me put forth really the public health implications of those 4,000 instances of sexual intercourse. Why does the United States of America have the highest rate of teenage pregnancy of any Western industrialized nation? Why do we have the highest rate of any country in the West of sexually transmitted diseases?

I think all of those instances of sexual intercourse they have been exposed to has a direct relationship to these very serious problems that really start with childhood and adolescence.

We must understand that what you have seen recently in the Washington Post, and on the news this morning, really is a consequence of what children have been exposed to. We must understand that the exposure to this kind of behavior on television has led to a serious public health policy problem, and that involves a public health issue for our children, and our culture. Teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

I feel that what is called for is a public policy to address this very, very important public health issue. What we have now in 1997 is really the sexual screen. And I hope that you will carry forth your efforts, and I commend your efforts in trying to deal with this very grave problem. Thank you.

Senator BROWNBACK. Thank you very much, Dr. Humphries. It was very good testimony. The next up will be Dr. Mary Anne Layden. Thank you for joining us, and the microphone is yours.

TESTIMONY OF MARY ANNE LAYDEN,¹ DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA CENTER FOR COGNITIVE THERAPY

Ms. LAYDEN. Thank you. Thank you for inviting me here, Senators. Senators, I'd like to tell you a story. This afternoon, 12-year-old Sam, red haired and freckled, could come home from school, and while he's waiting for mom and dad to finish making the meat loaf and the mashed potatoes, he could watch some television.

Across town, 10-year-old Amelia, who has finished her dinner—and she ate all her carrots—may watch a little television before she starts doing her American history homework.

What might Sam and Amelia watch between five and six, or between seven and eight in the evening? According to one study, by the Annenberg Public Policy Center, 44 percent of 12-year-olds, and 29 percent of 10-year-olds are watching *Hard Copy*, *Entertainment Tonight*, *Extra* and tabloid news magazine shows.

And they are not in the family hour between 8 and 9 o'clock. They are between 5 and 6 o'clock and between 7 and 8 o'clock, when children are home from school, and often not doing their homework yet.

What images have TV producers set for Sam and Amelia to absorb this evening? Sam might watch *Call Girls to the Stars*, Nam-

¹The prepared statement of Ms. Layden appears in the Appendix on page 206.

ing Names. Pamela Anderson Lee demonstrating her most passionate sex positions in the back seat of a car. The entertainer, formerly known as Price, ripping off the dress of a female, and staring at her underwear underneath. Drew Carey, being described as someone having a passion for strippers and raunchy sex.

Nude photos of Fay Resnick, from a pornographic magazine, with banners over her nipples. She says she's shared these pornographic pictures with her own child. The interviewer, engaging in psychobabble, says of Resnick, that posing for *Playboy* has allowed her to put her past behind her.

Amelia might watch a pornographic model teaching young females, and, I quote, how to be a playmate, including being advised to take the pornographic magazine with her when she travels on an airline, and show nude photos of herself to the captain so that he will invite her into the cockpit.

Rebecca Tremaine, nude from the waist up, on the cover of a subscriber's only version of GQ—I assume it's only going to subscribers because we wouldn't want it on the news stand—she's nude from the waist up, and she has a black man's hands painted over her nude breasts.

An ex-madame and prostitute discussing her book on sex advice, with six close up shots of women's crotches and photos of women in sexual arousal, sexual climax, back arching positions.

A woman with artificial breasts saying I really love my enormous breasts, and plastic surgeon Michael McGuire from St. John's Hospital in Santa Monica speaking about his role in giving women artificial breasts, describes women's bodies this way: If I'm part of the special effects that make Hollywood what it is, then I think it's very appropriate.

All of these are examples, and some that are worst, have come from a content analysis of tabloid news magazine shows, such as *Hard Copy*, *Extra*, *Entertainment Tonight*, which was conducted in January and February of 1996 and repeated in January and February of 1997.

The content was coded for references to the sex industry, that is, prostitution, and what we call prostitution light—stripping, phone sex, and all the other manners of it.

Also, pornography. It was coded especially for *Playboy* magazine which is a particular pornographic magazine that gets quite a number of references, and sexist body messages.

They would be typical of entertainment segments where the entertainment is women's underwear.

The content supports pathological messages which are connected to depression, low self-esteem, eating disorders, sexual dysfunction, body image disorders in women, and are connected to permission giving beliefs for sexual violence against women and children.

Sam and Amelia's parents, if they are like other parents, may not want them to view such topics. One study found a significant percentage of adults rated as unsuitable for children topics on TV such as prostitution—72 percent thought that was unsuitable; stripping, 65 percent; rape, 71 percent; and child molesting, 58 percent. So parents obviously don't want this content on TV.

Despite the fact that adults feel this content is unsuitable for children, and the fact that children are watching in large numbers,

we found in January and February of this year tabloid shows aired 105 codeable segments. Of these, 30 segments were references to the pornographic magazine *Playboy*; 19 segments were references to the sex industry as a normal thing. We didn't code any of the shows which had references to the sex industry as a negative thing.

So these were things that implied prostitution was fine, phone sex was fine, stripping was fine. And other pornographic materials, 56 segments of sexist body messages.

In February, *Entertainment Tonight* had 65 percent of its episodes with a codeable segregation, and *Hard Copy* and *Extra* had 80 percent of their episodes had codeable segments.

The tabloid news magazine shows are not the only shows which feature a normalized de-stigmatized sex industry. Maloney, Millennium, NYPD Blue, Wings, Spin City, Friends, just to name a small number, have frequent episodes which normalized sex for sale, the sex industry themes.

One show, Dave's World, which is promoted as a family friendly show, had two recent episodes which featured the sex industry. One episode involved a trip to a strip club, in which Dave, the main character, was arrested because he had gotten into a fight.

His visit to the strip club is discussed in the kitchen with children present, and there is only one sentence which could in any way be construed as disapproval from his wife.

In another episode, Dave interviews a pornographic model, and children come to look over the fence, clearly knowing about *Playboy* magazine, complaining that the model isn't nude.

In Dave's World, pornography is an every day thing to which no one disapproves, of which children are familiar, and no wife finds visual infidelity troubling, pubescent, offense, degrading, or psychologically unhealthy.

We might want to know what are the consequences of all this exposure to pornography and the sex industry. I'd like to talk a little bit about my work as a psychotherapist. For the last 12 years I have specialized in the treatment of sexual violence victims and sexual violence perpetrators.

I have treated rapists and rape victims, sexual harassers, and sexual harassment victims, incest survivors, pedophiles, prostitutes, strippers, and pornography addicts. In these 12 years I have not treated one case of sexual violence that did not include sex industry materials as a substantial factor.

Senator BROWNBACK. Not one.

Ms. LAYDEN. Not one.

Senator LIEBERMAN. In other words, as an influence.

Ms. LAYDEN. As an influence, contributing factor. For example, rapists who said, I acted out what I saw in the pornographic movie. Incesting fathers who said, when I said to the incesting father, you're having sex with your daughter, and he said, yes, she wants to have sex with me, and I said, how do you know that, and he said she has large breasts, which was his cue.

And I said where would you get such information that if someone has large breasts they want to have sex with you. And it's in every strip club and in every *Playboy* magazine as information.

In every case of sibling incest that I have treated—usually it's brothers forcing sex upon their sisters—the sex industry materials

that have been involved in every one of those sibling incest cases has been sex magazines like *Playboy* magazine, which is the most frequent one involved in sibling incest, which is so frequently touted on *Hard Copy*, *Entertainment Tonight*, *Extra*. Also *Penthouse* and *Hustler* magazine.

Research has supported these connections which I have seen consistently in my 12 years of treatment. The kinds of problems I treat are occurring at epidemic, pandemic, Tsunami levels.

Among the industrialized nations, we are the most sexually violent Nation on the face of the earth. One in eight women is raped—and these are reported rapes. We know that the numbers are really higher.

Fifty percent of women are sexually harassed on their jobs. By the time a female in this country is 18 years old, 38 percent of them have already been sexually molested. I'd like to repeat that number.

Senator BROWNBACK. Repeat that number.

Ms. LAYDEN. By the time a female in this country is 18 years old, 38 percent of them have been sexually molested. We're not counting in that number any adult rapes. 38 percent of females, sexually molested by 18. We're talking about millions upon millions of girls.

Will Sam and Amelia find any healthy sexual messages on TV?

Senator BROWNBACK. Wait, let me stop here. There are just stunning numbers.

Ms. LAYDEN. They are stunning. Though let me say, when the American Psychological Association published the study, which had the 38 percent figure, lay people who saw that number were stunned. Those of us who work in this industry were not.

We have seen an increasing flood of survivors of sexual abuse in childhood.

Senator BROWNBACK. Wait a minute. So you're saying the people that treat in this area are saying—

Ms. LAYDEN. We knew that the number would be that high is what we're saying.

Senator BROWNBACK. Aren't you just aghast at that number?

Ms. LAYDEN. Senator, I have been aghast for 12 years since I've been starting to do this work. I am aghast that these materials are so available and that only a few people like yourself are standing up to say no.

We have a group which is called the Social Action Committee for Women's Psychological Health, we have tried to change and educate the society. The responses we get from this society are extremely troubling.

Senator BROWNBACK. I'm sitting here, as a new Senator, and I know Joe has been in this fight for a long time, but this is an incredible indictment on the culture.

Ms. LAYDEN. It is a catastrophe.

Senator BROWNBACK. That I'm not familiar with the numbers. What I'm saying to you is, why aren't these being screamed out across the public?

Ms. LAYDEN. I have written to the newspapers. I am from Philadelphia. I have written to the Philadelphia Inquirer many times about these studies. They do print letters to the editor from me. The responses they get—

Senator BROWNBACk. That gets a wide distribution.

Ms. LAYDEN. The responses they get are that I am challenging the First Amendment by speaking out like this. And they often remove information, such as this number has appeared in any of my letters because the editors take it out.

Senator BROWNBACk. Wait a minute. They take it out?

Ms. LAYDEN. They take it out. And they will not print what I call data heavy letters. So I try to state it in general terms, and then people write letters and say there's no evidence.

Senator BROWNBACk. You give this to Senator Lieberman and I and we'll put it in an article.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Absolutely.

Senator BROWNBACk. This is stunning.

Ms. LAYDEN. It is stunning.

Senator BROWNBACk. Can you give the figures for other industrialized countries?

Ms. LAYDEN. I'm sorry to say that if we just took absolute numbers of rapes in this country, we make the Bosnians look like choir boys. And we know that—it made some press about the rape camps in Bosnia.

But we have a rape crisis in this country.

Senator BROWNBACk. I'll put that one out, too.

Ms. LAYDEN. The numbers are horrific, and the media is very implicated in these numbers, very implicated in these numbers.

Senator BROWNBACk. Dr. Layden, we just got buzzed for a vote.

Ms. LAYDEN. I was about to turn to some healthy things. I could wait until you get back and we could talk about the healthy things as shift of gears.

Senator BROWNBACk. How much more time do you need? We've got fifteen minutes until we go vote.

Ms. LAYDEN. I'll be done in fifteen minutes.

Senator BROWNBACk. We've got to get over and vote and come back. Go ahead and see if you can move it along a little faster. I don't want to short shrift your information, and we will come back—but if we can get to a point in the next maybe 10 minutes, and then we'll walk over and vote.

Ms. LAYDEN. OK. I'm just going to shift gears a little bit here.

Will Sam and Amelia find any health sexual messages on TV? It's hard. In an informal observation, I found three prime time episodes which had healthy messages.

On Promised Land, a married couple of 25 years talked about their desire to make love to each other, and their wish that the kids would spend the day out so that they could have some privacy. It seemed clear that what they were doing was loving, embedded in their relationship, and growing.

The same messages were found in an episode of Touched by an Angel. In those two shows, the people having sex were married people. The sex industry was not portrayed as a part of normal life, and people who were tempted to have sex with someone other than their spouse decided it was not such a good idea.

A third example of healthy sex was an episode which was an example of non-sex. On Early Edition, a young, unmarried man is strongly attracted to a young, unmarried female, who, because of circumstances, will spend the night at his apartment.

It is clear in the morning that they have slept in separate rooms, and that they had decided not to have sex despite their obvious strong attraction to each other.

And what is sexual health? From a psychologist's point of view, in real life, unlike what we see on TV, healthy sex is emotional intimacy expressed as physical intimacy. It's about commitment, communication and trust.

Sometimes it creates human life. It's supposed to be the glue that holds men and women together, and helps them keep their promises to each other. It should weave together mind, heart, body and soul. It is sacred and it is intended to be the nectar of heaven.

The media portrays it as the junk food from Hell. If Sam and Amelia were my little boy and my little girl, I would want them to grow up psychologically and sexually healthy. I would wish for them to love deeply, with passion, humor, friendship, respect, tenderness, honesty and sensuality.

For this to happen, however, we would have to make changes in the images that we are planting in their minds. Those images we plant are permanent.

If we do not, I am likely to end up not as their mother, but as their therapist. I want to ask TV producers to see themselves as citizen broadcasters. I want them to take a personal, Hippocratic oath: First, do no harm.

If they will help parents of Sam and the parents of Amelia, producers can become the kinds of heroes for which this country so deeply hungers. And maybe Sam and Amelia will invite them to the wedding. Thank you.

Senator BROWNBAC. Thank you very much. We are going to go over as fast as we can to vote, and then come right back and engage in some dialogue back and forth. So if we could be in recess for 10 minutes.

[Recess.]

Senator BROWNBAC. We'll call the hearing back into session. Sorry for the break. I'm not sure when the next vote will be, but it may not be for a little while.

Dr. LAYDEN, were you concluded with your testimony?

Ms. LAYDEN. I was, Senator, thank you.

Senator BROWNBAC. Good. I was thinking, going over to the vote, Senator Lieberman and I were talking about this, that one of the things that's so striking to me is that these numbers are just at ghastly levels, and yet it's now known well publicly, or we don't seem to—maybe we're not concerned about.

I can't think that the American people are not concerned about numbers at the levels that you're talking about.

What can we do to help you get those numbers out, or to get those numbers out? Should we go to Southern California with a hearing, and let's put chart boards up, show what the numbers have done. Let's show what the number of rapes were last year, in Bosnia, and what they were in the United States.

I mean, would that help you?

Ms. LAYDEN. Or what would 38 percent of the female population, let's look at that. Let's put a pie chart so they can see that if we have 38 percent of the girls in this country molested that this is not a small number.

And the other side of it as well is that this activity is not being perpetrated by six or seven guys. We're talking about millions of perpetrators, and increasing numbers of perpetrators. And for those of us who refuse to accept the explanation that this is innate, we are pushed to an explanation that this behavior is learned, and then we have to ask, who is teaching these perpetrators these permission giving beliefs.

Because with all of our freedoms, we are saying that we have the right to give information into the minds of these individuals, that are permission giving, these individuals become carriers of these messages into the society, into their homes, onto their jobs, into the streets, into the schoolyard, and that we don't have the right to say, we can't send those messages.

Those individuals interact with all of us. And even if I as a parent refuse to have my children see those images, my children are interacting with children who have seen those images, and with adults as well.

What we're finding, and I think this in many ways is similar to the situation that we had with cigarette smoking. That when cigarette smoking first started in this country, the doctors who were treating said, before the research was done, I'm noticing an effect. My patients who smoke cigarettes are dying of lung cancer, and we didn't listen to those clinicians, as they tried to tell us, because we said we needed more research.

Now, those of us who are treating sexual abuse survivors and perpetrators, are saying the same thing, but people are saying, where is the research. The research is hard to do in this area, partly because when you have trauma as an outcome, you can't do ethically experimental studies where you want to measure an effect, and the effect is trauma.

You know, we didn't do cigarette studies by taking 100 babies and putting cigarettes in this hundred babies' mouths and no cigarettes in these babies' mouths and see which ones died of cancer. We can't do a study which says, let's put a whole bunch of rape permission giving beliefs into these guys heads, and see how many people they rape.

So that we're going to depend to some degree on correlational studies, to some degree on natural experiments. We have a number of natural experiments. Oklahoma City shut down 150 pornography shops. Their rape rate went down 26 percent. It would be nice to have that in the whole country, a 26 percent drop in rape rate, because of that change.

There are a number of natural experiments where we can look at what's the connection, if we stop sending permission giving beliefs, what happens to the behavior. So we can look at those.

The clinical data is there. I have never spoken to a clinician who treats in this area who does not recognize this effect.

We're also beginning to see its connection to other effects which are very troubling. Stephen Coats from the Coatsville VA treats cocaine and substance abusers, and what he has said is you can treat cocaine abuse—and I do treat cocaine abusers as well—but the relapse into cocaine is through sex and pornography addiction.

Almost 100 percent of those who relapse into cocaine are relapsing through their sex addiction, through cocaine prostitutes,

through a partner who is using cocaine, so that we will not solve the drug problem until we understand that they are also sex and pornography addicted.

That that's a phenomena that we're just beginning to see. Patrick Carnes, who talked about the connection between the sexual violence and the substance abuse, said in one study that he conducted that of the alcoholics that he treated, 73 percent were sex and pornography addicted, but 3 percent of them said that that came up in their therapy. So he said, whoops, we missed something. And this is contributing to the alcohol problem. So we're seeing connections in other places.

And that kind of data, that clinical data is here and available. With some experimental studies, some early experimental studies that looked at the impact of permission giving beliefs on judgments of how long a rapist should receive for his crime, if you show people certain permission giving beliefs, sexual images, they downgrade their judgment of how much time a rapist should be in jail, from 94 months to 46 months, with four hours of visual viewing.

If you ask them whether women should be liberated, should we have women's liberation, normally the subjects, 71 percent, will say, yes, they should be liberated. You show them four hours and forty eight minutes of pornography, and only 25 percent now think women should be liberated.

Senator BROWNBACK. Is that right?

Ms. LAYDEN. That's right. A 50 percent decrease with four hours and forty eight minutes.

Now, an interesting thing about this study is they called four hours and forty eight minutes of pornography massive exposure. I don't think it's massive exposure. I think one of the reasons we can't do this study is because—

Senator BROWNBACK. Living in America is massive exposure.

Ms. LAYDEN. Yes. We've already got massive exposure, and some of the studies that don't find differences, it's because you can show them two hours of pornography, and it doesn't move them up a noticeable difference.

Senator BROWNBACK. Dr. Layden, these are out there, these numbers. Clinicians are seeing this stuff. I had one guy describe Washington the other day as a 13 square mile logic free zone. That we—give us proof, and studies. Out across the country they know that if you give permission to people to do aberrant, arousing, instinctive type of negative things, they'll do it.

Ms. LAYDEN. Right. And very aberrant, too. That same study looked at asking how many people in the country have sex with animals. It doubled. People's judgment of how many people in this country had sex with animals doubled after four hours of viewing of pornography.

So they think that we're all having sex with animals, group sex, sado-masochistic sex.

Senator BROWNBACK. Do you go and talk with the people in the television industry?

Ms. LAYDEN. I try.

Senator BROWNBACK. What have they said to you?

Ms. LAYDEN. Not much.

Senator BROWNBACk. Has your organization, the clinicians group that you are with—

Ms. LAYDEN. The Social Action Committee for Women's Psychological Health?

Senator BROWNBACk. Have they talked with the industry?

Ms. LAYDEN. We have tried to talk with people in our local area. When we see permission giving beliefs on television, we call the station and we say this is permission giving. We have—but we work with both advertising imaging.

Senator BROWNBACk. What did they say to you?

Ms. LAYDEN. Sometimes we get a good response. There was, for example, there was a commercial on for the cable movie channel, not Showtime but one of the other ones, that did classic movies. In this advertisement, it was a little girl pretending to be Marilyn Monroe. She was about 8 years old.

She was vamping, she was doing a strip kind of thing, in their ad. And we called them and we said, it's not OK to have a little girl, 8 years old, doing a strip. The next day the commercial was gone.

So we get some responses like that.

Senator BROWNBACk. But you've not gone directly to the industry headquarters in Hollywood—

Ms. LAYDEN. No.

Senator BROWNBACk. Or the financial community in New York.

Ms. LAYDEN. No, we haven't.

Senator BROWNBACk. Or other places, and said, look at the numbers here.

Ms. LAYDEN. We get such bad responses on the local level that we sort of—we do a little rabble rousing as an alternative. We do stand out in front of strip clubs in Philadelphia and hand out literature on how to get psychotherapy for pornography addiction to the customers who go in.

And most of them don't want any literature on how to get psychotherapy for pornography addiction, and we have closed down about four strip clubs because the customers won't come back when we're out there.

But we haven't had a forum to speak nationally on these concerns.

Senator BROWNBACk. Well, consider this a forum.

Dr. JANE BROWN. There was a great conference in Los Angeles last week talking about images of girls and women in the mainstream media. The conference sponsors have done a couple of excellent reports showing across media how girls and women are objectified and still considered sexual objects.

I was quite heartened by the number of people from the industry there who were willing to listen. As the earlier panel suggested, a number of these people are interested now because they do have children and they are beginning to think about what they want their own girls to be observing in the media.

Dr. HUMPHRIES. As a child and adolescent psychiatrist, I see children and their families all the time. And one of the things I ask is what their day is like.

And many of the patients that I see will immediately tell me what happens in school, and then they'll say, "I get off the school

bus, and then I get my bowl of ice cream. And then I go and turn on the TV.”

And they relate—they identify so strongly with these television soap opera characters. These are girls, predominantly, 7 or 8 years old. And they will stay there, looking at television till probably 6 o’clock, just glued to the set.

Ms. LAYDEN. And we’re now having to do eating disorder treatment with 5 year olds. Some of the new structured treatments are now aimed at 5-year-old girls because eating disorders have descended in age to lower and lower ages, and much of it is connected to the imagery we have of women in the media.

Because, for example, models, on average, are 19 percent below normal weight. Now, to get a diagnosis of an eating disorder, you only have to be 15 percent below normal weight. These women are held up as role models for young girls—older girls, too.

And they are, in fact, to get the kind of body that is in most of the fashion magazines, you’re going to have to puke three times a day, and put rubber on your breasts, because there isn’t any other way to get it.

And that’s not a model that we want, but that’s a model that little girls are getting. And even Barbie Doll. If Barbie Doll was a human woman, she’d be seven foot two inches tall, have a 45 inch chest, and a 22 inch waste.

Now, do you know any human women who look like that? And most people don’t know that Mattel got Barbie Doll by a Mattel executive going to Germany and getting a sex toy, of a porn star named Lilly, and that is Barbie. She’s Lilly. She was a rubber masturbation doll in Germany until the Mattel executive brought her here.

She looks it. She looks the whole part. And millions of little girls have had that image implanted in their mind permanently.

I want to show you one of our materials. This is the psychologists boycott list, which our group produces, of images which are hurtful to women. You can see Barbie is on there, as well as a number of other things that send unhealthy messages about women’s bodies.

There are 77 targets, media targets and so on, on our list. We could have had three times that many on our list of images.

Senator BROWNBACK. One last question, and then I’ll turn it over to Senator Lieberman. One thing really struck me. You talked about a code of standards on sex, on television, one being discussed, and you listed a number of factors within that.

One that you didn’t, though, is why not say that sex on television, if we’re to have this, should encourage sex in marriage, and discourage sex outside of marriage? That would seem to be a normative—at least it used to be.

That’s not in your suggestions?

Dr. JANE BROWN. Well, I was raised in the 60s. I didn’t get married until I was 37. I would rather say commitment. I would rather say long term commitment. I know a number of wonderful couples who have been together a long time who don’t want to get married, and some who cannot get married.

So I wouldn’t say that it’s about marriage as much as it’s about long-term, committed, loving, caring relationships.

Senator BROWNBACK. Then you get into a definitional issue that way. What's long term? What's a commitment?

Dr. JANE BROWN. There are lots of definitional issues here, yes.

Senator BROWNBACK. Marriage seems to be a pretty bright line.

Dr. JANE BROWN. I have Lesbian friends who are in committed, caring relationships, who cannot get married. I would want their relationships to be OK.

What we're interested in is that sex is seen as a part of a healthy relationship.

Senator BROWNBACK. So while you and I may not agree on a code here, you would agree that there is far too much sex and enslavement of women depicted on TV.

Dr. JANE BROWN. Absolutely.

Senator BROWNBACK. Senator Lieberman.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will be real brief. I appreciate very much the testimony of the panel. It's been very cumulatively powerful. It's been very impressive, because you all come with credentials.

In a sense we don't come with credentials. We're viewers and parents and reflections of public attitudes within our States. You have all done work in this area. Two of you have clinical practices.

So the fact that, if you will, if I can put it this way, that what you're saying validates our fears is, I suppose in one sense, encouraging, but obviously ultimately discouraging. Anyway, I think what you've said here is very important.

And I think the Chairman's idea of maybe taking this thing on the road is not a bad idea, that we ought to think about going to Hollywood. I am going to New York, which is, I understand it, one of the two centers, of both the companies that produce and production itself. And see if we come closer to them, whether some of them will come out and listen to this, just as we have today, and to talk about it.

If they don't, at least we will have presented it in their backyard. And if one of the witnesses on the third panel is kind enough to give her husband permission to travel with us, maybe we can get Dr. Bill Bennett to come and be our lead off witness.

He and I have gone out to Hollywood on a couple of occasions, but never quite done it like this. And I think you all, if we can arrange schedules, would be very helpful to us.

In terms of this fact that you all have testified to, which is that the research is just beginning on the impact of sexual content on television, on behavior, I was thinking as I was listening to you whether we ought to think about—and I've got to find the appropriate terminology—but whether we ought to think about urging or directing—you tell me which is the right one—NIH or NIMH.

Dr. JANE BROWN. How about both?

Senator LIEBERMAN. To allocate some percentage of their research budgets—could be small—but to sponsoring studies of this kind, so that we can continue to build on a factual basis.

Dr. JANE BROWN. That would be a great idea. One of the things that we need, too, is permission to be able to speak with children about these topics. Part of the problem as researchers is getting access to children to talk about this.

Dr. HUMPHRIES. I would strongly third that, because when you go before the human investigations committee, and you say that you would like to show a particular segment of film that a child may have had previous exposure to, you're told that you can't show it, even though in the naturalistic sense they may have had multiple exposures to it.

So if you look at it from that point of view, it's sometimes very difficult, and I would very much encourage you to try to ask the institutes to look into this. Because it is a public health issue.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Maybe we can work together on that. I mean, the fact is that reality being what it is, this is like if you—Field of Dreams, if you'll build it, they'll come. If there is no money to support research, then there is probably not going to be any research.

But if this is as large a societal problem as we believe it is, then it's truly important to begin to direct that some money go here.

Dr. Layden, in all the work that the Chairman and I and Bill Bennett and I and others have done on television, we haven't really focused on these sort of seven to eight syndicated or five to seven syndicated news shows, which are really not news shows.

And I thought the cumulative impact of the different topics you described is very powerful, and we ought to—again those are prime kid watching hours. That is when mom and dad have come home. We've all been through this. We're tired. We're just making the transition. And there is a real human tendency to allow the television set to become the babysitter.

But as I said before, none of us really, if we thought about it, would allow people who talked about, depicted and described the events that these folks are doing on these shows to babysit with our kids.

Ms. LAYDEN. And I think that without content information, how many parents seeing the name Entertainment Tonight in the newspaper think that they're going to hear about prostitution, phone sex, nude photos. And even if the parent was sitting and watching with the child, by the time you know that the prostitute is on there, the child has already seen it. It's too late.

As I said, what we are seeing is that the images are permanently implanted, and a number of these images are extremely addictive, and have brain chemistry connections with serotonin, with endorphins, and once they are permanently implanted there is no process by which we can detox those images out of your mind.

So it's too late, even if you're sitting with your child, to say, oh, that thing that you just saw, don't see it. It's in there. And parents, for the most part, aren't sitting down and watching with their children what the children want to watch.

Senator LIEBERMAN. I appreciate that. Two other points, and I don't want to ask any more questions, because you have been very generous with your time, and we want to go on to the third panel.

One point is, which you said before, and it's an extreme, but it was really stunning to me, this notion that after the exposure to the material you talked about that the numbers of people answering the questions who thought that bestiality was going on had increased.

And I remember saying once, part in jest, but really truthfully, what struck me is that the material described and depicted on the trash talk TV shows on the soap operas, on the *Entertainment Tonight* type shows, and then on some of the family hour stuff that Brent showed earlier, involves a range of human behavior that frankly I did not know was possible when I was the age of the kids that we're talking about.

And once you know something is possible it also makes it possible to be involved in that, or to assume that others are involved in it, so that the norms of what's acceptable get changed dramatically.

The second point, for understandable reasons, we have focused on the impact of this material on children, and part of it is that we are responding, both of us—Kansas and Connecticut—the same experience. Parents saying I'm in a fight with our culture to raise my own kids.

But there's something else here. This material is so supercharged it also is having effects on adults.

Ms. LAYDEN. Absolutely.

Senator LIEBERMAN. And that is what you have described. The impact on—look, we all, as we've said before, we all have these impulses in us. The question is can we control them and live in a civilized way.

You've got people who may have more trouble doing that. If you begin to overcome them with this avalanche of sexually provocative material, and all they've got to do to get it is turn on the television, unfortunately some of them who are not as well put together as most people are going to go and act out.

And they're going to act out, unfortunately, as this testimony suggests, first on, and tragically, on the people closest to them. Perhaps their spouses or their children. But then, tragically, we've just seen here in Virginia two young girls disappeared, and now their bodies were found.

There's consequences to this stuff. People out there, somebody said, paraphrasing the notion of why do bad things happen to good people, why do good people do bad things. Why do the good people, who seem like good people, who are running television networks, not appreciate the consequences of what they're doing.

And I think you have a good idea. I think we ought to take this show on the road and see if we can get these three to come with us.

Senator BROWNBACK. Thank you very much.

I want to thank the panel. We appreciate it and we look forward to further dialogue with you.

Our third panel that has waited patiently—and I appreciate you doing that—is Sarah Brown, Director of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, and Elayne Bennett, President and Founder of the Best Friends Foundation.

We did have a representative from the television industry who had previously accepted and then demurred at the last minute.

And I want to reiterate my disappointment that the television industry will not be here. They've been invited, asked, pleaded with. I issue that invitation again. We want to hear from the industry.

We'd like for them to come forward. We'd like for them to discuss these issues with us publicly, privately, any way you want to.

But, please, we've got to start discussing this.

Ms. Brown, we welcome you here. You can submit your written testimony, however you would choose to do it, and the microphone is yours. Thanks for joining us.

**TESTIMONY OF SARAH S. BROWN,¹ DIRECTOR, NATIONAL
CAMPAIGN TO PREVENT TEEN PREGNANCY**

Ms. SARAH BROWN. Thank you for including me this morning. I'll present only an excerpt of the written statement I submitted earlier. My name is Sarah Brown. I am the director of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, which is a private, non-partisan group whose goal is to reduce teen pregnancy by one third over the next 10 years.

I want to acknowledge that one Member of this Subcommittee, Senator Lieberman, serves on the Campaign's Senate Advisory Panel as one of its co-chairs, and we're very grateful, Senator, for your participation and your leadership.

I also want to commend the Chairman and this Subcommittee for your hearing topic today. As you know, it's a very important issue, and we're all grateful that you've focused attention on this subject.

Although we've talked about a lot of things this morning, my focus is going to be specifically on teen pregnancy, and how the media can contribute to its reduction.

Just to refresh our collective memory, teen pregnancy is a serious problem. We have about a million girls in this country who become pregnant every year. About half of them give birth. We have the highest rate of teen pregnancy of any industrialized democracy in the world. The children of teen mothers are at very high risk for a wide variety of emotional, cognitive and developmental problems, primarily because their own mothers are barely out of their own childhood themselves. The level of risk and the cold shadow cast on the future by this problem—children having children—is really very serious for all of us.

I want to talk quickly about four things today. What we know from good research about the effects of media on behavior, what kinds of research we need (a topic we just got into a minute ago with the last panel), what experience and common sense suggests in this area, and then, last, what we can do while we're waiting for perfect data, or at least better data.

So, point number one, what do we know? Well, as this morning I think has clarified, we know that the media is saturated with sexual material. Sexual activity is frequent, most commonly engaged in by unmarried partners who rarely use contraception, yet almost never get pregnant. Little attention is given to contraception, to responsible personal behavior, including abstinence, and, in particular, to the relationships of values to behavior.

The United States has in effect a media culture that glorifies sexual activity, especially illicit, romantic, spontaneous sex between unmarried people, but is very squeamish about the other side of

¹The prepared statement of Ms. Sarah Brown appears in the Appendix on page 209.

the equation—portrayal about how to manage sexual feelings, define responsible sexual behavior, or express respect for others.

Dr. Brown and others this morning have given us a lot of data on how indesignal??? the prevalence of sexual material in the media is.

The question from a research point of view, of course, is: What's the connection between all of this material and behavior. Now, at this point I think it's safe to say that, applying the most rigorous scientific standards, that we know more about what is in the media than specifically how it shapes behavior.

This is really a major gap in our understanding, but it is something that we can address. As a number of people have pointed out, if the experience from the violence research area is any guide, I think we're going to find really quite quickly that there is a relationship between media exposure and behavior.

Point two, what kind of research is needed? The answer here quite simply is: High quality research. I think the only thing sadder than not addressing an important question is to do it in a way that doesn't yield the kind of answers you needed.

So the most important thing I want to say to you today is that if this Subcommittee is able to press for more research, that it is careful to do it through the very best institutions in this country that know about peer review, that know about proper scientific design and that have strong abilities to administer scientific research well.

Candidate institutions include the NIH. The CDC is another. There are others as well. But the important concept is to do this in the best way possible, so that when we look at the results, nobody can say, oh, but you didn't do it right, or you didn't design it correctly. There's no need for that if we think about the best institutional home carefully in advance.

Point three: It's true the data are thin, but what do we know from experience about the relationship between media and teen pregnancy in particular.

Here, the consensus is powerful. Kids and adults alike all say that the current media environment is sexually enticing, and that those who right now are setting the cultural norm in this country through the media—the sports stars, the celebrities, the music idols, and, in particular, the television and movie gods and goddesses—have helped to create an environment that is accepting of teen pregnancy and its precursors.

Now, these individuals may not actively encourage teen pregnancy, but by being so casual, and even humorous, about pregnancy and child bearing, and by making casual sex, unprotected sex, nonmarital sex so commonplace, the stage is set, I think, for the high rates we now see.

Kids and grown-ups coast to coast ask us, the National Campaign, how can we encourage teens to avoid pregnancy and child bearing when their idols and their role models in the media commonly engage in sex with little enduring meaning, sex with no serious consequences, pregnancy without commitment, intercourse without honor, women as sex objects, sex as a game? In such an environment, how can we turn to young people and ask them to behave otherwise?

My fourth and final point is that media can, I think, be part of the solution to teen pregnancy—perhaps with a little bit of prodding from this Subcommittee and a few carrots and sticks along the way. The National Campaign is committed to working with the media to enlist their help in showing kids both the real consequences of teen pregnancy and positive alternatives to pregnancy and early parenting, not only through public service announcements but also through the content of entertainment programming itself.

In its very first weeks, the National Campaign established a media task force comprised of leaders in the entertainment media, advertising, public health communications and journalism. Dr. Jane Brown, who testified a moment ago, is a member of that group.

Let me just mention a couple of commitments that we have developed with specific media leaders in our very short life. This is a modest list, I admit, but we hope very much that it will steadily expand.

Example one: Black Entertainment Television, just this past Saturday, hosted a live, 2-hour town meeting with 300 teenagers, experts, and celebrities from television stars to hip hop artists to discuss not only teen pregnancy prevention, but another issue as well that we're very involved in, which is involving men and boys in preventing teen pregnancy.

BET also created three of its own public service announcements which it aired during this summit, and which it will continue airing over the summer. BET may also rebroadcast teen summit over the next year. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton taped a greeting that was shown during the program, and, in fact, the First Lady recognized BET's efforts to reduce teen pregnancy at a White House ceremony last Friday.

Here's a second example: One of the members of our media task force is the head of ABC Daytime Programming. She has made a commitment to the Campaign to convene writers and producers from not only ABC but other networks, if possible, to meet with the National Campaign—experts, parents, teenagers as well—to talk about how we can build prevention messages into the story lines of soap operas that are consistent with the pregnancy free adolescence.

Here's a third example: The executive producer of Beverly Hills 90210 is going to attend a meeting that we're holding at the end of June of State leaders who are organizing media-based teen pregnancy prevention campaigns in their own State. She, Jessica Klein, is going to talk with these individuals about how to work with the media to get positive messages across.

I think these (and other) commitments show that at least some media leaders are, in many ways, like those of us here. They're concerned about young people, and I think they're concerned about the future of the country. Our view is that this reservoir of good will can be harnessed to important issues like preventing teen pregnancy. We're making a start, and we look forward to working with this Subcommittee on this kind of constructive engagement with the media. Thank you.

Senator BROWNBACK. Thank you very much. And thanks for your work, and God speed. We sure want it to work and do well.

Ms. Bennett, welcome to the Subcommittee. It appears you have some knowledgeable guests that are here as well. Would you care to introduce them?

TESTIMONY OF ELAYNE BENNETT,¹ PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER, BEST FRIENDS FOUNDATION, ACCOMPANIED BY SUE LEI, FROM THE SCHOOL WITHOUT WALLS, WHITNEY BROWN AND NEFERTINA FRANCIS FROM AMIDON

Ms. BENNETT. Yes, I would. It's my pleasure to introduce Sue Lei, from the School Without Walls. Sue is a twelfth grader there. And I'd like to introduce Whitney Brown, from Amidon. She's a sixth grader. And Nefertina Francis, from Amidon, who is also a sixth grader.

We decided when we were trying to figure out we could best offer information to the Subcommittee, that it might be helpful to hear from the very population we're so concerned about.

And we've not prepared anything for them to say, so when the girls talk, they'll be talking about what they have experienced, what they see their friends do, what they hear about.

I would like to just, if I could, lay out a few facts. I've been crossing through lots of pages. My good friend, Sarah, who has done a wonderful job as the executive director of the President's Campaign has covered a lot of information. The three women who spoke prior to us were fascinating, and I kept my head nodding through most of their testimony.

I understand earlier this morning you heard a lot of data. I'm sure they covered the *U.S. News & World Report* survey on what Americans believe and what the Hollywood elite believes, and how often the Hollywood elite is very concerned when they answer anonymous surveys. But what they act on is very different.

So unless I hear you say you didn't hear anything like that, I'll jump into some of this. But I guess what I'd like to tell you is about our Best Friends program, of which the three young ladies here are a part, and tell you how we got started and the good news. And I'll throw in the bad news along with it.

As you know, there's much discussion today about the moral decline in our communities and the troubled state of our youth. Increased sexual activity during the last three decades has not only brought us a nearly 30 percent rate of out of wedlock births, but also dramatic increases in sexually transmitted diseases.

There's a 150 percent rise in penicillin-resistant gonorrhea among women in New York City alone. AIDS statistics indicate, and this is out of CDC, that it may soon become the leading cause of death among teens.

For our country, this is a recipe for disaster. The reported number of new gonorrhea cases among Washington, D.C. youth ages 10 to 19 increased nearly 50 percent the last 2 years.

In 1987, as a faculty member at Georgetown University's Child Development Center, I began to realize that something had to be done to provide guidance to our adolescent girls. Premature, under-

¹The prepared statement of Ms. Bennett appears in the Appendix on page 219.

weight babies born to younger and younger mothers caused concern among the staff.

In addition, many adolescent girls referred for counseling seemed to have emotional problems which often evolved from sexual promiscuity.

The messages from television, movies and magazines were overloaded with sexual encouragement. I began to wonder who was telling girls they did not have to have sex as teenagers, and in fact they could lead healthy and happy lives if they did not.

The result was the Best Friends program, based on the concept of girls supporting one another and waiting to have sex, and rejecting drug use. And this was along with guidance from parents and teachers.

We emphasize the joys of pre-teen and teen years, free from the complications of sexual activity through our six part curriculum. Best Friends girls receive 110 hours of personal attention, guidance, skills that we think adolescent girls need to lead happy and healthy lives.

We provide positive and upbeat messages. You will succeed in life if you set your goals and maintain your self-respect. We're now operating in 50 schools in 15 cities nation-wide, and now over 2,000 girls are participating in this program.

From 10 years of working with girls in the Washington, D.C. public schools, and training educators throughout the country, we have learned that most adolescents want guidance. They want to learn skills for saying no to things that will harm them. Things such as drugs, sex, and violence.

They need messages and role models to counteract the images of violence and sexual messages they see on television. Most girls want to hear messages of abstinence from sex and drugs, and we know that they will respond to a program that fosters self-respect by promoting self-restraint.

As Marian Howard of Atlanta's Emory University found, and she's also a member of the Campaign, when she asked 1,000 teen-aged mothers what they wanted to learn in sex education, 82 percent of the girls responded, I want to learn how to say no without hurting my boyfriend's feelings. An overwhelming number cited the cause of their pregnancy as a, quote, inability to say no.

And they need to learn safety skills to avoid dangerous situations, and individuals who prey on the young and the vulnerable. We, our schools, and communities, and our media must provide them with the guidance that they need.

Today sex has replaced violence as the prime time obsession. You heard it all in that wonderful analysis of what a child watches when he or she comes home from school between the hours of five and six or seven and eight.

I won't review it any further, just to remind you that in an extensive study, a sexual act or reference occurs every four minutes on the average during prime time television. Every four minutes.

Now, all you need to know is about what happens when you are bombarded over and over again with messages. What happens to the brain. What happens to the thought processes.

Only one in 85 of these references, and again you know, this, concerned any consequences. Moreover, casual sex was almost al-

ways condoned. The prevailing theme on television is act on your desires. There is no praise for restraint or delay of gratification.

The time spent by the average teenager during a week indicates that it's 21 hours a week of watching television, and I checked this with Sue Lei, and she verifies it. That's three hours a day—and this is an average, again. This is compared to only 1.8 hours a week reading—now this is 21 watching and 1 hour reading—and 5 hours per week on homework. And that's also an average.

We all know that adolescents often make decisions without thought to possible consequences or consideration of alternatives. Piaget's developmental research has shown that, quote, teenagers have a very limited ability to make decisions, and a superficial understanding of their sexual relationships.

Researcher Wanda Franz defines the problem solving dynamics of Piaget's development stages as the movement from the concrete operation stage to the formal operation stage. And during the concrete operation stage of development, which is usually up to age 12 to 13, adolescents are, one, overwhelmed by immediate concrete experience—picture this from television—cannot anticipate future outcomes, and process in haphazard ways. They're not at the level yet of deductive reasoning.

In making a decision about sexual activity, Franz maintains that concrete thinkers will be most concerned with immediate sexual gratification. They will disregard future risks, and will fail to evaluate options, and responsibilities for action.

Again, put this sound, academic, cognitive development in regard to what is presented on television. The goal for Best Friends girls, and, truly, for all our adolescents is to reach the formal operation stage of development, where at about ages 14 to 16 they can begin to anticipate possible outcomes, they can weigh the value of the outcomes, they can consider complex interactions, and they can associate behavior without outcomes.

During this time of growth, from the concrete operational stage to the formal operations is when most adolescents are most in need of strongly defined standards of behavior and societal support of mature decisions.

We should offer them guidance by teaching them effective problem solving skills similar to processes taught in math and sciences courses—in some courses—and providing the support system so they can then make good decisions.

Television programs which portray or encourage these skills would be welcome for our adolescents and could easily be offered. Aristotle said it first: The best friend to have is one who encourages you to be a better person. Let's contrast this with the messages our youth are getting on television today.

The television show *Friends* is one of the most popular shows on television. It is laden with plots that portray or refer to casual sex. The actors are talented, but they talk of little else.

One recent show—and I have to admit I did not see it, but George Will discussed in his column—portrayed a couple, unmarried, one I gather is a curator of a museum—you girls may know who this is—but they ended up having sex in a museum display under animal skins.

And they woke up the next morning—did you see that one? That's Friends, yes. There were observers there coming into the museum, and, of course, prominently displayed was a Catholic priest right in front. So all of this was very funny.

I think it all had to do with—I won't go into what it had to do with, because it's really pretty disgusting.

It is obvious again that these friends are not encouraging each other to be better people.

I have a whole segment here on what 81 percent of Americans feel, that television contributes to the decline of moral values. And surprisingly, 46 percent of Hollywood leaders agree.

Another 63 percent of Hollywood leaders agree that portrayals of sex, or sexual references contribute to young people having sex. So you've got here two thirds of the Hollywood elite agreeing that the portrayal of sex on television contributes to young people having sex, and 90 percent of the American people believing this.

So why are we watching this crud on television? What is it? Do we go to the sponsors? Do we tell them, forget it, we won't buy any more of your products?

Somehow, somewhere we have—we do have data, we do know, and we're not acting on it. I'm disturbed today that I don't see, other than you two wonderful gentlemen, where are the rest of the people who should be sitting here? This is a sadly empty gallery.

I know you've had some people this morning, some media. But we've heard some absolutely explosive information today that should be on the front page of every newspaper. It's not there. You won't find it. Why don't we know that 38 percent of women by the age of 18 will have been sexually molested, and this, in fact, is born out by our own in-house survey of 1,147 girls across the country who participate in Best Friends programs.

Senator BROWNBACK. It's kind of as if we don't want to know.

Ms. BENNETT. Well, where is it? Where is it in our media? Where is it in our print media? Again, the Louis Harris survey showed that of the three largest networks, the afternoon prime time, afternoon, evening hours, 65,000 sexual references each year. The average American now watches 14,000 references to sex in the course of a year.

Teenagers face more adult strength stresses than their predecessors did at a time when adults are much less available to help them. With the divorce rate hovering nearly 50 percent, and 40 to 50 percent of teenagers living in single parent homes, headed mainly by working mothers, teens are more on their own now than ever before.

I do have to include this—I do hate to talk about it—and then we'll talk about exactly what's happening on television. But unfortunately many girls first sexual experience is forced. The Alan Guttmacher Institute reported that two thirds of teen mothers said they had sex forced upon them earlier by adult men.

The National Center for Health Statistics reported in 1992 that of 185,000 births to girls 10 to 18 in 1992, 70 percent were fathered by adult men. These adult men were not in sex ed classes.

In many States, adult men having sex with or without consent of underaged girls constitutes statutory rape. Unfortunately during the last decade, statutory rape laws have been rarely enforced.

Why is it? Is it because the media has desensitized us to the vulnerability of young girls? Knowledge of contraceptive techniques is not going to help these girls, because the adult men are hitting on—and that’s the term—younger and younger girls because they don’t want to use protection. They know young and inexperienced girls are much less likely to have an STD, and they are unconcerned about impregnating them.

Furthermore, when young girls have been used for sexual gratification, these father figures—and I use the word father very reluctantly—have set these girls up for a destructive, dependent cycle of love/hate which almost inevitably leads to a girl becoming another sad statistic in the growing domestic violence in our country.

Best Friends emphasizes the issue of sexual abuse through our videos and discussions, which emphasize that sexual abuse is wrong, and never the victim’s fault. We talk about common sense safety rules that unfortunately hear much these days.

We encourage and tell our girls never to go anywhere alone, never to hitchhike or accept rides from strangers, and to leave the room when pornography is present on videos and on television. There is pornography present on prime time television.

We also tell them to never keep a secret that makes them uncomfortable. We are certain that Best Friends girls are far more capable of determining what is acceptable or unacceptable behavior in their boy friends. And because of this ability we believe they are far less likely to become victims of abuse and physical violence.

Just one quick story, and I’d like for our girls to talk to you. In one of our elementary schools in suburban Maryland, middle income, a fourth grade girl wore an outfit to school that the boys thought was suggestive. They didn’t use that word. They all used the word sexy.

The boys got together, three or four of them, and a plot was hatched in which they were going to jump this little girl the next day at school on the playground. And the rumor kind of went throughout the school, and the principal heard about this and called the boys in.

And they said yeah, well, she wore that dress or that blouse or whatever. Fourth grade. But, they said, it’s OK, they all had condoms in their shoes. They had come to school with condoms that they placed either in their shoe or in their pocket.

So the fact that they were going to be protected meant it was OK to jump on her, and I’m not sure how far—again, remember where their reasoning levels are—what they had in mind, the consequences were. But it had to do, I’m sure, with assaulting her in some way.

We know that this is going on. We know the incredible impact of visual representation to children, and when you plant a visual image in a child’s head, it is very difficult to make it go away.

There are good things. There are good videos. We use them. All of our discussions center on educational videos that are designed to interest children. And from that point we can discuss the vital issues that need to be discussed.

Whoopi Goldberg narrates the video, “AIDS, Everything You Should Know,” and it promotes abstinence as the only sure way to avoid AIDS.

So I think we need to commend the good things that are happening, and somehow try to find a way to increase the numbers.

We are here today to say that we know the impact of media on our children, and we know it's incredibly powerful, and we urge a major effort in responsible monitoring by the TV and the media industry. Our children deserve it.

Ms. BENNETT. Sue Lei, would you like to talk about what a typical high school girl or guy might watch on television, and just some of your thoughts about when you take care of your younger brothers and sisters?

Ms. LEI. OK.

Senator BROWNBACK. Welcome, Sue Lei.

Ms. LEI. I'm a senior at School Without Walls. This is my last year. And I have a younger brother and a younger sister. My brother is eight, and my sister is ten.

And every day after school they will come home and watch TV, mostly Channel 5, because there is a lot—Power Rangers and other cartoon shows. But after eight they will watch either shows like the TGIF, Channel 7 Fridays, and comedy shows.

But my friends, they're all into Melrose Place and 90210 and Pacific Palisades. It's like every day, like every other week after a show they will talk about the show as if they are real life.

I remember one time they were just talking about Moisha. I have never seen that show before. Channel 20. And they were like, this guy did such and such. And this guy did such and such, and she did this and that, and she left.

So I thought it was real, real people doing real acts. Until I asked them, "Do I know this person?" No. It's on TV. I go, "Oh."

So it's like TV is being portrayed, and I do believe we do watch a lot of TV. But if we have nothing, like no entertainment outside of—recreation outside of the school, or outside of our homes, where do we find entertainment but the TV?

Ms. BENNETT. Why are your brothers and sisters not playing outside?

Ms. LEI. First of all, the neighborhood is not safe. They are willing to go out, but their friends are not willing to come out. So there's no point in them going outside and playing.

So what they do is they would rather stay home and watch TV and sit in front of the tube.

But we did participate in the TV boycott, the National TV Boycott. Are you familiar with that? From April 28th to May 1st. Where, nation-wide, don't watch TV for a week. And we did participate in that, yearly.

But a week out of 365 days is not enough.

Ms. BENNETT. And you turned it off at your house?

Ms. LEI. Yes.

Ms. BENNETT. What did your brother and sister say when you did that?

Ms. LEI. They didn't do it. I did.

Ms. BENNETT. But I mean were they unhappy that week?

Ms. LEI. Well, they were watching TV, and they came up to my face and say, guess what happened to such and such and such a TV show.

Ms. BENNETT. Oh, I see. They continued to watch. You didn't watch it.

Ms. LEI. I didn't watch it.

Ms. BENNETT. You have to work to get them not to watch it.

Ms. LEI. Yes. That point has to be nation-wide and reach the schools, to ask the schools to participate in the National TV Boycott Week. It's just a week, 7 days. It's not that hard.

Ms. BENNETT. That's a good idea, if all the schools would join together in that.

Senator BROWNBACK. That would be good, wouldn't it. Whitney, are you the next one up?

Ms. WHITNEY BROWN. Yes.

Senator BROWNBACK. I like that smile.

Ms. WHITNEY BROWN. Thank you. Well, I don't watch a lot of TV. There's nothing really to watch on TV. It's like it's not going to help you any except like the Discovery Channel or Animal Planet, that will give you information.

But the other shows, they're not anything, they're not like real life. They're just fake. In my school, Amidon Elementary, all the kids watch TV. We all watch TV.

But there's only a couple who don't watch it as much. Everyone's talking about what they saw, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Did you see this? Did you see that? But it's really no need for it.

Ms. BENNETT. Do they see sex on TV?

Ms. WHITNEY BROWN. I don't know. Because I don't hang around people like that.

Ms. BENNETT. So they don't talk about that so much.

Ms. WHITNEY BROWN. Yes. If they do, they're not around me, because I don't—

Ms. BENNETT. You get out of there when they start talking about that.

Ms. WHITNEY BROWN. Right.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Is that something that you got from your family, or did you just make the decision? In other words, that you don't watch those kinds of shows, and you don't hang around with those kids?

Ms. WHITNEY BROWN. It was a family thing. My mother and I, we watch TV shows together. We never did watch a lot of TV. No one in my family watches a lot of TV.

And we made that decision altogether.

Senator LIEBERMAN. That's great.

Ms. BENNETT. That's one of the reasons she was smart enough to finish her test early so she could be here.

Senator BROWNBACK. I hope you get 100 percent on it.

Ms. BENNETT. Is there anything you would like to tell this Subcommittee about television and kids, or what to do, or any ideas you have?

Ms. WHITNEY BROWN. Yes. I would like to say that I think that television industry should limit the shows, because they are really not good for children's minds, because it will give a bad influence on them.

Like they would say, this celebrity is doing such and such a thing. Well then I should go out and do it too. So they should limit their shows.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Now old are you, dear?

Ms. WHITNEY BROWN. I will be 12 on Sunday.

Senator BROWNBAC. Well, Happy Birthday.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Happy Birthday.

Ms. WHITNEY BROWN. Thank you.

Senator BROWNBAC. And Nefertina is with us as well.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Nefertina, how old are you?

Ms. FRANCIS. I'm 12. Well, what I think about TV is some children watch too much of it. And they get the wrong idea of what they show. Me, I don't watch a whole lot of TV, not on weekdays or anything. I just watch it on weekends, and most of the time I just go out and ride my bike or something.

But most children, they just stay home and watch TV all the time, and they don't do anything that will help them. And they watch too many like X-rated things, and too much stuff with violence in it.

Ms. BENNETT. The X-rated things, are you talking about, do they get videos, maybe from the video stores and put them on?

Ms. FRANCIS. Some videos and some movies that are coming out now, some of the movies are really bad for children to watch.

Ms. BENNETT. How do they get them? Do adults check them out, and then they watch them and then they're there, and the kids just get them, and adults don't care, or adults don't know about it? Or what do you think?

Ms. FRANCIS. I'm not too sure about that.

Ms. BENNETT. We do know several cases that did evolve around the watching of X-rated videos, or R-rated, and one actually took place in PG County where a group of young boys had been watching videos.

And some girls came over to the house, later, and the girls were—they ended up having sex with the girls. They were 13, 14 years old.

And later, of course, it was argued whether it was consensual or whether the girl—but we know, and everyone who has had anything to do with developmental psychology or any kind of work with children knows the impact of these visual images, particularly on adolescent boys.

They tend to make it appear that girls want this, desire this, this is normal—things that they might be hesitant about. Once they see it depicted, I mean, you heard it. You heard the earlier testimony.

Senator LIEBERMAN. You don't have any doubt that what kids see on television is part of what causes the problem of teen pregnancy which you are trying to diminish?

Ms. BENNETT. I have no doubt. None.

Senator BROWNBAC. This seems to me to just go beyond any question of logic. Senator Lieberman and I raise millions of dollars every 6 years. I do it every 2 years, coming from the House.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Hopefully you'll stop.

Senator BROWNBAC. I hope to stop soon. And most of it goes for TV advertising. Now, we don't just do this just because this is fun. It's because this is meant to try to persuade and influence.

Now we're going to deny that people who see, what is it, 14,000 incidents a year, or 4,000 a year, 14,000 by the time they are aged nine, that this would have no impact on them. Well, we're dumber

than we look, I guess, if that's the case, because we shouldn't be buying this TV advertising and all these advertisers shouldn't be buying this TV advertising.

I don't know who is kidding who on this, that we need more—we do need more research. We need more information to substantially put this down. But otherwise there's a lot of people spending millions and billions of dollars and they're not getting their money's worth on TV advertising.

Ms. SARAH BROWN. You need to do both things, I think, simultaneously. The notion that we can't act until we have yet more data, I think, is absolutely ridiculous for the reasons that you just articulated.

You don't have to be a rocket scientist to know that media is an important player in the field of not only teen pregnancy but abuse and denigration of women, as has just been discussed.

But it's also true that good research can help you understand these influences in more depth, how to use media for social goals and good. It can help you understand who is most vulnerable to what types of images.

So, I don't think we should in any way set this up as an either or. Obviously we need to do a lot of things right now to get more positive images on the media, to decrease negative ones. But we need more research simultaneously.

Senator BROWNBACK. Where are we—it strikes me we're almost at a type of analogy to the smoking industry. But we're 20 years behind of saying, OK, well, 20 years ago that smoking affects your health.

Everybody out there knew it affected your health, because they would wake up in the morning coughing. Now, is this logical that this doesn't affect your health? But we were denying it for a number of years.

Where are we on this causal connection?

Ms. SARAH BROWN. Well, it depends on whether you ask this from the standpoint of research, or whether you just talk to individuals. In that regard, the National Campaign has had focus groups in three cities, just in the last few months. In each one, the groups talked about the power of media to shape feelings, to define what's permissible behavior, and to support people and things that we know are not in their best interest. The point is that although the researchers have questions, parents and adults seem to have none at all. They have already concluded that media shapes behavior.

Senator BROWNBACK. None.

Ms. SARAH BROWN. Now, what's interesting is that I think young people feel the same. Let me give you an example. I think there has been a very unfortunate conversation going on in this country in the last 10 years or so, about how adolescents don't listen to adults, that they just listen to the peer group, and if you can't get to the peer group you can't influence them.

Yet, if you sit down and talk with young people, they often say exactly the opposite. Every single adolescent we've talked to has noted how much they want to hear from the adults around them about what's expected, about what the facts are. They may not always agree, but they want an open conversation.

Look at it from their point of view: They get a huge amount of confusing material in the media and they need help in interpreting it—and coming to terms with it in their own lives. Every adolescent we have talked to says, “I need to hear more from my parents. I need to hear more from my teacher, and the adults around me.”

The point is that adults have a huge role to play in helping adolescents, and I think for some reason we’ve gotten kind of confused about that. The same is true for media. Everybody knows that media is an important influence. Kids say it. The adults say it. You all say it. We say it. Really, there is no argument at the level of experience and common sense.

Senator LIEBERMAN. That’s a very good point. There’s a theory that there’s a kind of values vacuum. There’s a reluctance of some of the traditional institutions to say it, and what you just said is all right.

And we’ve all experienced it in our parenthood, that kids may complain, but basically they’re looking for help to decide what’s right and wrong. And the problem is when a lot of the people who used to do that have stepped back from doing it, it leaves a vacuum which the television fills, with all the wrong messages, among others.

I want to ask the three Best Friends, because you’re very impressive group of young women, really. You are impressive because you’re bright, you’re well spoken, but you’ve also clearly made what appears to us to be the right decisions.

And I’m just curious. Are you not watching television because of the kinds of stuff that worries us, because you think there’s too much sexual material on there, and that it’s not good for you? Or do you just think television is a waste of time, and that’s why you’re not watching it?

Ms. WHITNEY BROWN. Yes. I think television is a waste of time, because it can’t do anything for you. I spend most of my time reading.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Good for you. Let me ask this question, which is an awkward question to ask here, and if you don’t want to answer it, don’t answer it.

Do you feel that kids—we’ve heard some testimony today from some of the experts that there are a lot of boys and girls—I’m thinking about 12-year-olds now—who are involved in sex. Do you believe that from what you see around yourself? I don’t mean yourself. But I mean in your school and people you know?

Ms. LEI. There are like two cases that—I watch the news every night, and I watch TV because I want to watch the news. The “Ten O’Clock News.” And yesterday—was it yesterday or some other day—they were talking about how two boys attacked a girl. One attacked the girl, and the other boy was on top of the girl, during recess.

These kinds of things happen mostly because they watch TV, from what I understand. They watch TV and a show promotes sex, then they’ll like, oh it’s OK. And I’ve never tried it before. And they want to be adventurous, and they really want to see how it feels, and how it—is it really just to do what that they promote—the TV shows promote it.

It's like, if they do it, they won't get any—they won't get slapped or anything. Because the TV did it, and they didn't get slapped. They didn't get in trouble. Why should they?

Senator LIEBERMAN. Right. Do you want to say anything else?

Ms. WHITNEY BROWN. I was going to say that the TV might influence them to do certain stuff, but it's also peer pressure. It could be their friends around them. Saying, well, my friend, whoever did this, so maybe I should try it, too.

Senator LIEBERMAN. You are really great. And you've got a wonderful future ahead of you. So God bless you.

I have to go. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the two witnesses—well, the five—but the two here who run these programs. You are really heroes in organizing a very constructive response to the problem that we're talking about here.

And the frustration and the infuriation is that you're fighting not just against sexual trends and poverty, disintegration of families. We're fighting against the tube, which is an enemy to what you're trying to do.

And I think we all together have to get this message to the folks out there.

Ms. SARAH BROWN. Some people call all this a "culture war." That's what it is—a struggle over what this culture is going to say about what's acceptable.

In this context, I want to acknowledge that Elayne Bennett is another one of the individuals deeply involved the National Campaign. We value her extremely highly for the reason you see so clearly here. Like Elayne's program, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy was organized largely out of concern over children and families. This is not a Campaign about sex or sex education, or something that sort of gets the cameras rolling. It's that we know that if we want a healthy, happy, productive populace, we're going to have to get a grip on this problem.

Senator BROWNBACK. Amen.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thank you.

Senator BROWNBACK. I want to thank you all for engaging in a culture war. And it's one that we're going to win. We've got to win it. I have to tell you I feel like today that we opened the body up and there's a big cancer there.

But that's how you start the cure. You open it up and then you expose it, and then we start talking about it, and we deal with it.

And the beauty of this country has always been once we focus on the problem, we're generally able to solve it, but it's getting us focused that is frequently the difficulty. You folks help in doing that.

Ms. BENNETT. We're grateful to you, Senator Brownback and to you, Senator Lieberman, because you are the ones who will provide the leadership. And we'd like to thank you for Hadassah Lieberman for being on our advisory council, and we'd like to thank you, Senator Brownback, for Becky Adams who often babysits our boys and makes them turn off the television.

Senator LIEBERMAN. I'm beginning to think as I listen here that I've been working with the wrong Bennett.

Ms. BENNETT. We're a team.

Senator LIEBERMAN. You're a great team. Maybe we all can go out to Hollywood together and give this message, because you are out there dealing with what we believe are the consequences of all this.

Ms. SARAH BROWN. In that context, I want to mention that about half of our Campaign's Media Task Force members who have signed on to work on reducing teen pregnancy live in Los Angeles (Warner Brothers, CBS and so forth), and I know they would all be highly motivated to work on this issue with you in some constructive way.

Senator LIEBERMAN. That's great.

Senator BROWNBACK. Let's further engage that.

Thank you all for coming. Thank you all for being here. We are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 1:12 p.m. the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

Testimony of

**Dr. Dale Kunkel,
University of California, Santa Barbara**

Hearing on
"Government and Television:
Improving Programming without Censorship"

before the

United States Senate
Committee on Governmental Affairs

Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management,
Restructuring, and the District of Columbia

Senator Sam Brownback, Chairman

April 16, 1997

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the Television Improvement Act of 1997 (S 539). I am one of several researchers who head the National Television Violence Study (NTVS). The NTVS project is one of the largest and most unique studies of television violence ever conducted, and its findings have important implications for the ongoing debate in this realm. I will first offer some background about the study, then report our most recent findings from the research, and finally offer some comments about the study's recommendations and their implications for the legislation proposed by Senators Lieberman and Brownback.

Overview of the National Television Violence Study

The NTVS project was commissioned by the National Cable Television Association in 1994 to deliver a series of three annual reports assessing television violence issues. It involves researchers from four university sites. A team of five faculty from the University of California, Santa Barbara, along with numerous graduate and undergraduate research assistants, analyze the overall landscape of television programming (including broadcast and cable) for its risk of harmful effects from violent portrayals. A separate team from the University of Texas, Austin provides in-depth analysis of reality-based programs addressing the same type of concerns. In addition, a research team from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill evaluates the efficacy of anti-violence public service announcements, while another team at the University of Wisconsin, Madison examines child and parent reactions to industry-based warnings and advisories attached to violent programs.

Although the NTVS project is industry-funded, the study is scrupulously independent and free of any influence from industry sources. An advisory council

with representatives from a wide range of leading national organizations with interest in the topic of media violence (e.g., American Bar Association, American Medical Association, American Psychological Association, National Education Association) oversees the research and ensures its independence and scientific integrity.

The cable industry deserves recognition for funding this monitoring project designed to inform policy-makers and the public about the state of violence on television. The study introduces a measure of empirical accountability to the TV industry's efforts to reduce the risks of harm from violent portrayals. By hiring a large group that contains a number of nationally prominent media effects researchers, many of whom have not been shy about criticizing the industry in the past, the cable industry knew this study would pull no punches. Our findings bear this out. Our first report issued in February, 1996, documented the widespread nature of violence on television, and underscored its risk of harm to the child audience.

The UCSB Content Analysis Study

By almost any measure, the NTVS content analysis is the most comprehensive scientific study of television programming yet conducted. Two elements in particular are strengths that are unique to this study. First, the sample is the largest and most representative collection of TV content examined by researchers. A composite week of content on each of 23 different channels is selected randomly over the course of the entire season, yielding more than 100 hours per channel and a total of more than 2500 hours for the study each year. By sampling randomly over time, each program has an equal chance of being selected and thus, applying probability sampling theory, one can be confident that the results have the strongest possible generalizability. Unlike smaller-scale studies that sample only a day or week of television, our findings

cannot be influenced by a "bad" or atypical day or week of programming. Our data represent an accurate picture of the overall television universe most frequently viewed by the American public.

Perhaps of greater importance, the content study carefully categorizes each violent portrayal on the key contextual features which have been demonstrated by scientific research to either enhance or diminish the risk of a harmful effect on the audience, and in particular child-viewers. Scientific evidence has established unequivocally that children's exposure to televised violence poses a risk of three types of harmful effects: (1) the learning of aggressive attitudes and behaviors; (2) desensitization to violence; and (3) increased fear of being victimized by violence.

Prior to the advent of the NTVS project, research measuring the amount of televised violence had been conducted for many years. However, relatively scant attention had previously been devoted to the contextual aspects surrounding the portrayals of violence. Previous studies typically emphasized an overall violence count, with most acts of violence treated the same as any other, regardless of the degree of variation in the portrayal.

There are many ways to depict violence on television. For example, the violence may occur on-screen and be shown graphically or it may occur off-screen but be clearly implied. Violent acts may be shown close-up or at a distance. There are differences in the types of characters who commit violence and their reasons for doing so. And there are differences in the outcomes of violence -- some depictions focus on the pain and suffering of victims, whereas others avoid showing the negative consequences of physical aggression. Simply put, not all portrayals of violence are the same. Their context can vary in many important ways.

This observation gains importance once we link it to the existing body of scientific research that establishes whether each contextual factor enhances or diminishes the risk of a harmful effect from viewing a violent portrayal. One of the most important contributions of the NTVS project to the study of televised violence is to establish through rigorous analysis a list of key contextual features that may be associated with violent depictions, identifying for each contextual element the risk it contributes to each of the three types of harmful effects. (See "Contextual Features" summary table on next page.)

For example, violence that is committed by an attractive role model, that is rewarded or goes unpunished, and that includes no visible pain or harm cues to the victim would pose much greater risk for encouraging aggressiveness than would a portrayal that omitted these contextual features. At a fundamental level, it must be emphasized that sheer amount of violence alone is not the strongest indicator for risk of harmful effects, and in particular the learning of aggression; rather, such risk is best predicted by the context that surrounds the presentation of any violent material.

Our measures are not applied subjectively, but rather are judged by coders who receive a minimum of three months training to master a coding manual of roughly 100 pages before they ever begin to actually review a program in the sample. The level of detail in the coding manual helps to insure that each coder will rate a show the same as would any other coder. The consistency of judgments across coders is monitored constantly throughout the program review process each year, and analyzed statistically in order to confirm a high degree of reliability in the judgments that form the data for the study.

How Contextual Features Affect the Risks Associated with TV Violence

CONTEXTUAL FEATURES	HARMFUL EFFECTS OF TV VIOLENCE		
	LEARNING AGGRESSION	FEAR	DESENSITIZATION
Attractive Perpetrator	△		
Attractive Victim		△	
Justified Violence	△		
Unjustified Violence	▼	△	
Conventional Weapons	△		
Extensive/Graphic Violence	△	△	△
Realistic Violence	△	△	
Rewards	△	△	
Punishments	▼	▼	
Pain/Harm Cues	▼		
Humor	△		△

Note. Predicted effects are based on a comprehensive review of social science research on the different contextual features of violence. Blank spaces indicate that there is no relationship or inadequate research to make a prediction.

△ = likely to increase the outcome

▼ = likely to decrease the outcome

Summary Of Key Findings

The most important premise of the study is that not all violence poses the same degree of risk of harmful effects. Context matters. Some portrayals of violence pose high risk, while others may pose little risk at all, depending on the nature of the portrayal.

The most important finding from the NTVS content study is that most programs on television contain violence (58% in 1994-95; 61% in 1995-96), and that most of the violence on television poses risks of harm to the audience. Most violence on television follows a highly formulaic pattern that is both sanitized and glamorized.

By sanitized, we mean it is devoid of realistic harm to victims, both from a short term (within scenes) as well as long-term (at the overall program level) perspective. Pain and suffering by victims of violence is shown in less than half of all violent scenes (42% in 1994-95; 45% in 1995-96). More than a third of violent interactions (35% in 1994-95; 40% in 1995-96) depict harm to victims unrealistically, understating the severity of injury that would occur in the real world. By glamorized, we mean that violence is performed by attractive role models who are often justified for acting aggressively and who suffer no remorse, criticism, or penalty for behaving violently.

Rather than showing violence to excite or entertain, a program can feature violence in a way that discourages such behavior in real life. We label such material as containing an anti-violence theme. The study identified four ways in which a program can emphasize an anti-violence theme: (1) alternatives to physical aggression are presented and discussed; (2) victims' pain and suffering are depicted throughout the plot, especially involving victims' family, friends, and/or community; (3) main characters repeatedly show reluctance or remorse for committing acts of

violence; and (4) on balance, violence is punished far more than it is rewarded. Across the last two years, only 4% of the violent programs on television emphasized an anti-violence theme. In other words, violence is seldom used in an educational way to convey the personal and social costs of such anti-social behavior.

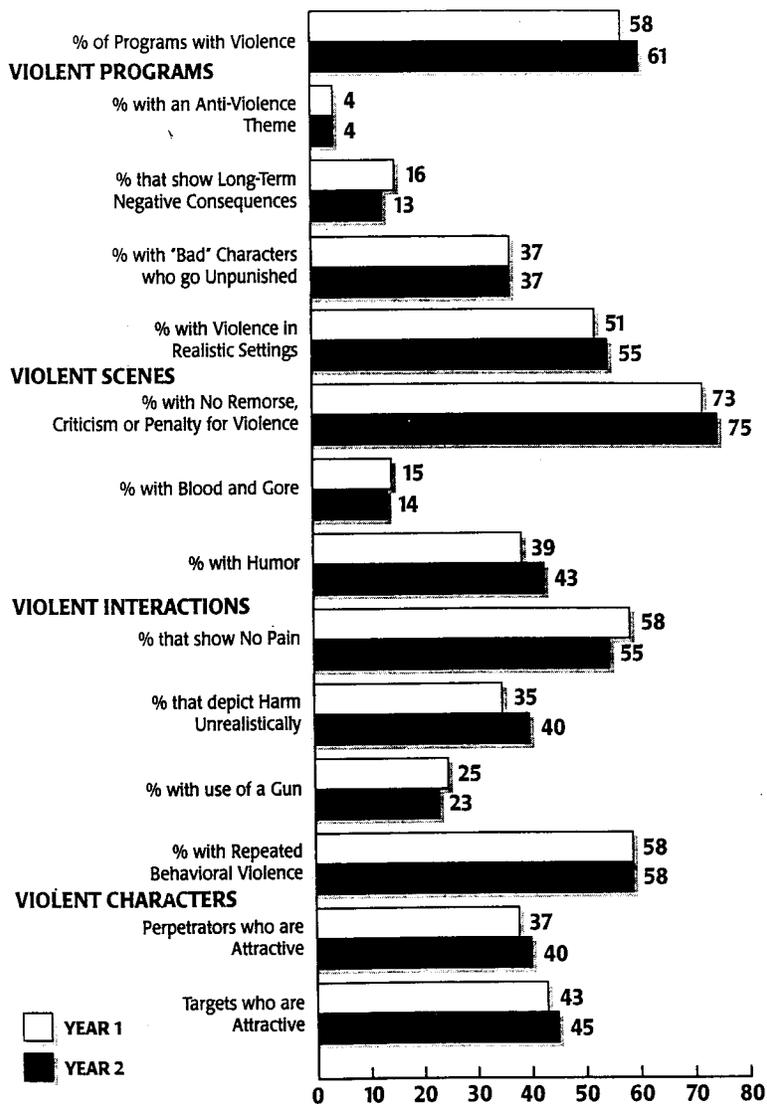
Finally, let me underscore the most significant finding from our second year report just released a few weeks ago. There has been no meaningful change in the overall presentation of violence since last year. The summary table of findings comparing the Year 1 to Year 2 data (see next page) illustrates the tremendous degree of consistency that exists in the nature and extent of violent portrayals. While very minor shifts in the tide may be evident when one isolates the view on a single channel at a time, the level of this ocean as a whole remains constant and unchanging. Given that the study identified slightly more than 18,000 violent interactions each year, the degree of consistency in the context factors surrounding those portrayals is striking. That consistency clearly implies that the portrayal of violence is highly stable and formulaic -- and unfortunately, that formula of presenting violence as sanitized and glamorized is one that enhances the risk of harmful effects for the audience.

The Cumulative Nature of Television Violence Effects

A comment is warranted about the level at which we have focused our analysis. Our data are reported largely at the level of overall patterns across programs, rather than identifying which shows are most problematic from one year to another. That is a conscious decision that reflects the nature of the process by which violence influences the audience.

It is rare that a person views a single program and then reacts immediately to that show in a violent fashion. Instead, it is a cumulative process of long-term

Overall Industry Averages: Year 1 vs. Year 2 Comparisons



exposure to televised violence that poses risks of harm, in much the same way that cumulative exposure to cigarette smoke causes risk of cancer. The impact of one cigarette alone would be minimal, and largely incalculable -- yet the risk posed by smoking thousands of cigarettes over time adds up to be a significant health hazard.

Similarly, the risk posed by exposure to televised violence is the product of one's cumulative exposure to thousands of violent acts over time. Worrying about which particular program contains the most violence is like worrying about which brand of cigarettes contains the most tar or nicotine. One may be slightly worse than the others, but all brands contribute to the risk. What should concern us most about televised violence is not the question of which shows are the "Top 10" most violent programs. Rather, we should be concerned that violence predominates across the television landscape, appearing in more than half of the 5000+ programs we studied, and that the most pervasive pattern for presenting violence increases its risk of harmful effects for children. That pattern is at the root of the public health hazard that televised violence poses from a collective or cumulative perspective.

Implications of the NTVS Study for the Television Improvement Act of 1997

Much of the focus in the public discussion about television violence in the past year has shifted to the controversy about how to properly rate programs for the coming V-chip technology. That pattern has become so predominant that when the NTVS second year report was issued recently, the headline of our press release -- "Study Finds No Improvement in Television Violence" -- was largely overlooked by the media. They chose to report instead the findings that age-based program ratings create a "forbidden fruit" effect that attracts younger viewers to restricted content, which means the industry's current V-chip ratings may be in further jeopardy.

That issue is important. But last Friday at a national conference on TV violence held at the University of California Santa Barbara, former Senator Paul Simon explained the need to re-focus the violence debate. From Simon's perspective, it is far more important to reduce the level of harmful violence on television than it is to argue about V-chip ratings because many families will simply never use the V-chip technology. Indeed, it is precisely those children from families with less attentive parents that are at greatest risk from being harmed by TV violence, because their parents may not be present to moderate TV's influence. The V-chip is a tool for active parents who want more information to guide their children's television viewing, but it is not a panacea for all of the problems associated with TV violence effects.

That is why the NTVS project issued recommendations that call upon the television industry to be more responsible in the overall presentation of violence.

Among our recommendations are the following:

- Produce more programs that avoid violence; if a program does contain violence, keep the number of violent incidents low.
- Be creative in showing:
 - More violent acts being punished.
 - More negative consequences, both short-term and long-term, for violence.
 - More alternatives to the use of violence in solving problems.
 - Less justification for violent actions.
- When violence is presented, consider greater emphasis on a strong anti-violence theme.
- Be sensitive to the time of day that programs containing violence are aired.

These recommendations are important because our data show that the risk of harmful violence on television does not appear to be diminishing. The industry's previous self-regulatory code did in fact address aspects of the presentation of

violence, limiting approaches that were thought to be particularly harmful in the past. Today, the larger accumulation of research evidence over time provides us with much greater knowledge about what types of context features add to the risk of harmful effects, and what types can minimize the problems. If the industry was willing, that type of knowledge could certainly be integrated into a set of guidelines to encourage programmers to shape any violent portrayals in more responsible fashion.

Again presuming the will on the part of the industry, scheduling issues could also be addressed by a collective effort. Presently, a single programmer might suffer a competitive disadvantage if it chose to "protect" a time period such as the early evening hours from any violent material. With an industry-wide agreement, that competitive disadvantage could be alleviated.

Conclusion

It is well established that much television violence poses a risk of harmful effects to the audience, and in particular to children. The National Television Violence Study indicates that this risk remains substantial and that, from the perspective of the levels of violent material on television overall, there has been no recent improvement in the situation.

The television industry should be encouraged to become more pro-active in addressing this issue. I have heard anecdotal evidence that efforts are being made to reduce violent content. Arthur Seideiman, a leading television producer and member of the Television Industry's Ratings Implementation Group, reported last week at the UCSB conference that his programs are now reviewed more stringently than ever before for their violent content. That may be true, but the fact is that the action that appears on the screen -- which is all that we code in the NTVS study -- does not yet

reflect any meaningful reduction in violence consistent with the rhetoric of greater responsibility.

For any reduction to be palpable, it must be practiced at a widespread level throughout the industry. It must affect the choices of what is re-broadcast as well as what material is newly created. It does not matter to child viewers whether the violence they see appears in a first-run, prime-time series or in an ancient rerun aired at an odd hour -- the effect will be the same.

The Television Improvement Act of 1997 would provide an opportunity for the industry to take strong and meaningful action to address the problem of television violence in a collective fashion. It deserves serious consideration as a tool to both encourage and assist the industry in focusing its efforts to present violence on television in more responsible fashion.

**TESTIMONY BY JEFFREY I. COLE
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT,
RESTRUCTURING AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

April 16, 1997

Thank you, Chairman Brownback and members of the Subcommittee, for asking me to testify on our work on television violence and current developments in the television content area. I have served as director of the UCLA Center for Communication Policy since its inception in 1993 and have been on the UCLA faculty for the past 23 years. Our center is dedicated to working on the difficult, often contentious issues in the telecommunications world that often are exemplified by opposing sides that seldom listen to each other and rarely understand each other's position. Over the past four years we have conducted national conferences on the Information Superhighway with Vice President Gore and the leaders of just about every major communications company in the nation and an audience of 2000 leaders of the communications and entertainment industries, on Television and Religion and Television and Advocacy Groups. We have also co-sponsored or helped organize over 15 other conferences on important media issues. In 1994, 1995 and 1996 we co-sponsored a national poll with U.S. News & World Report of leaders in the film and television industries to learn their attitudes toward television content issues, especially television violence. Importantly, this was a group that had never been polled before.

There is probably no issue in social science that has been studied more over the past 30 years than television violence. We did not get into this issue merely to produce another study that would end up in some obscure academic journal. We believed a unique opportunity existed to do something unusual, constructive and highly effective. Events over the past three years have shown that such an opportunity really did exist and I feel we have taken full advantage of that opportunity.

The monitoring of television violence that we have conducted over the past three years is based on a political arrangement between the four broadcast networks (ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC) and former Senator Paul Simon. At an unprecedented industry-wide conference on television violence held on August 2, 1993 in Beverly Hills, California, keynote speaker Simon called on the broadcast and cable networks to arrange for an outside and independent monitor to look at the issue of television violence and report annually to the nation. Such an action he felt "would indicate a desire to sustain better programming." Realizing that such monitoring could only truly come from a self-regulatory vehicle, Simon added that he "would prefer the federal government not be involved."

Recognizing that some members of Congress were calling for the increased regulation of the television industry and that the public mood might be conducive to such regulation, the broadcast and cable industries agreed in early 1994 to arrange for independent monitors to look at television violence.

At the UCLA Center for Communication Policy we believed this created a unique opportunity to have a real impact on the violence issue and thus our interest in applying to do the broadcast monitoring. What attracted us to this work was that the broadcasters were tied to the monitoring process. Through an annual public report and discussions throughout the year, we believed we could address this important issue in a new and potentially effective manner. At our first meeting with the four broadcast networks, after securing an iron-clad guarantee in the contract for our independence, we insisted upon regular meetings with each of the networks to discuss our findings. Free and open communication between the broadcast networks and UCLA was essential if our work was to have any real effect on the content of television programming. If we found problems with a particular program in September of 1996, we did not want that problem to compound itself until the next report was released a year later. Instead, regular meetings ensured that the problem would be raised soon after it aired and the broadcasters would have an opportunity to deal with it almost immediately.

We also believed that the television industry was serious about dealing with the violence issue. While there were many polls demonstrating what parents felt about television violence and how to deal with it, there had never been a thorough survey of those who make decisions in the film and television industry to see if their views parallel those of the public. In early 1994 we conducted a poll with *U.S. News & World Report* of decision-makers in the film and television business. What we found (published in the May 9, 1994 issue of *U.S. News & World Report*) convinced us the time was right for the study we were about to begin. While a majority of those surveyed felt the industry rather than the government should deal with the violence issue, leaders

of the industry acknowledged that there was a problem, that some media needed to clean up their programming and that they felt their industry should take the lead in this effort. They felt this way not only because they did not want to see the government intrude into their industry, but also because they felt they were the ones who understood television best and would know how to deal with the problem. The poll clearly demonstrated that the industry was concerned about violence and wanted to do something about it.

The opportunity to work directly with the industry and the belief that they were serious about dealing with television violence is what attracted us to the work. Once again, our involvement in this work was not merely to produce another study, but to have a real a real impact on the nature of television programming. Our work was also different from past research in several important ways:

1) Very little sampling.

Until the mid-1970s the term "television" meant the major broadcast networks and a few independent stations. Today, in addition to those outlets, television can mean syndication, new broadcast networks (UPN and WB), basic and pay cable, home video and video games. All are hooked up to the television set and are part of the world of television. While we looked at all of these sources of programming, we understood from the beginning that our greatest influence would be with the broadcast networks. Therefore, we felt it was essential to create a complete and definitive portrait of the content of the four broadcast networks. We did not want to create

a one-day or one- or two-week sample or composite that would be subject to criticism that it was an atypical or unrepresentative week. Instead, we looked at all of the networks' programming. Every made-for-television movie (between 150 and 200 each season) was examined as was every theatrical film (films made originally for the movie theater, between 100 and 150). There was absolutely no sampling of this programming. Every television special and on-air promotion and advertisement was also examined. Thus when we speak of television movies or on-air promotions, it is after having taken a definitive look at this programming. Television movies are different from each other and it would be difficult to generalize about them from looking at a small sample. We also looked at every television series (between 120 and 150) that aired during the season. It is only in the area of series that any sampling occurred. We examined every series on the air at least five times. If after five random viewings throughout the season that program contained not a trace of violence (usually situation comedies) we stopped looking at it. We reserved the right to look at the show again for any reason and, in many cases, did so. Shows that contained any issues of violence were examined for the entire season.

Since syndication, public television, basic and pay cable, home video and video games were not our primary focus, they were all sampled, usually for a two-week period.

2) We examined the context of television violence.

The rationale and methodology of the monitoring project are based on the belief that not all violence is created equal. While parents, critics and others complain about the problem of violence on television, it is not the mere presence of violence that is the problem. If violence

alone was the problem and V-chips or other methods did away with violent scenes or programs, viewers might never see a historical drama like *Roots* or such outstanding theatrical films as *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Lion King*, *Forrest Gump* and *Schindler's List*. In many instances, the use of violence may be critical to a story that actually sends an anti-violence message. Some important stories, such as Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, a history of World War II or a biography of Abraham Lincoln, would be impossible to convey accurately without including portrayals of violence. \

For centuries, violence has been an important element of storytelling, and violent themes have been found in the Bible, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, fairy tales, theater, literature, film and, of course, television. Descriptions of violence in the Bible have been important for teaching lessons and establishing a moral code. Lessons of the evils of jealousy and revenge are learned from the story of Cain and Abel. Early fairy tales were filled with violence and gruesomeness designed to frighten children into behaving and to teach them right from wrong. It was only when fairy tales were portrayed on the big screen by Walt Disney and others that the violence contained in the stories was substantially sanitized.

The issue is not the mere presence of violence but the nature of the violence and the context in which it occurs. Context is key to the determination of whether or not the violence is appropriate. If parents could preview all television, film and literature for their children, we do not believe they would remove all violence regardless of its nature or surrounding context. Parents know that violence can be instructive in teaching their children important lessons about life. What parents

would do if they could preview all content for their children is remove or modify the inappropriate or improper uses of violence. Examples of these are applications of violence which glorify the act or teach that violence is always the way to resolve conflict. Our discussions with parents indicate that they know violence is a part of storytelling, but that there are appropriate and inappropriate ways of depicting violence. For example, the consequences of violence should be shown and those persons using violence inappropriately should be punished. We would also note that when violence is used realistically, it is more desirable to accurately portray the consequences than to sanitize the violence in a manner designed to make it acceptable.

Over the years, scientific research has focused both on the quality and quantity of violence on television. For example, the most important and prominent scholar to investigate this issue, George Gerbner, whose work stretches back into the 1960s, conducted extensive quantitative and qualitative analyses of violence on television. Most attention, however, was focused on the quantitative aspect of the content analyses of Gerbner, including his mechanism to determine whether the amount of violence was increasing or decreasing.

Some of the early quantitative research that counted acts was limited in its ability to examine the context of television violence. The same is true of the numerical counts often favored by public interest groups. (Numerical counts generate big headlines, but we believe they do not fully address the issue of television violence.) That work required elaborate and exact definitions of violence to determine whether the act was counted or not. It was necessary to decide if verbal violence should be counted or whether comedic violence such as cartoons (what Gerbner calls

"happy violence") would be registered. A precise definition determined whether the particular act would be counted. Everything had to be neatly included or excluded so that the conclusions with regard to the amount of violence would be consistent with the definition of violence.

No matter how well the definitions were drawn, there would be those who felt that some important aspect of the problem should or should not have been included. Almost everyone has his or her own definition of violence. People have often attempted to validate or invalidate quantitative research based on how much the scholar's definition resembles their own.

Looking at violence within a contextual framework makes these definitional distinctions less critical. There is less need for a narrow definition because the focus is not on inclusion or exclusion in a count. We avoid the problems associated with narrow definitions by defining violence broadly. We put our focus not on establishing a correct, narrow definition of violence, but rather on distinguishing between violence that raises issues of concern and that which does not. Our broad definition includes sports violence, cartoon violence, slapstick violence--anything that involves or immediately threatens physical harm of any sort, intentional or unintentional, self-inflicted or inflicted by someone or something else. More precisely, violence is the act of, attempt at, physical threat of or the consequences of physical force. We also occasionally considered verbal threats of physical violence, although these were of secondary importance. Verbal phrases such as a teenager exclaiming, "If I don't get home by midnight, my dad'll kill me," would only raise issues if the teenager's father was a homicidal maniac.

Our broad definition might yield high numbers of scenes of violence on a given show. However, unlike previous studies, this is not our primary focus which is instead on whether the violence raises concerns within the context of the show. It is possible that a situation comedy such as *Home Improvement* or *3rd Rock from the Sun* might yield several scenes of "violence." But the nature of the violence and the context in which it occurs might lead us to conclude that none of these scenes raised concerns.

In sum, all violence, in our view, is not created equal. The focus of the project is not on counting the number of acts of violence but on the contextual analysis of each of these acts. We examine acts of violence and the context in which they occur to distinguish between uses of violence which raise concern and those acts which, because of their nature and the context in which they occur, do not raise such concerns.

3) We name names.

In order to maintain credibility with the broadcast networks, the government, the press and readers of the report, we felt it was essential to specifically identify programming that raised concerns about the way violence was portrayed. To do otherwise is to say, "Trust us, we know it's a problem, but we cannot tell you which program is the problem." This did not work for us for several important reasons. First, our goal is to improve the content of television programming. By identifying which programs raised concerns, we could show these programs to the broadcasters and examine solutions to these problems. We could not do this if all we did was say that a certain percentage of their programs contained problems. Second, our goal of dealing with

the problems on television required us to identify problem shows to the producers of those shows. By naming specific shows and episodes of those shows, we could meet with producers and specifically discuss problems. Happily, many producers took advantage of this opportunity and did meet with us. Our specific criticisms triggered a general discussion about the way in which violence is portrayed and how to better deal with this issue.

Most importantly, we wanted parents and any interested viewer to read our report and be able to see where the problems exist. By naming specific shows they could look over our shoulder and properly evaluate our criticisms and see if they have merit for themselves or their children. They could understand why some programs were considered a problem and others were not. More than anything else we did, naming the names of specific programs made our report useful to those most interested in the television violence issue.

4) The report is readable and accessible.

All too often academic research is intended only for academic audiences. This is fine when the subject is something obscure or arcane in which only an academic audience would have an interest. Television content is a subject in which almost everyone (even those who do not watch television) has an interest. It is an area in which parents, programmers and producers, the press and the government are vitally interested. Therefore, we wanted to write a report that was accessible to this wide range of readers with an interest in television.

A reader does not require a Ph.D. in Communication Studies to understand the rationale, methodology or findings of our report. Both of our annual reports have been written in clear and plain English and are easy to follow. They do not have to be interpreted for parents by the press. Any parent can pick up our report and easily determine our methods and what we found in the world of television. Nothing is unclear or ambiguous. It is a reader-friendly report on television violence.

Over the years, academics, advocacy groups and interested persons have conducted research on television violence. Broadcasters usually scrutinized the conclusions or methodology in order to refute the findings or discredit the work. Some of the previous work has been conducted by people or organizations with personal, political or religious agendas, using unsound methods or unreliable samples to prove what they already believed to be true. Others conducted important, sometimes ground-breaking, work only to find that it was not fully understood or appreciated by those working in television who could best implement the results of the research.

The monitoring of broadcast network television violence conducted over the past two years has been distinct from any work that came before. Through the arrangement with Congress, the broadcasters are tied to this project. The fact that we have met with them over the past two years to discuss our work and its findings has meant that they had to carefully examine the report and discuss its conclusions. Any misconceptions or misunderstandings were quickly identified, clarified and settled. Our communication with the broadcast networks was not by press release, television interview or academic journal. The process Senator Simon created allowed us to

communicate directly with the networks so as to meaningfully and effectively deal with these issues.

Each network took the findings of each year's report very seriously. At the networks, each page of the report was color-coded, annotated and cross-referenced and then placed in a three-ring binder. Each section, such as those on promotions or theatrical films, was distributed to the relevant departments of the networks. Each network provided an in-depth response to the substance of the report and its findings and recommendations. Though these discussions were frequently heated, they were always constructive and conducted on both sides with a desire to learn from each other and make real progress on the violence issue. Comments in conversations demonstrated that all of the networks had carefully read and evaluated the report and were completely familiar with all of its content.

The discussions with the networks were open, comprehensive and constructive. In the conclusion of the first year's report we noted that:

The problem has been that programmers and their practices and standards departments have no one to talk to about these issues other than themselves, except for advocates whom they see as lacking objectivity or simply furthering their own cause. Hence, the need for an independent, outside monitor, not beholden to the networks, to the advocates or to the government.

Over the course of the year we came to realize how true this was. We believe that the broadcasters as well came to recognize the value of an outside monitor. Though they did not fully agree with all of our findings, they were willing to discuss any aspect of television programming. In some areas, such as on-air promotions, they fully reviewed their policies and created internal changes (such as new policies, reporting relationships or additional personnel). This year's report demonstrates that these changes effectively dealt with the problem. Other programming areas will be slower to change and are discussed in detail in this year's report. Never once, however, did we find any of the four networks unwilling to examine any part of their programming or to make any member of their staff available to answer our questions. At some of the meetings throughout the year, as many as 18 network executives, from the president of the company or the network to the heads of all of the departments, attended the discussions.

Throughout the year we also received calls from at least a dozen producers of programs that were identified in the report as raising concerns. In only one instance did those producers call to complain about the way their show was examined. In all other instances the producers felt that because we named shows, dates and specific issues, they could understand the basis of our criticism and agreed with it. Several mentioned that our analysis of their show mirrored internal production discussions. Several producers felt that the criteria of the report were clear enough to begin to incorporate them into their own production process.

In the conclusion of our first report on television violence we stated:

This is the first of three annual reports that the Center will issue on the state of television violence. Future reports will be able to analyze both how the issue of violence in the next television season has improved or worsened and also how the industry itself has responded to our recommendations. This is an unprecedented situation. We know that we have the industry's attention and plan to focus that attention on ways to improve the television picture of violence. After the release of this report, the Center is prepared to work with the industry on how to implement its recommendations. One of our recommendations suggests that the follow up to this report begin with a series of discussions with the networks to identify what is and what is not working in the effort to improve the situation in the area of television violence.

In any serious cooperative endeavor, success is predicated upon the involved parties having at least a modicum of respect for each other. In the present project, this is especially true in regard to the target of the criticisms, the television industry. Members of the television industry are not children in need of training, nor are they insensitive ogres whose concerns for the bottom line outweigh those for the quality of society. There is a tendency among academics to believe that if only television people knew the results of the scientific studies, they would change their evil ways. There is a tendency among moral critics to forget that members of the television industry have parents, children, brothers and sisters too, and that they care about making society a healthy and peaceful place. The industry could

profit from a closer look at some of the evidence and conclusions of the scientific studies, but that is not to say that a huge knowledge gap exists between the scientific community and the television industry. Survey after survey, including one the Center conducted last year with U.S. News & World Report, clearly indicate that the industry knows it has a problem with television violence and wants to do something about it. Having said that, it is also important to recognize that the television business is competitive, and growing more so each day. In order to enable broadcast networks to make significant improvements in this area, their competition, including cable television networks, will have to address this issue as well. Increasingly, viewers simply do not distinguish among broadcast and cable channels as they "surf" through their television dial.

Though the members of the industry should not be regarded as ignorant and uncaring, there is certainly something to be said for holding their feet to the fire with an eye toward making the necessary improvements in programming. There is a tendency for the industry to make the proper noises and then wait for the danger to blow over. There needs to be some mechanism put in place whereby the industry will feel pressured to make real changes. The government needs to recognize when change occurs. If the industry is not held accountable in some concrete way, nothing will be accomplished.

Clearly, we feel the monitoring that has been conducted of broadcast and cable television over the past two years has had an important effect on dealing with this issue. Though there is a large body of academic literature that demonstrates there can be a link between media violence and violence in society (this discussion occurs at a time when real violence is dropping at record levels), there is no corresponding link with regard to sexual behavior and language on television. In Canada, the former (until July 1996) chairman of the Canadian Radio-Television-Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), Keith Spicer, led the effort against violent programming that he felt affected children. He was not concerned with images of sex (unless they were linked with violence) because, while he knew there might be damaging effects from violence, he believed sex to be largely "life affirming."

Much has happened on the legislative front since the monitoring of television violence began in 1994. The V-chip was hotly debated in Congress during the Summer of 1995 and became part of the Telecommunications Bill of 1996 signed by President Clinton in February 1996. The V-chip was required to be part of all television sets larger than 13 inches manufactured after February of 1998. Ironically, the recent FCC rulings on digital television have the effect of limiting the life of all analog television sets and probably ensure the fact that very few people will buy a television set (unless they must have one) until digital sets are available at a reasonable cost, probably not for at least three years.

The V-chip can not have an impact unless it is accompanied by a television labeling system to activate the chip. The Telecommunications Bill of 1996 gave the television industry a year to

develop its own system or else the FCC would appoint a panel to create a system. Probably fearing that the industry might challenge the Bill in court on First Amendment grounds, the authors stated that the FCC's panels' recommendations would not be binding on the television industry. Rather than going to court, the television industry went to the White House on February 29, 1996 and agreed, voluntarily, to develop a television labeling system within the year. This voluntary approach was endorsed by practically all interested parties as the best possible way to deal with the problem. The industry's feet were held to the fire and it had an important effect.

At the White House meeting the television industry announced that it had asked Jack Valenti, the head of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), to lead the development of the labeling system. Valenti was the man who had helped develop the ratings for the motion picture industry in the late 1960s. The motion picture ratings were created within several years of the disappearance of the last vestiges of the Hays Office motion picture production codes. The Hays was a film industry-led effort that called for self-regulation, partially out of concern that movie content in the 1920s and 1930s had gone too far and partially out of the fear that if the industry did not regulate itself then the government would do the job for them. The Hays codes were never enforced by law, were completely respectful of the First Amendment and demonstrated the advantage, once again, of holding the industry's feet to the fire.

Over the spring and summer of last year the implementation committee under Valenti began the process of designing the television ratings system. About ten days before the system was scheduled to be unveiled, word leaked out that the system would strongly resemble the motion

picture industry labels. The "G" rating in film would directly translate into the "TV-G" rating in television and the "PG" would do the same thing. Film's "PG-13" would become a "PG14" on television and the "R" rating would most closely resemble an "MA." One important difference between the two systems was the introduction of two new ratings geared specifically toward children: "TV-Y" and "TV-Y7."

From the moment the new system was announced, a firestorm of protest erupted from child advocates, academics and some government officials. What those critics wanted was a system closer to what they saw being developed in Canada. There, the V-chip field trials used separate labels for sex (S), violence (V) and language (L). Furthermore, the S, V and L labels were modified by levels of gradation ranging from one through five. Therefore, a program, rather than being rated, say, "PG-14," would be rated V2, S3, L2 or some other combination. Canada, which itself was scheduled to implement that system in September of 1996, decided to delay the system's introduction for a year, partially to further study the system and partially to see what happened in the United States.

As the new system began to appear on air in the United States at the end of 1996 and the beginning of 1997, criticism from the advocates and others escalated. All sides released polls and studies claiming to represent what parents felt about the system. Although we see the debate so far largely centered on political issues, we feel that it will have a significant impact on the violence issue as well as all television programming. Having looked at as much television

programming as anyone in the nation, we offer the following thoughts on the debate over the television labeling system.

1. The system is either voluntary or it is not. If it truly is a voluntary system, then opponents can, of course, criticize it all they want. But if it really is voluntary, it is voluntary whether the government likes it or not. One cannot call something voluntary then, when it finds it does not like what was done voluntarily, propose involuntary legislation. That seems to be a serious concern for those truly interested in the First Amendment. If the system was only alleged to be voluntary, then we all find ourselves on the proverbial "slippery slope."

2. We do not know what parents really think. Like many others, we have spoken to many parents, but do not feel we can represent their views. It seems clear that parents have not had a real opportunity to form attitudes toward the system because it is a system that is not fully developed. It is not enough to ask parents: "Do you want more information?" We hope the hearings to be held next month by the House Subcommittee on Telecommunications will begin to examine what parents really think about television labels. It is also our hope that those hearings will be followed over the subsequent months by some comprehensive research on parents' views about the present system and possible alternatives.

3. If an S,V and L system had been adopted instead of the recent system, today we would be debating the weaknesses or limitations of that system. There is a danger that the SVL system may represent a return to when violence was studied by counting all acts of violence the same. A

Beauty and the Beast or a **Bambi** contains violence and could, under some variations of the SVL system, look the same as more worrisome forms of violence. Does one sexual reference in a situation comedy trigger an "S" rating, or does a television movie dealing intelligently with rape look the same as a "R"-rated exploitation film?

4. There are problems with the current system. Clearly, it is not being applied as well as it should be. There are many examples of similar programming rated differently by programmers. An indictment of the application of the system is not the same thing as an indictment of the system itself, however.

We accept that only the programmers themselves can apply the labels. The logistics of any other person or group applying the labels would be a nightmare. We do not feel, however, that the oversight committee reviewing the ratings should be comprised solely of members of the television community. The film ratings are created by a committee that is comprised largely of parents. Those same people should have a role in the oversight of the television ratings.

One thing we do hear consistently from parents is that the labeling icons are easy to miss. Alternative placement, size and length on screen should be tested.

5. Lastly, it is clear that important decisions about the labeling system should not be conducted by shoddy polls, quick research or an extraordinary rush to judgment. If the current system needs

to be amended, it should be done through a substantive examination of what parents really think, the merits of each system and a healthy respect for this nation's First Amendment freedoms.

I am pleased to see that this hearing is entitled "Government and Television: Improving Programming Without Censorship," because that describes our goal and philosophy from the first day we became involved in the television content issue. Too often critics simply want to change television content so that it conforms to their world view with little or no concern about the effects of those actions on the economic viability of free television or the protections ensured for all by the First Amendment. We feel the government has an important role to play in this area by focusing attention, holding hearings such as these and by using the so-called bully-pulpit. We do not feel, however, that the solutions to these difficult social, political and economic issues come from quick and meaningless polls, shallow research or even from government legislation. At the end of both our first and second annual national reports on network television violence, we issued recommendations for dealing with this issue to the broadcast networks, to the television creative community, to affiliates, to schools, to parents and to children themselves. I would like to introduce those recommendations into the record. We also issued a recommendation to the government which was as follows:

Understand the important role you play in the issue of violence in the media. Do not underestimate your power to shape public opinion. As much as possible, speak to the television industry with one voice. Use your powerful voice to encourage, persuade, cajole and, when necessary, threaten. Recognize when progress is made.

The television violence issue needs sustained leadership from the government. Broadcasters should not have to fear that all understandings and arrangements disappear after every election or change in government.

Important changes are occurring in the world of television. The audience of free broadcast television continues to erode as that of cable increases. Earlier this month the FCC began the era of digital television that, while improving the quality and number of television signals, is sure to cause much confusion among viewers as their television sets will become obsolete and they migrate to digital signals and sets. V-chips and television labeling systems, whether simple or complex, will further complicate the television environment and cause much confusion. The government can provide an important voice in the midst of this confusion by injecting much needed light in a heated debate.

**TESTIMONY OF THE
NATIONAL PARENT-TEACHER ASSOCIATION**

**Helen K. Liebowitz
National PTA Board of Directors**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Senate Subcommittee on Government Management, Restructuring and the District of Columbia. I am Helen K. Liebowitz, National PTA Health and Welfare Commission member and Team Leader for the National PTA's Critical Viewing Media Literacy Project. The National PTA is comprised of over 6.5 million parents, teachers, and other child advocates concerned about improving the quality of television programming for children. Thank you for this opportunity to present the views of many parents nationwide who have been frequently frustrated in their attempts to influence children's television programming while not wishing to cross the fine lines of First Amendment freedoms.

It is appropriate that you entitle this hearing: "Government and Television: Improving Programming Without Censorship." For the many years the National PTA has testified before Congress related to improving children's TV, we have ALWAYS noted that the danger in industry resistance to providing better programming could be a national inclination toward outright program censorship. First Amendment rights can only be protected through responsibility. You requested the National PTA to focus on a number of areas:

- Discuss concerns that National PTA members at the local level have regarding the quality of television with special emphasis on violent programming
- Review the history of National PTA involvement in urging quality programming while recognizing the dangers of coercive government interference in restricting freedoms of speech and creativity
- Comment on how the TV industry has responded to the public's concerns since the passage of the TV Violence Act of 1990
- Provide recommendations, in addition to v-chip ratings, that the industry could undertake to reduce the amount of violence on television

I come before this subcommittee, not as a legal expert or a researcher, although this testimony incorporates facets of both legal opinion and research conclusions. As a parent, National PTA board member, former New York State PTA president, and a long standing activist in various community organizations, I do represent many parents and local citizens who are concerned about the influence of violent television programming on their children and family. Indeed, for some children, television acts as a surrogate parent. With a TV in 96% of all American households, TV obviously has a major effect on the attitudes, education and behavior of our children.

The industry maintains that parents have the option of shutting off the TV if they don't like the programming. However, on the other hand, parents can't choose good programming if it is not available and they want to watch it. What parents are seeking, in an age when violence and children killing children and concerns about safety and character building are on the top of the national agenda, is a television industry that is responsive to their concerns. After all, quality television can be a positive force in the lives of our children and families. Public broadcasting; non-commercial programs such

as Cable in the Classroom, Discovery, and Arts and Entertainment; and network specials are able to enhance and enrich learning for youth and their parents.

Since 1973, the National PTA has communicated with the Congress, with Federal agencies, and with the television industry about our concerns pertaining to the relative lack of quality television programming for children. Unfair advertising directed at children, the advertising of products injurious to children's health, the limited number of age-specific and alternative quality television programs, cartoon-length commercials, and the effects of television watching on children's academic performance and emotional health are all issues of paramount importance to the National PTA.

Since 1973, the National PTA has played a major role in the following telecommunications areas:

- Support of limiting advertisements during the times that most children watch television
- Support of rules that regulated unfair and deceptive advertisements targeted at children such as sugar-cereals, tobacco and alcohol products
- Opposition to the FCC deregulation of children's programming in the 1980's which served to increase TV violence, ads targeted at children and program-length commercials (using popular TV characters and stories to sell products)
- Support of the Television Violence Act of 1990
- Support of the Children's Television Act of 1990
- Support of the provisions in the Children's Television Act that requires the industry to broadcast at least three hours of children's programming per week
- Support of the v-chip provisions in the Telecommunications Act of 1996

In 1978 and 1979, the National PTA conducted its own set of hearings where parents responded overwhelmingly that the increase in TV violence was one of their major concerns—and this was 16 years ago.

While we recognize the responsibility of parents to monitor what their children watch, the National PTA has always maintained that parents need assistance from the television industry, which more often than not, has turned a deaf ear to many parental requests for more excellent programming. Frequently, the industry has fought against any federal regulation which would require them to meet their obligation to the children's interest, and at the same time, resisted the option for voluntary self-regulation at improving television programs for children through the TV Violence Act. Cries of censorship, denial of freedom of the press, severe economic burden, and unconscionable meddling "by those national organizations who do not represent real parents" have all been justifications by the industry to maintain the status quo.

In fact, real parents flooded the FCC with comments during the recent comment period related to the v-chip. The following are excerpts from what some of the "real" parents had to say:

"I am not pleased with the language and situations which dominate many of the television shows which are on the air today. My first preference would be to eliminate the material, but as that does not seem likely in the near future, I feel the very least that can be done for families is to allow intelligent decisions."

*Janet E. Boatman
Kingman, Texas PTA*

"My husband and I both feel there is too much sex, violence and trash on the TV and find it difficult to find programs that are suitable for the whole family to watch together."

*Mr. And Mrs. R.T. Varkalis
Montgomery County, Maryland PTA*

"To give you an example, I have five year old twins, and an eight year old. My eight year old is much more easily disturbed by violence on television than are either of my younger children."

*Barbara C. Coe
Glen Haven Elementary School PTA
Silver Spring, Maryland*

"As a writer for ABC-TV General Hospital, and as a Mom, I especially feel the quandary of how to entertain the adult audience without shocking the sensibilities of the youngster."

*Eleanor Mancusi
Mom to Two
local New York PTA*

"It's frightening when you think of the lack of help we've had in the past on making informed decisions as to suitable TV viewing. I do believe it is evident in some of the behavior our children are exhibiting. Please listen to the concerns of PTA members. Our goal is the protection of all of our children and youth."

*Laurie L. Musel
Iowa PTA President*

"Without information, my husband and I have had to make a more blanket decisions to allow our children to only watch children's programming on the public broadcasting channel, select educational shows on such channels as Discovery, and videos that we rent or purchase for them."

*Sherri Cornett
Boulder Avenue Elementary School PTA
Billings, Montana*

"As a person in my early 40's, I grew up watching television. Watching TV was often a family activity. We laughed, cried and learned from programs shown on TV. As my own children grew, they watched the typical "Sesame Street," "Mr. Rogers," cartoons, reruns of "Lassie" and "Little House On the Prairie." Now that they are teenagers I am embarrassed to watch and listen to the programs I see them watching. Programs shown before nine o'clock in the evening contain more profanity, sex, suggestive situations and pointless humor than I can stand! With all the problems and temptations that children must face daily, why must television further encourage negative behaviors?"

*Cathy Robertson
Thomas Middle PTA
Arlington Heights, Illinois*

"With the incredible proliferation of material available over the airways in this day and age and with the incontrovertible fact, it is simply impossible to even the most meticulous parent to review every possible program children of all ages might want to see."

*Patricia G. Sidas
Nutmeg Statewide PTA
Connecticut*

"The promos for various shows need to be monitored. Certain mature audience shows have promotional spots during family hours that are very questionable. These promos need to be screened."

*Susan S. Hein
Bolton, Connecticut*

"In a society in which our children are spending more time than ever in front of the television screen, children are being taught through this box and we must insure the quality of programming."

*Mrs. Susan M. Olson
Gadsden elementary PTA President And 178 members
Savannah, Georgia*

"We have heard so much about violence and how it affects our children. Please help parents that are willing to make this effort to raise decent, moral children who are not learning things before they are ready to."

*Karen DeCesare
Deltona, Florida*

"I am not an advocate of censorship. But I do believe that one of the most crucial duties of our society is to make sure that the best values of our culture are given to our children, not the worst. We cannot be in the room at all times when our children watch TV. Often, I come back into the TV room to find that channel surfing has ended up in an inappropriate place."

*Michael Fleming
Gorham, Maine*

We want the TV industry to understand that in many households, children may be watching television unsupervised with no adult to make program choices. With the increasing number of latchkey children and working families, this situation is becoming a fact of life. Parents are not asking for censorship; they are asking the industry for a little

assistance. Clearly this committee would not protect teachers who taught violence to children. Yet why would we condone a steady diet of children being exposed to TV violence, year after year. The Nielson Index estimates that the average child will have witnessed some 18,000 murders and countless robberies, bombings, smugglings, assaults and beatings during their years of TV viewing. What kind of social role-modeling is that for children to emulate? How is it possible that this program menu could be educationally redeeming or have any positive impact on the character of our youth?

From our members, we have learned that there are few single issues that preoccupy parents more than the poor quality of children's television that many believe contribute to a violent society. The statistics related to a child's exposure to television violence are indeed alarming. The numerous studies that link watching television violence to aggressive behavior in children are well known in the policy making and regulatory realms.

Particularly disturbing to our members are findings of research studies which show three possible effects of viewing television violence on young people. According to Rand researchers John P. Murray and Barbara Lonnberg, television violence can create the following affects:

- Children may become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others;
- they may be more fearful of the world around them; and
- they may be more likely to behave in an aggressive or harmful way toward others.

According to several recent studies, television violence has NOT diminished, despite the passage of the 1990 Television Violence Act, the Children's Television Act, and the v-chip provision in the Telecommunications Act. A March, 1997 study concluded that there has been no meaningful change in the presentation of violence on television during the last two years. The National Television Violence Study conducted by the University of California, Santa Barbara, found little change in such elements as the portrayal of pain and harm to victims or the long-term negative consequences that result from violence from 1994-1995 and 1995-1996. The researchers identified over 18,000 violent incidents in a sample of more than 2,000 hours drawn from 23 cable and broadcast channels during the 1995-1996 television season. Over half of all the violent incidents still failed to show the victim suffering any pain. Long term negative consequences from violence were portrayed in only 16% of the programs, compared to 13% last year, sited as an insignificant change by the study. In addition, three out of four violent scenes contained no remorse, criticism, or penalty for violence, and "bad" characters go unpunished in 37% of the programs. Television programs that employed a strong anti-violence theme remained extremely rare, holding constant at 4% of all violent shows.

Many parents are beginning to complain, not only about violent program content, but also about violence in promos and advertisements as well. A 1996 UCLA report on this issue defined television promos as video highlights to sell a product of the network and to expose viewers to new programs. The report said that promos raise serious concerns, particularly because they feature violence out of context. It is almost impossible, says the

report, to provide sufficient context for any violence that does occur. The study concludes that violence is used in many ways in promos as a "hook" to draw viewers into the programs.

In light of this research and little change in the reduction in TV violence, the National PTA has been vigilant and responsible in attempting to balance the needs of parents and children with the requirements of the First Amendment freedom of speech. Our preference has always been to seek non-legislative solutions to children's television issues, but as industry defensiveness and resistance to parental concerns about violence on television has increased, so has parental pressure to use legislative vehicles in forcing the industry to reduce violent programming and increase educational options for families. In fact, parents have been extremely patient with the industry, and have accepted some of the responsibility in choosing television programs for their families.

While the National PTA is concerned about issues of censorship, let us be clear that we do not equate government action in the telecommunications area with censorship. The combination of purposeful Congressional policies and voluntary industry efforts are essential as we discuss a telecommunications framework that will work for children and creative artists alike. In addition, there is no single quick fix to better television, no panacea that will eliminate TV violence overnight. But the greater industry resistance is to change, the greater Congressional action will be to pressure them to do so.

For instance, the National Cable Television Association with Cable in the Classroom has been working with the National PTA over the past several years in the Family and Community Critical Viewing Skills project. This cooperative effort is designed to provide parents and teachers throughout the community with information and skills to help families make better choices in the television programs they watch, and to improve the way they watch these programs. We are tremendously proud of this project and relationship. To complement this project with a reduction in TV violence, the meaningful implementation of the Children's Television Act and descriptive content-based ratings and industry voluntary self-regulation would be ideal.

Unfortunately, the other piece to this equation—reduction of violence has not occurred, and parents do not want to shoulder the full burden of responsibility for making sure their children do not watch violent TV without some help from the industry. In other words, parents do not and should not shoulder the full responsibility for television they never asked for, do not want, and they are tired of being patient.

In testimony before the Senate Commerce Committee on February 27, 1997, National PTA president Joan Dykstra told the Senate Commerce Committee which was holding a hearing on the progress of the v-chip rating system proposed by the industry the following:

"The decisions that will be made by the FCC and the television industry during the next several months will determine whether parents and the industry can co-exist and strike a balance without further government activity, or whether parents and the Congress will resort to legislative action that will go far beyond the v-chip

venturing into the constitutional quagmire of "safe harbor" resolutions. What lies in the balance is nothing more than the First Amendment. Our parents want the First Amendment to work for them as well as for the industry which often hides behind free speech protections and threats of protracted lawsuits as delaying tactics in responding to any means that would decrease violence on television."

Senators Brownbeck and Lieberman, you now ask whether the National PTA would support S. 471, the Television Improvement Act of 1997, to allow broadcasters, free from anti-trust restrictions, to once again come together to develop a National Broadcasters Code of Conduct, similar to a code that was in force prior to the decision in the *United States V. National Association of Broadcasters*. In that action, collective self-regulatory measure that regulated advertising was regarded under the antitrust laws as a violation of Section 1 of the Sherman Act. This proposed law is similar to the Television Violence Act of 1990 that the industry basically squandered away in blatant disregard for Congress and parents.

We testified in support of the Television Violence Act and will support this similar measure. In the absence of antitrust laws, the broadcasters could come together without legal impunity. S. 471 removes the legal consequences that might otherwise be barriers as the broadcasters take action to address TV violence. The problem is that the bill does not compel the broadcasters to agree or to implement anything. While it would encourage them to come together, Congress would grant an antitrust exemption so that the broadcasters could cooperate with each other in promulgating and implementing standards for reducing violence. We will not support this bill by reducing support for the Children's Television Act and the v-chip provisions, but can support this legislation as an

example of Congressional permissiveness, not congressional coercion. Ultimately, decisions to reduce or address TV violence would not be a result of state mandate, but through the private arrangements of the broadcasters.

However, the National PTA has vivid recollections of how the industry failed to take advantage of the last antitrust exemption they received as a result of the Children's Violence Act of 1990. While that bill had a 3 year sunset, it did provide adequate time for the broadcasters to meet and agree on a National Code, but they never did. As each of these efforts fail, I can tell this committee that this nation comes ever closer to the day when the American people will demand that Congress take arbitrary action to curtail TV violence, if voluntary action once again fails.

If I were the industry, just imagine the good public relations the broadcasters could create around a Code that includes:

- Special recognition for programs that are violent-free
- Identification of sponsors that do not sponsor violent programming OR violent commercials
- When violence is presented, provide greater emphasis on a strong anti-violence theme
- Broadcast anti-violence public service announcements focusing on such events as gang membership, alternatives to violent behavior and address behavior that can lead to violence
- Make commitments to identify all programming that is educational as well as programming that is violent

Submitted to the United States Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs
April 16, 1997

Testimony of
Whitney Grove Vanderwerff, Ph.D.
Executive Director, National Alliance for Non-violent Programming

Hearing on
“Government and Television:
Improving Programming Without Censorship”

Thank you, Chairman Brownback and members of the Committee for this opportunity on behalf of the National Alliance for Non-violent Programming, NANP.

This is a network of ten national not-for-profit organizations with a long history of effective community involvement, training and education. The NANP network was created solely to reduce the incidence and impact of media violence through community action, informed advocacy and educational strategies promoting media literacy. It was the vision of the late Marjorie Powell Allen of Kansas, who believed it was urgent to address without invasion of First Amendment rights the issue of violence that is glamorized and presented as entertainment. It is pertinent to this hearing that we exist and that we persist.

The National Alliance for Non-violent Programming’s member organizations now represent more than 2 million people in more than 3,000 local chapters. We work at the grassroots in broad-based community education initiatives – in school and after school, with parents, health professionals, the faith community, civic organizations. We are honored to serve as the delivery system for excellent materials like those developed by the PTA and David Walsh’s National Institute on Media and the Family.

We find that addressing television’s impact galvanizes people. We also find that the gap between five decades of research on the effects of televised violence and public knowledge has narrowed. People everywhere confirm that television is a powerful, pervasive educator, shaping attitudes and behaviors of our children and youth.

We acknowledge the responsibility of the consumer.

The American public is beginning to understand the public interest obligation of the broadcasters. The FCC recently cleared the way to award an additional 6 Mhz channel to each incumbent broadcaster. If sold at auction these licenses would have raised an estimated \$20-35 billion for the U.S. taxpayers. Instead, the FCC was directed to award these licenses for free. In order for the American public to receive a fair return on the use of this valuable public resource, broadcasters must update their public interest commitment to be commensurate with the opportunity they are receiving.

The public is entitled to ask:

- ♦ Is it too much to ask broadcasters to provide reasonable amounts of quality children's educational programming?
- ♦ Is it too much to ask broadcasters to limit the amount of commercial information presented during programming designed for young children?
- ♦ Shouldn't broadcasters better address the needs of their local communities by carrying more minority programming and covering a wider variety of local issues?
- ♦ Why shouldn't broadcasters be asked to help reduce the sky-rocketing cost of campaigns by contributing some free time to candidates running for federal office?
- ♦ Shouldn't the television industry pay close attention to the proven effects of televised violence and provide programming that's good for kids?

The proven effects of televised violence in many young viewers include increased anti-social behavior and aggression, increased fearfulness, desensitization, and increased appetite for more violence.

We have timely evidence about violent content. Let me reiterate, from the new National Television Violence Study Dale Kunkel has just discussed, these major findings:

- There has been no meaningful change in violence on television since last year.
- Violence on television is still frequently glamorized.
- Most violence on television remains sanitized—i.e. violence is typically shown with little or no harm to the victim. Only 13% of violent shows portray the long-term negative consequences of violence such as physical and psychological suffering.

We work at the grassroots and we hear from the grassroots. Across the country parents are asking not just for the tools they need to choose programming that is appropriate for their children, but for something *to* choose.

Here are voices from the grassroots, from people involved in media literacy initiatives across the country; they echo Dale Kunkel's remarks about the cumulative effects of media violence:

From a mother of two in Augusta, Georgia:

"Wake up, America! A whole generation is learning that respect comes only to those who hit the hardest, who carry a weapon, or who talk the meanest."

From a student in Thibodaux, Louisiana:

"I'm just trying to learn. I can't understand why they won't make TV better."

From a Boys & Girls Clubs teen mentor in Greensboro, North Carolina:

"I see what happens with the young kids in my group. They see violence on television and think it's OK for an argument with words to turn into a fight with weapons."

From a parent educator in Kansas City:

"Television violence is desensitizing our children. Of course it's not the main cause of violence in our society. But it's the cause of lack of respect."

From a physician in Salt Lake City:

"Our children spend more time learning about life through television than in any other manner."

From a teacher in Salinas, California:

"Don't tell me kids aren't affected by all the violence on television. I see it all the time."

Just this morning we heard from a mother in Columbia, South Carolina who said, "I have two step-children. My job is hard enough without my little boy's learning from a popular children's television program that kicking is the way to handle an argument with his little sister."

I submit to you that after decades of mindlessly absorbing television, of being asleep at the switch and careless at the controls, many Americans have heard a wake-up call and are looking at television with new eyes.

And after decades of fierce and energetic competition to reap a fulsome financial harvest, the television industry is also hearing this wake-up call.

For the industry to collaborate on voluntary guidelines to mitigate television's negative impact on our children and to promote better programming isn't such a radical idea.

Because there's another kind of network.

John Gardner writes that in order to restore cohesion to our society, leaders from various segments must "come together in Networks of Responsibility to seek to resolve the larger problems of community, region, nation and world."

How about promoting and supporting a *voluntary television industry network of responsibility to provide quality programming and serve the public interest?*

People working together at the grassroots in media literacy initiatives all across the county will receive this network in a sense of shared responsibility for the health and well-being of our children and our society.

And at the grassroots Senators, as we're working on this issue, we find we aren't bowling alone.

Thank you very much.

Whitney G. Vanderwerff, Ph.D.
Executive Director
National Alliance for Non-violent Programming
1846 Banking Street
Greensboro, NC 27408

**Statement to the Committee on Government Affairs
United States Senate
April 16, 1997**

**Submitted by Michael Brody, M.D.
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry**

Let me say right off that I watch television-- not like those people who say they were watching while they were cooking a pheasant or waiting for their DNA experiment to incubate. No I watch television. I have cable, and Direct TV. I enjoy going to TV land.

TV is educational, entertaining, and of course an escape. I can watch because I am an adult and have that choice. I have the right of consent. Children don't and shouldn't.

This is our hardest job as a parent. To know how much control/consent to give up to our kids. Do we measure their ability to assume consent by age or behavior? We certainly have to factor in risks physical and mental. That's why our children can't drive cars, as opposed to planes, in most states till they are 16 or drink until 21. As a society we have determined these ages of consent.

Children are not small adults. Piaget has shown that children progress cognitively in stages from illogical thought to concrete concepts -- ability to make groupings and categories; and finally to a stage of formal operations where there is the ability to manipulate these groupings mentally. Until they have reached this last stage of cognitive operational thinking, they will have trouble with the seductiveness of TV and its imitation and modeling possibilities.

Yet we expose our children to 22,000 hours of TV before they complete 12,000 hours of formal schooling. We do this while we are the only industrialized country without a real TV policy for children.

As a free society we have to balance our freedoms with responsibility to all our children. I again am not speaking of adults. As adults we have the right to watch Die Hard and Broken Arrow as many times as we want. We also have the right to drink, smoke and yes even buy high tech stocks. We have consent. But as I said before, our children don't and shouldn't.

I also say to you as I have said to Mr. Valenti -- who has been quite opposed to a content based TV rating system, that would be most helpful to parents, similar to their being able to identify the actual ingredients in their kids' favorite cereal -- Parents want more information and less judgement. No government or other censorship. Just information.

In the early 1970s I evaluated every child that murdered another child in the District of Columbia. I couldn't possibly do that today, because of the overwhelming numbers. As crime rates decrease overall, the population of younger serious offenders increases at an alarming rate. Now of course the media is not solely responsible -- there are too many privately owned guns in our country, drugs, fragmented families, poverty, racism and inferior schools -- but over four decades of research and over 2000 studies has shown that TV does have an impact. That is why The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry is waging a national campaign against violence and feels that the violence in the media is a public health problem.

Murder is extreme but as a child psychiatrist I also wonder about the whole affect of the blitz of media junk and violence on a child's fantasy life. Stories like play are a very serious matter to me. Stories for kids should inspire, promote curiosity, and help solve problems. Yet TV story lines and fantasy become more and more homogenized. Similar to pornography -- pre-packaged for those too lazy to think of their own fantasies. This is hindering imagination as TV has the same chases, the same rescues, jagged narratives and stereotyping with the same real goal, to arouse physiologically, so that kids would be stimulated to buy more and more products. This constant selling is robbing our young of their souls and converting them to little more than super consumers. It is no wonder that David Denby, in his New Yorker article, sees our kids being Buried Alive by media junk. They use toy systems instead of toys; they eat at Mickey D's instead of at home; they consume large quantities of easy programming instead of literature and

yet remain in a constant state of non-gratification looking for or surfing for the next quick fix.

So the networks should understand that 1) children are not just small adults. They have special needs for socialization and imagination. Developmentally, they are vulnerable to imitation and modeling. If there are stories where there are no consequences to violent acts kids believe this to be so. 2) Narrative for kids is important. It can be used to inspire and encourage. 3) The networks should sincerely support the 3 hour per week education requirement, a more helpful content based rating system and the V-Chip.

Our young children's egos (their tools to deal with reality) rests in our hands. This is not just an issue of improved programming without censorship but one of trust.

Statement to the Committee on Government Affairs

United States Senate

April, 16, 1997

Submitted by David Walsh, Ph.D.

National Institute on Media and the Family

"Television and Children"

Everyday new frontiers of our knowledge about children's brain development are discovered. The implications of the breakthroughs in neuroscience are both exciting and sobering. It is clearer than ever that the early years of a child's life are crucial in the formation of neural networks that will support a host of mental and emotional abilities and traits. The fact that glucose metabolism in the brain peaks between the ages of seven and sixteen underscores the incredible amount of neural network development occurring during a child's early years.

The networks are formed by the countless experiences a child has. Each experience stimulates the building of connections between brain cells. The stronger and more repetitive the experiences are, the stronger the connections become. Consequently, the nature of those experiences serves as a major determinant of a child's brain "software."

This process is taking place during a time of tremendous change which we call the "Digital Revolution." Children today are being raised and educated in a very different way. Mass media, especially television, have become powerful shapers of children's minds. The power of media to shape children's thoughts, feelings, attitudes, values and behavior is increasingly obvious to parents and is well documented in scientific research. There is a growing body of evidence about media's influence on language development, reading skills, attention span, and on attitudes toward violence, sexuality, and other behaviors.

American children today spend more time watching television than any other activity of their waking lives. By the time American children graduate from high school, they will have spent twice as much time watching television as they will have spent in the classroom. Therefore the influence of television on their minds during the important years of attitude and value development is crucial.

In addition to the effects on individual minds, we need to pay attention to the effects on the culture. *Whoever tells the stories defines the culture.* That fact is not new; it's been true for thousands of years. Since World War II, however, we have turned over a larger and larger share of the story telling function to media, especially television. Television has become our cultural story teller.

I want to be clear that I am not suggesting television is the sole or most influential shaper of children's attitudes and values. I am suggesting that it is a powerful one and to dismiss its role would be a serious error.

Although it is not the only harmful effect, the case of violent entertainment's effect on children is a very important example. I am co-author of the American Medical Association's *Physician's Guide to Media Violence*. When I speak about the effects of violence in the media, the point I try to make is that the most harmful effect of the steady diet of violent entertainment aimed at children is not violent behavior. In my judgement, the most harmful effect is that what we have done is to create and nourish a *culture of disrespect*.

Violence is the extreme of disrespect. For every kid who's picking up a gun and shooting another kid, there are thousands who aren't doing that. But they're putting one another down, pushing, shoving, and hitting with increasing frequency. As I stated earlier, "Whoever tells the stories defines the culture." Media has taught our kids to replace, "Have a nice day" with, "Make my day!" Too many of our children are learning this lesson all too well.

America's children are in trouble. And therefore so are the rest of us. Whether we're talking about the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in the industrialized world, a teenage homicide rate 800% higher than that of the next closest industrialized country, or the 400% increase in marijuana use among eighth graders since 1992, there are plenty of warning alarms going off.

A natural temptation is to look for a scapegoat when things are not going well. Since things are not going well with our children the search for a scapegoat is in high gear. Parents, teachers, politicians, courts, and media are all popular targets. One thing is for sure: there is enough blame to go around for everyone. Placing all the blame on any one group is not going to get us anywhere. What can lead to improvement is for every individual and every sector of society is to shoulder its share of the responsibility for change.

A Cree Indian elder once said, "Children are the purpose of life. We were once children and someone took care of us. Now it is our turn to care." We should all be waking up to the fact that caring for children in the "Digital Age" includes being responsible media consumers and responsible media producers and distributors. Parents, producers, and programmers who respond to this challenge will be maximizing one of the great benefits of media: creating a healthy society and promoting the common good.

David Walsh, Ph.D. is the founder and president of the National Institute on Media and the Family, Minneapolis, MN. The Institute is an independent, non-sectarian, non-profit organization dedicated to maximizing the benefits and minimizing the harm of media on children and families through education and research.

Testimony by L. Brent Bozell III
Chairman, Parents Television Council
before the Senate Subcommittee on Government Management, Restructuring and the
District of Columbia
May 8, 1997

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Subcommittee, my name is Brent Bozell. I am the chairman of the Parents Television Council, a special project of the Media Research Center. Fifteen months ago, the PTC released "A Vanishing Haven: The Decline of the Family Hour," a study of program content in the first hour of prime time television - 8 to 9 p.m. Eastern and Pacific time, 7 to 8 Central and Mountain. In all parts of America, this used to be known as the family hour, home to such wholesome programs as "Little House on the Prairie," "Happy Days," and "The Cosby Show." However, as the study demonstrated, by the fall of 1995 that time slot was anything but a haven for all-ages viewing. Vulgar language and promiscuous sex were widespread, and, in some cases, the norm.

Three months ago, the PTC was the first to examine how the new parental-guidance TV ratings system was working, and our report, "The TV Ratings System: F for Failure," demonstrated that, quite simply, it wasn't. As bad as the system was in theory, it was, and is, worse in practice. Take TV-PG, by far the most common rating. It supposedly means that a program is suitable for everyone except young children, but it was applied to shows with high levels of sexual material and cursing -- shows clearly designed for more mature audiences than pre-teens. It was also applied inconsistently: shows containing nothing objectionable were given the very same rating as shows that were objectionable. In that sense and others, the system failed at its mission to inform parents about which programs are suitable, and which unsuitable, for their children.

The report the PTC released today, "The 'Family Hour': No Place for Your Kids," updates both these studies. Researchers looked at what the networks aired during the so-called family hour during the February '97 sweeps period, with one eye toward quantifying family-unfriendly content and the other toward scrutiny of the ratings system. Unfortunately, they found no meaningful improvement over the quality of fifteen months ago. And in some respects, TV has actually gotten even worse.

First, let's review the content analysis. The study covers 93 hours of original programming - 144 separate shows - on six networks: ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC, UPN, and WB, airing from January 30 through February 26, 1997. Our main concerns were foul language and sexual

content.

There was significant regression on language. Our first study had found 0.62 obscenities per program hour; this time, the figure was 0.88. Put it another way: if your children watch network television between 8 and 9, the so-called family hour, they have, on average, an 88 percent chance of hearing a swear word like "ass," or "bastard," or "bitch," or even an altered version of the f-word. During the study period we noted ten of these. In each case, whether a bleep sound or a euphemism like "freaking" was used, the intent was clearly to present the specter of the f-word itself. Overall, one-third of the programs contained at least one obscenity.

Regarding sex, matters are better, but only slightly. Overall, references to sex outside of marriage -- premarital, extramarital, and homosexual -- outnumbered those to sex within the context of marriage by a ratio of 3.6 to 1. True, this result is preferable to the 8-to-1 ratio we found in the first study, but it's a long way from satisfactory. Moreover, given that we're talking about the first hour of prime time, when literally millions of children are in the audience, shouldn't sexual material of any kind be extremely rare? In fact, the opposite is true: thirty-one percent of the programs included at least one sexual reference.

The networks were not equally guilty of airing this filth. Easily the worst was Fox, which in terms of both sex and language easily outgrossed the others, averaging more than two obscenities and one sexual reference per hour. CBS, NBC, and the part-time UPN frequently offended as well. ABC and the part-time WB network were the least likely to air rough language or sexual references.

Turning to the ratings system, thirty-two percent of program hours in our study of the family hour were rated G; 59 percent were PG; 9 percent were TV-14. In other words, even by the very permissive standards of the networks, less than a third of family-hour programming was "suitable for all ages," as the G rating is defined. Additionally, of the 86 shows rated PG - meaning they're supposedly appropriate for everyone except young children - 36 percent contained sexual references, and almost half contained vulgar or obscene language.

The so-called family hour may now be the most dangerous time slot for families, in that parents, recalling the favorite TV series of their childhood, still believe that if a show airs at 8 or 8:30 p.m., it's fine for their children, especially if it's given an innocuous-sounding rating

like PG. However, as our study demonstrates, those who tune in between 8 and 9 actually have a better chance of seeing something sordid than they do of seeing something wholesome.

Nielsen figures show that on an average night, the networks have more than 13 million prime time viewers age 17 and under. Viewership among the young is especially high in the first hour of prime time. According to the ratings for a week in mid-April, eight of the ten most popular shows among those age 2 to 5, and seven of the ten most-watched shows among 6-to-11-year-olds, air between 8 and 9. The bottom line is that an awful lot of children are being exposed to an awful lot of garbage by a television industry that by and large couldn't care less.

The industry wants to have it both ways: to appeal to those who enjoy raunch even at 8 p.m., and also by rating shows deceptively to falsely indicate to parents that they're appropriate for youngsters. This game must end. The networks should do one of two things. The first would be to air only family-friendly programs before 9 o'clock. That's the appropriate, and pro-children, solution. Barring that, the second would be to publicly and unambiguously declare that the family hour is dead, that this time period is no longer a safe haven for families, and children, and that parents in search of television entertainment for their children will have to resort to cable or videocassettes. Obviously, we all want them to choose the first option and return to the traditional family hour, but if the networks are going to reject that option, they have an ethical obligation to alert parents to this sad reality.

It is for that reason that I wholeheartedly applaud Senators Brownback and Lieberman, along with Representatives Smith and Kennedy, for sponsoring the Television Program Improvement Act of 1997. The TPIA would create an antitrust exemption for the networks that would permit them to develop voluntary guidelines regarding sex, language, and other issues. Its stated goal is "making television more family-friendly," and it does so without allowing the government to control broadcast content in any way.

Television is not the source of all of society's ills, but it is unquestionably a participant in the public conversation. Indeed, it is the most powerful cultural influence on our children in America today. But just as television is having, in so many ways, such a negative impact on our children it could also be an awesome force for good. To ask the industry to consider this is not radical. It is to remind it of what it once was.

STATS

STATISTICAL ASSESSMENT SERVICE

Testimony of David Murray, Ph.D.
8 May 1997

SEX AND TELEVISION PROGRAMMING

"Ozzie doesn't live here anymore."

Dr. Robert Lichter
Center for Media and Public Affairs

I like sex; I am drawn to it, and to images of the unclothed and splendid female form, as a moth to a flame. I tend to agree with the writer Florence King, who explained male channel-surfing behavior (and the behavior is, overwhelmingly, as is most of the behaviors of sexual production and consumption that trouble us here today, male), at any rate, channel surfing, as being driven by the unquenchable hope that somewhere, on some channel, there is a naked female, dancing.

I have been that man, and yet, still, I am troubled by what has become of sex in America. Is it possible as a student of culture and history, being familiar with the outrages and inventiveness of the id in many settings, and still be troubled by the modern American sexual scene? Resoundingly, yes.

In all cultures, in all times, from David delighting in the image of Bathsheba, to Orpheus descending hell itself to reclaim Eurydice, to the noble Roman Antony besmitten with unequalled

Cleopatra beneath the visiting moon, on to the polymorphous Kama Sutra of the sixties and the tawdry Melrose Place of today, sex not only sells, it enchants, arouses, and makes pliant and vulnerable the human personality. We seek it, we pay for it, (in both senses of the term), and we are monkey-curious about what its limits might be.

Sex is animal, in the first instance, housed ironically, as the poet Yeats lamented, in the place of excrement, as it is god-like, in that it is our divine share in the blessing of procreation.

As a cultural anthropologist I have studied the varieties of culture, and found one essential message; sex and reproduction are the engines of social transformation. Thus it is that each utopian, each revolutionary, seeks to grasp the levers of sexuality to harness this powerful drive for his or her purposes. Sex is power, both for its appetitive functions, and for its product -- the human infant.

The anthropologist in me, who has visited and dwelt among the exotic aspects of human appetites, who was weaned on Margaret Mead and her bare-breasted and sexually-playful Samoans, on Gilbert Herdt's homoerotic Sambia, or the utterly dreadful and appalling sexual practices of Ronald Berndt's Kogu of New Guinea, wishes to bring to your attention the sexual practices of yet two more cultures, exotic indeed, and to contrast them.

The first culture, which I will term "Rube World," was reported on in the 1994 University of Chicago and National Opinion Research Center study entitled, the Social Organization of Sexuality. Here we find a normative world of relative sexual restraint and healthy expression.

Based on a survey of 3,500 adults, this study showed that sex with strangers, the casual affair, is rare; no more than 4% of dates that begin in a bar end up in a serious relationship. Only 2% of couples who engaged in sex in the first two days of their relationship went on to marriage.

and only 10% of marriages arise from having sex in the first month. In fact, 25% of long-term partners knew each other for a year before having sex. The casual pickup, while exciting, proved emotionally sterile and a dead-end.

Moreover, sex in this culture was not with exotic strangers. What the researchers termed "Social Similars" comprise 90% of all sexual relationships racially, and 84% of relationships are between persons of the same educational background.

Further work by Dr. Tom Smith of the General Social Survey, in a Kaiser foundation report on this same culture, showed that only 3% of adults reported having an affair during the past year, with only 16% of adults reporting ever having had an affair. Indeed, lifetime, 90% of wives and over 75% of husbands are faithfully monogamous.

In fact, so sedate and self-disciplined was this culture that 89% of those surveyed had either one or no sexual partner in the previous year; 72% said they had one or no partner in the previous 5 years. Only 5.8% of all couples were living together outside of marriage, and of these, 60% would later marry.

Homosexuality constituted roughly 1 to 2% of women, and between 3 and 5% of men, depending on the definition of the category. It is worth noting, in light of the recent celebrity of ABC's "Ellen," that more individuals in this culture have never had a sexual partner at all. Frequency of intercourse, in case you're wondering, remains at about once a week.

Overall, say the Chicago sociologists, this culture is "not as obsessed with sex in (their) private lives as (they) are in popular culture."

The other culture, in contrast, I will term "Tube World." It turns out to be almost the polar opposite of our first case, and is replete with libidinous ribaldry and the crudely grotesque. It is a

place that features incest, homoeroticism, sadism and masochism, rape, bestiality, and a preoccupation with the alimentary organs and functions. It is the culture of "Hypersex," and it is none other than contemporary American prime time television.

But the contrast I am drawing here is not really between two separate cultures either in space or time. For my first instance, Rube World, is likewise familiar ground. In fact, it too is contemporary America. But it is life in America as lived by real people, as opposed to the fantasy figures of television. Moreover, it is the American life as lived by a generation rapidly being displaced by one more consonant in its values with Tube World's mores.

Consider that the largest social change in sexual practices found by the Chicago researchers occurred among young American white women. While today, as well as in the past, roughly 60% of American males have experienced intercourse premaritally, women have shown a dramatic rise. Of women born before 1910, only 12% reported premarital intercourse. However, for women born between 1965 and 1970, the figure skyrockets to over 51%. Much of this change is very recent. Even as late as 1970, only 26% of Caucasian teens had experienced teen-age sex; while today, the figure stands at nearly twice that.

That is, we find ourselves living simultaneously in Two Americas: not rich and poor, but eroticized and normal. Increasingly, I am arguing here today, young people are being socialized in their sexual behavior by the values and example of Tube World, which presents for them sexual scripts and templates for their own future enactment.

I have suggested that studying the cultural symbolism of sexuality and its practice, approved and disapproved, is to be involved in the very wellsprings of a culture's present, and its future. I became increasingly interested in the disparity I saw opening before me, between the

actual lives of Americans as lived, and the cultural representations of those lives in our dominant symbolic medium, the television. What we have before us today are two worlds -- one real, one virtual and imaginary, with the boundary between them increasingly porous, and unclear. In all things, the world of TV is heightened, misleading, wonderful, and to be preferred, leading us in the direction of what the critic Lionel Trilling called the philosophy of "egalitarian hedonism."

Social science data show that our sexual lives are simply at far remove from the doings of our virtual counterparts, our dramatic caricatures, found on TV. Television presents sexuality in a manner that is not only pervasive, it is treated as an exotic imperative, ungovernable, lusty, smoldering, involving impossibly perfect sexual athletes who are nearly Olympian in their beauty and bodily enhancement. Further, it offers their behavior as normative, natural, expected, condoned, and even to be encouraged.

Has the world of television prime time become more sexual over time? According to media content analysis conducted by the Center for Media and Public Affairs (CMPA), prior to 1969, fewer than one instance of extramarital sex was coded for every thirty shows. During the early 1970's, extramarital sex cropped up on about one of every eight shows. Since the mid 1970's, the ratio has dropped to one in six, and continues to narrow.

And not coincidentally, standards of sexual morality have changed just as dramatically. Prior to 1970, 38% of the shows coded by CMPA presented extramarital sex as wrong. The proportion dropped to only 7% after 1970. In the 1970's and 1980's, 41% of prime time shows coded viewed recreational sex as acceptable without qualification, and 33% made no moral judgment. Currently, 94% of sexual encounters presented in soap operas involve unmarried individuals.

I am not saying that television alone is responsible for all of sexual change. We find ourselves bequeathed enormous, and unprecedented social changes, as we find them everywhere coupled with a novel human tool; television. Of course, correlation does not equal causation; TV has not done all the evil deeds we lament all by its lonesome, nor has it taken us against our will some place of degeneracy that we did not wish to go. And yet, sometime in our recent past, over the space of the last two generations, something novel happened in virtually every home in America. An alien arrived in our midst, switched on in the average home for over 7 hours a day, emitting flavored radiation and targeted at our children.

According to a study from the Center for Media and Public Affairs, 220 prime time scenes that dealt with sex between unmarried partners, fewer than one in ten concluded that having sex would be wrong or inappropriate for any reason. In two out of three, the script explicitly endorses the desirability of the sexual relations, be they adolescent heterosexual encounters or teenage lesbianism.

A 1987 study by Planned Parenthood Federation concluded that 65,000 sexual references a year are broadcast on television during the prime afternoon and evening hours. That includes hourly averages of ten sexual innuendos and between one and two references to intercourse and "deviant or discouraged sexual practices." The study concluded that the average American television viewer now sees nearly 14,000 instances of sexual material every year.

One intrepid team of researchers found a sexual act or reference every four minutes during prime time. Sex comes easily and early on TV, where Jack gives a first date come-on to Wally in "Love and War" with the line, "Your condom or mine?"

When "Moonlightings" David Addison sees Maddie on her hands and knees, he asks, "You

looking for something or have you finally come to your senses?" The "St. Elsewhere" writers tried to name a character "Connie Lingus" but NBC censors forced them to call her "Constance."

Incredibly, NBC executive Perry Simon explains that such dialogue "makes the audience feel it is witty and clever."

On "Flying Blind," (FOX network), one interchange has a male character glance at a clock after a sexual episode. When his mate expresses her satisfaction, he states he now knows why his tongue feels like he tried to pick up a Buick.

Subsequently, in a scene putatively involving his own mother and father during a word-game, the character spells out the word "vulva." His mother thinks this an interesting term, but his father expresses what is supposed to be amusing ignorance of female anatomy.

By the time an average high school student graduates, he or she will have been exposed to over 15,000 hours of such television programming, in contrast to only 11,000 hours of classroom instruction -- "Educational TV," indeed.

For the adolescent being socialized, tube world is offered as the normative space for their yearning and aspiration, the measure against which they should hold themselves. The disparity between the lived life of marriage, attachment, fidelity, commitment, and satisfaction, versus the imagined, commodified, and insisently grasping world of ceaseless and polymorphous gratification expressed on TV, serves to establish a space of disillusionment, and a preference for the virtual over the real. The young are be lead to a yearning for the digitized shadow land of fulfillment as superior to the actual world of consequence.

Does TV just reflect what is going on already in the wider society? Or does it actively solicit? In my experience as a parent, I have watched TV target my children as aggressively as "Joe

Camel" is said to do. It seeks to reach, grasp, and transform the emerging youth by placing inducements for "upcoming shows" that are designed to be the most suggestive and provocative aspects. In this sense, television proselytizes sexuality, and becomes an aggressive advocate with powerful marketing tools at its disposal. Commercials and "trailers" are all too often strategically placed landmines of inducement for hedonism.

We will be told by many studio executives that programming only reflects what the public clamors for; but then why do they reach out and grasp my daughter, and seduce her with the steamiest scenes, and then tell her conspiratorially where to find them without my knowing? This is not the parent's friend.

We must finally realize that television is a remarkable cultural tool; indeed, a Promethean fire, which is at the service of two masters: profit, or commodification, and moral crusades of the intellectual elite who dominate the medium. Today the industry must face the growing fear on the part of parents that our children are as straw, beneath which we hold this approaching flame.

Increasingly, the norms of Tube World reflect not the values of most Americans, but those of a distinctive subset of Americans. In the words of my colleague Dr. Robert Lichter of CMPA, "The fictional world of prime time can be sharply at odds with public sentiment. More often, it tries to guide middle American tastes in the direction of intellectual trends emanating from New York and Los Angeles."

Robert Lichter's analyses also show a new development in television's use of sexuality, by demonstrating that contemporary programming has incorporated controversial material into more salable formats, and by tackling "social issues" with an added sexuality component and an increased focus on the social pathologies of dysfunctional families.

As Robert Lichter has written, "Increasingly, contemporary and political issues are introduced not only to comment on real-world controversies, but also to identify characters and to provide intellectual cachet. In this way, social advocacy and entertainment are mutating into a kind of "advotainment" that integrates commentary into entertainment packages in a more sophisticated and complex fashion..."

This leads to what Dr. Lichter calls "The most striking feature of the current prime time landscape," the sheer incongruity of earnest social criticism juxtaposed against crude dialogue and sleazy storylines. He quotes one critic who noted that "There are fewer oxymorons as delightful as a Hollywood producer on a moral crusade." Few such developments better express what Lichter terms "The contradiction between preachiness and profit seeking that expresses Hollywood's moral sensibility."

It is time for the television industry, commanding one of the most powerful tools for shaping the human personality the world has seen, to accept the responsibility that comes with this power. Self-governance and an internalized sense of artistic responsibility need not mean the abandonment of creative and dramatic explorations of all dimensions of human experience, including the sexual. But until the industry finds a way to restore a balance between their forces of profit-seeking and social advocacy with the values and needs of mainstream American parents, they will risk more and more calls for government intervention.

No civil libertarian doubts but what this presents a grave risk to freedoms of expression. By acting responsibly on their own, the television industry in fact holds the power to protect for all Americans those liberties of expression upon which a free society depends.

**Statement of Jane D. Brown, Ph.D., before the Subcommittee on
Government, Management, Restructuring and the District of Columbia**

Senate Governmental Affairs Committee

May 8, 1997

I've been studying the effects of television on children, especially adolescents, for more than 20 years. I believe that television and other media today are important sources of sexual information for our children. Unfortunately, too frequently, the sexual information offered is not what our children need to make responsible, healthy decisions about their own sexual behavior.

The media are important sex educators in this culture because our traditional channels of sexual education are offering our children too little too late.

In a recent poll one-half of the 13 to 15 year olds said they had learned the most about sex from their parents and school, but the other half said they'd learned the most from their friends and entertainment.

In contrast to the just-say-no-till-marriage prohibitions most frequently offered by parents and schools, the media offer an accessible and compelling portrait of sexual behavior.

The current portrait of sex provided by the media can be characterized in three phrases: No commitment, no contraceptives, no consequences. Sex on television is frequent, unrealistic, and potentially harmful to the health and well-being of our children.

Recent studies of the sexual content of television have found that:

In the hour we used to call the family hour (8 to 9 p.m.) on television, three-fourths of the shows on the four major networks contain some sexual content. In the average hour, you will see eight and one-half sexual interactions.

Most of these interactions are only kissing and flirting, but another study of situation comedies in prime-time (8-11 p.m.) found that almost half of the sexual behavior fit the legal definition of sexual harassment ("unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature").

If a child watched only the family hour for a year, she would see more than 3,000 sexual interactions. This is more than three times as many as she would have seen 20 years ago.

In the shows teens watch most often, one in every four interactions between characters are about sex.

We know that sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV are now epidemic among teenagers, but on prime time a viewer will see 25 instances of sexual behavior before he or she sees one mention or depiction of the use of a contraceptive or the need to defend against pregnancy or disease. Despite the frequent and unprotected sexual activity, babies and small children rarely appear on television.

On television, real men are always ready for sex; women's bodies are sexual objects to be ogled and lusted after, and sex is a form of recreation, or is linked with violence. Rape is the second most frequently discussed sexual activity on soap operas.

Although the most recent study of the family hour found that most sexual interactions were between people in established relationships, on soap operas, characters who are not married to each other are three to six times more likely to have sex than characters who are married to each other.

Does this content make a difference in the lives of our children? Currently, we have less documentation about effects of television viewing of sexual behavior than we do about other kinds of portrayals, especially violence. But I believe we can draw from the strong evidence we have about the negative and direct effects of violence viewing. The same mechanisms are at work. The research is clear that the frequent and unpunished violence on television causes increased aggression in young viewers. It also leaves children afraid of the world around them.

We know less from research about how the portrayals of sexuality affect viewers. But I believe it is reasonable to assume, given the frequent portrayals, the lack of negative consequences, and the lack of alternative models and sources of information, that television and other media play an important role in the sexual socialization of children and adolescents.

Recent studies suggest that even young children understand the sexual conversation on television, and a few studies have found a link between exposure to sexy television and early initiation of sexual intercourse. An experimental study found that teens exposed to music videos were more likely to agree that premarital sex is OK than teens who didn't see the music videos.

More research is needed to show to what extent the sexual content in the media is used and contributes to patterns of sexual behavior. This is difficult research to do, however, given our reluctance to talk with children about sex.

In the meantime, the television industry should be asked to examine their standards for portrayals of sexuality. Since the media are including such frequent portrayals of sexual behavior, let's make sure these portrayals contribute to rather than detract from the sexual health of our youth.

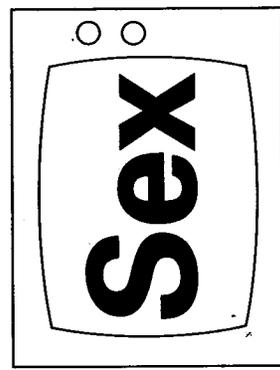
I am a member of the board of an organization based here in Washington called Advocates for Youth. They have an office in Los Angeles that works with script writers and producers to develop more responsible sexual content in television, films and music. They've developed a list of suggestions for what they consider responsible sexual content. This is an excellent set of suggestions that could be used as a starting point for a code of standards that the television industry might adopt.

The standards suggest that television might contribute to the sexual health of our children if it:

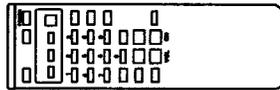
- recognized sex as a healthy and natural part of life
- showed that not all relationships result in sex
- discussed or showed the consequences of unprotected sex
- showed that the use of contraceptives is essential
- recognized and respected the ability to say no
- avoided linking violence and sex
- showed rape as a crime of violence, not one of passion
- encouraged parent and child conversations about sex

Television could be an ally in our common commitment to create a world in which men and women are respected for their unique abilities and contributions rather than their number of sexual partners.

Sex, Kids and the Family Hour
A Three-Part Study of Sexual Content on Television



Overview



The impact of television on young people's lives is commanding increased attention from parents, teachers, lawmakers and the entertainment industry itself — and for good reason. After all, the average child watches three to four hours a day of television, more time than he or she spends in the classroom, or in any other activity besides sleeping. And we know from decades of academic research — as well as from common sense and personal experience — that television can influence children's attitudes and behaviors.

Indeed, concern about what children see on television has prompted a flurry of activity over the past year: the passage of legislation requiring television sets to include a "v-chip" so parents can block unwanted content; an agreement by the television industry to develop a system for rating television programs regarding their sexual and violent content; new rules requiring TV stations to provide a minimum of three hours a week of educational TV for kids; and efforts to persuade television programmers to reserve the first hour of prime time for shows that are suitable for all ages — the return of the "family hour."

In the series of studies presented in this report, we focus on the content of television programming about sexual activity and sexual relationships, examining what messages are communicated in the so-called "family hour," the first hour of prime time broadcast television (8-9 p.m. in most areas of the country). More children watch TV during this time period than on Saturday mornings or weekday afternoons. In fact, seventeen out of the top twenty-five programs watched by children ages 2-11 are aired during prime time; on any given evening, more than a million children under the age of 11 watch shows such as *Beverly Hills 90210*, *Roseanne*, *The Nanny* or *Friends*.

We chose to look at the kinds of messages about sex that children are getting from television because the consequences of sexual activity can be so significant in a young person's life. Each year more than 700,000 teenage girls have unplanned pregnancies, and millions of young people become infected with sexually-transmitted diseases. More than 2,500 teens have AIDS, and experts believe that at least 20,000 adults now infected with the AIDS virus likely contracted the disease during their teen years.

Each year more than 700,000 teenage girls have unplanned pregnancies, and millions of young people become infected with sexually-transmitted diseases.

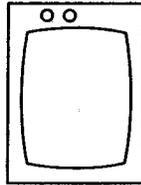
This report summarizes the data collected in three separate studies commissioned by the Kaiser Family Foundation and Children Now about sexual messages on television and the impact of those messages on children and families.

First, a content analysis documents the nature of the sexual messages on shows that air during TV's family hour. Second, a series of focus groups with children ages 8-13 record their responses to family hour programs containing sexual content. And lastly, a national survey reflects parental opinion about television's family hour and the issue of sex on TV, focusing especially on the views of parents of younger children, as well as opinions from children themselves.



Content Analysis

Sexual Messages on Television's Family Hour



The content analysis looked at the amount and nature of sexual content in television programs broadcast during the family hour on the major commercial networks. The goal of the study was not simply to count the number of sexual interactions, but also to examine the context of sexual depictions and the nature of the messages communicated about sex. Special attention was given to identifying and analyzing messages about sexual risks or responsibilities. To gain a historical context, a sample of family hour programs from the 1976 and 1986 seasons was analyzed for comparative purposes. In order to provide a snapshot of the most recent family hour programming, a week's worth of shows from the fall 1996 season were also analyzed and reported on separately.



Television programs broadcast during the family hour contain a significant amount of sexual content, far more than was broadcast during the previous two decades.

- Three out of four family hour programs on the networks (75%) contain some sexual content. By comparison, 65% of shows in the same time period in 1986, and 43% of shows from 1976 contained sexual content.
- The study measured two different types of sexual content: "talk about sex" and "sexual behavior." Both have increased substantially over the past 20 years. Sexual behavior, which encompasses overt physical actions ranging from kissing to sexual intercourse, increased the most dramatically. Today 61% of family hour shows contain sexual behavior, up from 46% in 1986 and 26% in 1976.
- Since much of the sexual content on television can be minor in nature, the study also examined what proportion of family hour programs included scenes in which there was a primary emphasis on sex, meaning that the sexual content was the most important



A few shows do a good job of emphasizing the risks and responsibilities of sexual activity.

- A handful of shows not only raise issues regarding sexual risks and responsibilities, but actually make those issues the primary themes of their programs. In 1996, 6% of all shows with sexual content had an overall emphasis on these topics, such as waiting until a relationship matures, before having sex, or pursuing efforts to prevent STDs or unwanted pregnancy when sexually active.
- In both the 1976 and 1986 samples, only one scene even mentioned any topic about risks or responsibilities.

Overall, the vast majority of sexual content in the family hour is not accompanied by any message about sexual risks or responsibilities.

- Just 9% of the scenes that included sexual content in 1996 had any mention of issues relating to sexual risks or responsibilities, such as condoms, abstinence, abortion, AIDS or STDs.
- None of the examples of sexual intercourse were linked with any discussion of risk or responsibility, nor were precautions depicted.

aspect of the scene. This analysis revealed that 30% of family hour programs in 1996 featured scenes with a primary emphasis on sex, up from 23% in 1986 and 9% in 1976.

- There were an average of 8.5 sexual interactions per hour of programming during the family hour in 1996, with roughly one third of these involving talk about sex and two thirds involving physical behaviors. This represents a marked increase over levels observed in previous years; the overall amount of sexual interactions increased 118% since 1986 (3.9 per hour) and 270% since 1976 (2.3 per hour).

Most of the sexual behavior on the family hour is relatively modest, although there were several notable exceptions.

- Of the overt physical actions observed in family hour television programming in the 1996 season, the most common action was flirtation, followed closely by kissing. Collectively, these two categories accounted for 84% of all sexual behaviors observed.
- However, during the three weeks of programming sampled in the winter of 1996, 15 cases of sexual intercourse were either depicted or implied.

Most of the sexual behavior featured during the family hour occurs between characters who have an established relationship with one another.

- Only 6% of all sexual behavior during the family hour involved characters who had just met or were on a first date.

- With respect to the instances of implied or depicted sexual intercourse, three out of four involved characters who had an established relationship with one another.

A small proportion of the sexual interactions occurred between teenage characters; these interactions were generally modest in nature and were more likely to be accompanied by a message of sexual responsibility.

- Twelve percent of all sexual interactions observed in the 1996 program sample involved teenagers. In terms of frequency, sexual interactions that included a teenager occurred an average of once an hour.

- The interactions involving teenagers were almost entirely limited to either talk about sex, flirtation or kissing.

- Almost a third of the sexual interactions involving teens (29%) were presented in the context of shows that were judged to include an overall emphasis on the need for sexual responsibility.

Snapshot — The New Fall Season

In order to take a quick look at the most current season of programming, a one week sample of family hour shows from October 1996 was analyzed. In this sample, the amount of sexual content remained high — in fact, there were an average of 9.4 sexual interactions per hour, compared to 8.5 in the previous season. There were two instances in which sexual intercourse was implied or depicted during family hour programs. Only 3% of the scenes with sexual content had any mention of issues regarding sexual risks or responsibilities, compared to 9% in the previous season. Once again, none of the examples involving sexual intercourse addressed any risk or responsibility concerns.



Only 9% of the scenes with sexual content made any mention of the risks or responsibilities of sexual activity.



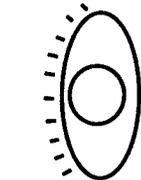
Methodology

This study was conducted by Dale Kunkel, Professor of Communication at the University of California, Santa Barbara, with assistance from Kirstie Cope and Carolyn Colvin. A total of 122 hours of television programming encompassing 182 shows broadcast over a 20-year period was examined. The primary focus of study was the programming presented on a regular basis in the winter of 1996. The four largest networks (ABC, CBS, Fox, and NBC) were included in the sample. Three randomly selected episodes of each regularly scheduled program were recorded in January and March, 1996.

To compare how sexual messages have been presented on television over time, a sample of past programming from 1976 and 1986 was also obtained. These samples were limited to one episode of each program scheduled during the 8-9 p.m. time period on the three major commercial broadcast networks in existence at that time. For the "snapshot" of programming from the fall of 1996, one episode of each regularly scheduled show airing during the first hour of prime time was recorded in October, 1996. The fall programming was analyzed and reported independently in the "snapshot" section of this report.

Focus Groups

Children Respond to Sexual Content on TV



In order to get a sense of how children interpret the sexual content on television, a series of focus groups with children ages 8-13 were convened. The children viewed a selection of clips containing sexual content from programs that aired in 1996 during the family hour. The children were separated by gender and by age group (8-10 year-olds and 11-13 year-olds). In some instances, parents watched their children through closed circuit TV.

Key Findings

Most of the older children — and at least some of the youngest — understood the sexual content, even the jokes and innuendos about sex.

Although some of the sexual content went over their heads, much of it did not. Even in the groups of 8-10 year olds, some of the children understood a joke in *The Nanny* about Fran losing her "virgin...airlines ticket" to be about her virginity, and understood that a reference to whipped cream in *Jeff Foxworthy* was about a man intending to "squirt whipped cream all over [his wife] and lick it off."

Most of the children understood and enjoyed the programs with clear, positive messages.

• After watching a segment of *Meatloaf Shores* about a high school girl who thinks she might be pregnant, the children said the message they got was that "if you're worried about your future, you shouldn't have sex," and "Even condoms aren't 100%," repeating almost verbatim some of the lines in the show.

• After viewing a clip from *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air* in which a teenage girl is deciding whether or not to have sex for the first time, the children said her older brother was worried "whether she was too young to have sex," and was concerned about her "getting AIDS" or "getting pregnant," two issues that were mentioned on the program. They felt the show was about "not having sex until you're ready." Many of the children mentioned that particular episode as their favorite because "it taught me something," or because "she stood up for what she believed in. She wasn't ready to have sex and she told him."

Not surprisingly, shows with mixed messages left the children confused.

• One clip from *Beverly Hills 90210* was about a group of college students participating in a 24-hour "sex out" to raise



Methodology

The focus groups were conducted by the public opinion research firm Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin and Associates. A total of eight focus groups were conducted among children 8-13 years old, in Chicago, Illinois and San Jose, California. The children were separated by gender and by age group (8-10 year-olds and 11-13 year-olds). All of the groups had a mix of ethnicity and urban/suburban residency. The parents of the younger groups in Chicago, and of all groups in San Jose, watched their children through closed circuit TV and spoke after the sessions with the moderators.

During the focus groups, the children viewed a videotape of clips from programs that aired in 1996 during the family hour. The content shown to the children reflected the range of approaches to sexual content found during family hour programs. The shows chosen were by no means either the most graphic in their depiction of sex or the most direct in their sex-related dialogue. The tape included an over-representation of programs that raised issues regarding sexual risks or responsibilities. Each of the clips came from shows with more than a million viewers under the age of 11.

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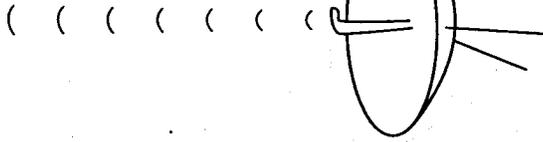
awareness about abstinence and AIDS. Much of the show was about a female character trying to get her boyfriend to break his 24-hour vow of celibacy. The children understood that the show was about "abstinence," and "not having sex," but noted that "it still sounded like they all wanted to have sex." One young boy, when asked what the message of the show was, said "They were saying not having sex is hard, but it's still...they weren't saying anything, really."

Parents expressed concern about some of the sexual messages on television, but also found TV to be a good way to broach important issues with their children.

- Some parents appeared frustrated about television encouraging their kids to grow up too soon. As one mom said, "You do want to be able to wash the dishes for a second or so and not worry about him learning about sex before you want him to."
- Many parents seemed to feel that television could be a useful ally in helping them bring up important subjects with their kids. One parent commented that TV shows "teach my daughter something. She gets to see different ways of handling situations, and I think that's a good thing." Another parent noted, "It's a good thing, when the topics do come up. I know for my daughter, that's when she'll ask a question."

Public Opinion Survey

Parents Speak Up About Television Today



In order to help determine how parents feel about television today, a nationwide survey questioned parents about how they think sexual content in the family hour is impacting their families. Some of their children (ages 10-12 only) were also surveyed about their television viewing.

Parents' Concerns

The amount of sexual content on TV worries parents as much as, if not more than, violent content.

- Forty-three percent of parents of children ages 8-12 say they worry a "great deal" about the amount of sexual content that their children are exposed to when watching television, and an additional 28 percent say they are at least "somewhat" concerned. By comparison, 39 percent say they worry a "great deal" about violent content on television, and 36 percent say they are at least "somewhat" concerned.

Children often watch TV alone, and sometimes watch shows that their parents don't know about.

- More than two-thirds (68%) of parents of children ages 8-12 say they are able to watch television with

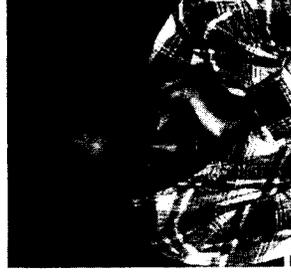
their children at most half of the time. Although most — 72 percent — say they "usually" or "always" know what their kids are watching, this may not actually be the case. In more than a quarter of households (28%) the parents think they know more often what their child is watching than the child says is the case.

Parents give TV some credit for presenting actual issues responsibly.

- Thirty percent of parents of children ages 8-12 say TV generally portrays sexual issues in an "informative or socially-responsible way," and 31 percent say this is true at least some of the time. However, another third (31%) of parents say television "hardly ever" portrays sexual content in a useful manner.

Parents see a role for television in shaping children's views on actual issues in a positive way.

- Many parents hold out hope that television could play a more positive role in helping children learn about making responsible decisions about sex. 35 percent say television could have "a lot" of influence, and 43 percent say at least "a little." Only 21 percent say there is no role for television in teaching children about sexual responsibility.



Sexual content on TV is a chance for some families to talk about tough issues.

- Thirty-eight percent of parents of 8-12 year-olds say that when they see something "inappropriate" on TV, they talk with their child about it. Forty-five percent say their child has at some point asked a question about sex, AIDS, or some other sensitive issue because of something they saw on TV.

Although many parents aren't familiar with the term "family hour," the vast majority support the concept.

- Although a majority (60%) of parents of younger children have never heard of the "family hour" with regard to television, three-quarters think that during the first hour of television programming the networks should only broadcast shows that are appropriate for all ages. Even among Americans with no children under the age of 18 currently in the household, 70 percent say they think this should be the networks' policy. Only 26 percent of parents of 8-12 year-olds think there are enough shows on now that are appropriate for their child; 72 percent say there are not enough.

Methodology

The survey was designed by the Kaiser Family Foundation, Children Now, and Princeton Survey Research Associates (PSRA), and conducted by PSRA between October 3-29, 1996. The results presented here are based on a national random-sample telephone survey of 421 parents with children ages 8-12. The margin of error for the parents is plus or minus 5 percent. In addition, 164 children of these parents, ages 10-12, were also interviewed by telephone for this survey. The margin of error is plus or minus 8 percent for this sample.

A second national random-sample survey of 1,010 adults, ages 18 and older, was interviewed by telephone by PSRA between October 30 - November 3, 1996 on additional questions pertaining to television programming today. Included in this second survey was a sub-sample of 167 parents of children between the ages of 8-12. The margin of error for the national sample is plus or minus 3 percent. The margin of error for the sub-sample of parents of children ages 8-12 in this survey is plus or minus 8 percent.



Conclusion

The three studies summarized in this report offer a wealth of new information concerning sexual content on television, and how that content impacts children and families.

The studies reveal that there is an abundance of sexual content on television shows that air during the early evening hours, often termed the "family hour," a time that is particularly popular with younger children. They also indicate that while some programs mention the risks and responsibilities of sexual activity, most of the sexual content on television does not include any emphasis on these themes.

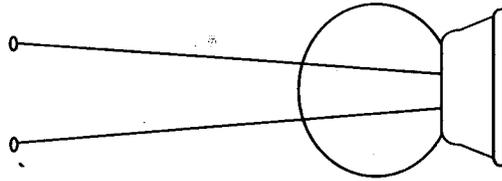
Although more research needs to be done to understand how children are affected by the sexual content on television, the focus groups reported on here indicate that children appear to be picking up the sexual information presented to them on television — taking away confused messages when programs send mixed signals and clearer messages when shows offer a more straightforward perspective. Children appear to appreciate the positive, responsible messages some shows offer them.

With regard to parents, both the focus groups and the surveys indicate that the vast majority are deeply concerned about the amount of sexual content on television, particularly during the family hour. Many are especially concerned that they cannot always monitor their children's viewing as closely as they feel they should, particularly during these early evening hours when household chores beckon. On the other hand, most parents see a role for television as a communicator of messages about sexual risks and responsibilities and some report having experienced the positive benefits of having television programs help them raise important issues about sex with their children.

As the public debate about the family hour, the v-chip and a TV rating system intensifies, it is our hope that these studies will help inform and enlighten concerned parents, policymakers, television industry leaders, and young people themselves.

Acknowledgments

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Sex and the Mass Media

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S-E-X. Not many three letter words, save perhaps "God" and "yes," are as good at capturing our attention and triggering the imagination. Sex sells, and mass media producers know it. Thomas Edison understood the magnetism of sex when he projected "The Kiss" (originally shot for the Kinetoscope in 1896) on the large screen, exciting the "first wave" of moralistic outrage at movie romance (Mast, 1981). Warner Brothers knew the power of sexual attraction when they paired Bogey with Bacall. Ed Sullivan and Elvis knew, too, and so do the creators of MTV.

What these media figures didn't know, however, and what social scientists still haven't definitively figured out, is what effect, beyond attracting audiences or selling products, the media's love affair with sex and romance has on the people who watch and listen. Does the talk about and the images of love, sex and relationships promote irresponsible sexual behavior? Do they encourage unplanned and unwanted pregnancy? Are the media responsible for teenagers having sex earlier, more frequently and outside of marriage?

The answer to all these questions is a qualified "yes." Qualified, because even though we know a fair amount about the ubiquity and explicitness of sexual content in the media, we still have only sparse research on the effects of sexual media content per se. The perceived sensitivity of sex as a research topic and a focus on adolescents and television to the exclusion of other age groups and other media have restricted the kind of research that has been done. Still, what we do know about the effects of sexual media content, as well as the larger body of media effects research on such topics as violence and anti-social behavior, suggests that the media do play an important part in shaping Americans' sexual beliefs, attitudes and behavior.

Although they are not the only source of sexual information available to Americans, the mass media are a compelling one. Mass media channels are already numerous and expanding rapidly, thanks to cable, satellite, the Internet, laser and CD-ROM technologies. The media menu is varied, accessible, and affordable. Television, movies, music and music videos, and magazines capitalize on topics considered taboo in other social situations, thus often making sexual media fare more attractive, especially for younger consumers. On the other hand, professionals associated with other institutions such as churches, schools, and the work place rarely discuss sexual intimacy except to counsel people of all ages to abstain unless married. Although a majority of teens rank parents and friends as their most important sex educators, almost one in five say they have learned the most about sex from "entertainment" (Gibbs, 1993).

Here we argue that the media should be considered an intrinsic part of the sexual development of Americans. The media serve as windows on mainstream cultural norms, values and mores. In most media, sexual behavior is frequent, often with unmarried partners, and rarely with any concern for consequences or use of contraceptives. Women in the media rarely get pregnant, and when they do they either have the baby or a convenient miscarriage, but almost never an abortion. Although it is tempting to cast the media as villains and focus solely on the negative effects such portrayals of sexuality may have, we argue that the media, if they so choose, could be allies in the cause of responsible sexuality. In fact, there are already encouraging signs that some members of the media are taking on that role. Television writers and producers who attended a "Soap Opera Summit" held last fall in Los Angeles came away with their eyes opened. Most agreed that day-time soap operas do not tell a realistic story about unwanted pregnancy, many vowed to do something about it, and some shows like "General Hospital" and "One Life to

Live" already have incorporated episodes that directly address the issue of birth control, and more specifically condom use (Hinsey, 1995).

In this paper, we review studies focusing on sexual media content and the relatively sparse research focusing explicitly on its effect on sexual attitudes and/or behavior, and briefly examine more general media effects studies that may add to our understanding. We pay particular attention to research on the media's role in agenda-setting, cultivation and cognitive social learning. These three theoretical approaches have been particularly productive in explaining how:

- the media affect what issues people believe are important (agenda-setting) and what aspects of those issues are most salient (framing);
- the media's portrayal of the world becomes reality, particularly for heavy television users (cultivation);
- attractive media role models and engaging story lines provide scripts for individual behavior depending on a variety of developmental and socio-cultural factors (cognitive social learning).

We highlight some successful and not-so-successful public health campaigns, discussing what does and does not work when using the media to promote healthy practices. We conclude with a discussion of implications and possibilities for future research, policy and media initiatives.

Sex in the media

"TV, movies and magazines made it seem so simple. Everyone was having sex, and all sex had a happy ending." This is what one young woman remembered thinking about sex before she "lost her virginity" (Trafford, 1994).

Regardless of age or gender, all but the rarest of Americans are exposed to sexual images, allusions and talk in the media on an almost daily basis. Bumper stickers command "just do it," sexually attractive models beckon from billboards, and radio and television talk shows showcase sexual anomalies and perversions.

Television soap operas, prime time series, movies, music lyrics and men's, women's and teen magazines draw heavily on sexual themes.

Television

Americans watch a lot of television:

- More American homes have working television sets than telephones, and the television is on about seven hours per day in the average home (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 1994).
- About one-third of Americans' free time is spent watching television, more than the next 10 most popular leisure activities combined (Gerbner, 1993).
- Most children spend more time with TV than they do in school (Workman, 1989). Teenagers spend about two hours per day watching television (Wartella, 1994), even though they show a growing preference for music as they get older (Arnett, 1992; Larson, Kubey & Colletti, 1989).
- More than three-fourths of households in America now have video cassette recorders (VCRs) and more than two-thirds have cable TV; teens in homes with VCRs and/or cable spend more hours per day watching television than teens from homes without VCRs or cable (Lin, 1993).
- African-Americans watch 50% more television than other groups (U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, 1991), and children and teenagers from low-income households watch more TV than other children (American Psychological Association, 1993).

Exposure or "time with" measures tell only a fraction of the story, however.

The more important questions are: What do Americans see on the screen? Do they believe what they see? How do they interpret what they see? These questions are getting harder to answer given the growing array of programming from which savvy viewers can choose. The double whammy of new and "emerging" networks

(CNN, WB, UNB) and television technologies already have taken a sizable chunk out of the major networks' share of the television market, and other players are eager to enter the competition for audience attention. In Fall 1992, 71% of U.S. households were tuned to a network program during prime time (7 to 10 p.m. central time Monday through Saturday, and 6 to 10 p.m. on Sunday); two years later ABC, CBS and NBC's hold had slipped to a 57% share, according to the Nielsen Media Index. Meanwhile, upstart Fox, programming only 15 of 22 prime-time hours, had grabbed a 12% audience share during the 1994-95 ratings season; UPN had a 7 share; and the WB network had a 3 share (Williams, 1995). The message, for those interested in media effects, is that even the television audience is increasingly fragmented. It will be increasingly important to tie possible effects to particular kinds of media diets that may vary significantly by age, gender, race and ethnicity.

Nevertheless, it is important to consider what kind of content is available. Content analyses suggest a remarkable consistency across television programming. Anecdotally, we know that televised media sex today is far more explicit than it was in the days of Ozzie and Harriett's twin beds (Childers & Brown, 1989). Recent content analyses confirm expectations.

Prime-Time

The most recent comparative study of specific sexual behaviors during prime time on the major broadcast networks (ABC, NBC, CBS and Fox) found an average of 10 instances of sexual behavior per hour (Lowry & Shidler, 1993), a slight decrease in the overall 'sex rate' since a similar study was conducted four years earlier (Lowry & Towies, 1989). The drop, however, occurred primarily in the least explicit sexual category—physical suggestiveness—and was offset by a 50% increase in the rate of heterosexual intercourse, defined as talk about, implied, or actual physical portrayals of intercourse.

When the sex behavior in promos for upcoming shows was added, the rate of sexual behaviors per hour increased from about 10 to more than 15, painting a picture more in line with public perceptions and supporting the authors' conviction that the networks frequently use "sex as bait" to increase their ratings (Lowry & Shidler, 1993, p. 635).

More alarming, given current rates of STDs and unplanned pregnancy, analysis showed that few programs ever mentioned the adverse consequences that may result from having sex — references to pregnancy prevention and STD prevention both showed declines from the already low rates in the earlier study. Thus, a typical viewer would see about 25 instances of sexual behavior for every one instance of preventive behavior or comment. And, even then, the message may not be the most desirable — all the references to STDs or pregnancy prevention coded by Lowry and Shidler were in a joking context.

Other studies of television have focused on more specific kinds of sexual behavior. One found that 40 percent of the sexual behaviors observed in prime-time comedies fit the legal definition of sexual harassment, often to the accompaniment of a laugh track. Although the sexual harassment rarely led to a successful sexual encounter, it didn't lead to social sanctions either. Typically, the recipient — female or male — simply ignored or quietly rejected the unwelcome sexual advances (Skill, Robinson & Kinsella, 1994)

Another study looked at the content of 'sex talk' in shows most watched by children and adolescents. Working with Nielsen's top ten rankings for children (2-11) and adolescents (12-17) during the 1992-93 broadcast season, Ward (in press) found that one in four of the interactions coded per episode conveyed some sort of sexual message. Some shows like "Blossom" and "Martin" talked about sex 50 percent of the time. The most frequently occurring types of messages equated masculinity with being sexual or commented on women's bodies as sexual objects.

The picture of sexuality presented was one of sex as recreation, where competition and game-playing are givens and the prize is physically attractive. In the three weeks of programming studied, only two of the ten shows, "Beverly Hills, 90210" and "Blossom," included messages about sexual responsibility.

Soap Operas

Traditionally even steamier than prime-time programming, daytime soap operas have received substantial research attention because of their strong appeal for women and adolescents. The most recent analysis of sex on the soaps found that the top-rated soap operas average 6.6 sexual incidents per hour compared to about half that number 10 years earlier. Talk about safe sex and contraception is still relatively rare—6 references in 50 episodes, against a backdrop of 15 different storylines about pregnancy over a two month period. In addition, unmarried intercourse remained the staple on the five shows studied (Greenberg & Busselle, 1994). Extramarital sex outnumbered married sex acts 120 to 36, and although there was lots of talk about pregnancy, there weren't many babies —only 22 appearances by toddlers 4 and under (Greenberg & Busselle, 1994). Still, the references to taking sexual precautions suggest a trend in the right direction in this day of AIDS and sexually-transmitted diseases (Olson, 1994).

Talk Shows

No matter who's involved with whom, sex on the soaps looks almost tame compared to the topics discussed on day-time talk shows. With Nielsen ratings that range from Oprah Winfrey's high of 8.5 to America's Black Forum at point-6¹, hosts like Ricki Lake, Sally Jessy Raphael, Jenny Jones, Montel Williams and Geraldo Rivera are luring hundreds of thousands of viewers away from the soaps.

¹Each rating point equals 954,000 households, or 1 percent of the estimated 95.4 million TV homes in the U.S. (Williams, 1995).

Following in the footsteps of Phil Donahue, the dean of day-time talk, this new breed competes for guests willing to make public confessions about their intimate sex lives and feelings. Incest, child molestation, homosexuality, marital infidelity and other formerly taboo topics are made all the more palatable because of the apparent "normality" of non-celebrity guests who look and talk just like the audience's friends, family and neighbors (Lupton, 1994). "Catfights and rowdy showdowns" keep viewers tuned in, so producers shop for controversy and on-air confrontations (Champagne, 1995). Sometimes they get out of hand: Jonathan Schmitz is charged with murder in the death of Scott Amedure, a young man who declared his attraction to Schmitz during the taping of a "Jenny Jones" show on secret admirers (Small, 1995).

Few studies have addressed the related questions of how motherhood and pregnancy are portrayed on television even though several popular shows suggest that motherhood is "the" valued attribute for television women. On the hit show "thirtysomething," one of the central female characters, Hope, was portrayed as resolving her conflict between work and family by deciding that she could find fulfillment only by having another child and not returning to work. In contrast, Hope's friends, Eilyn and Melissa, were presented as ruthless and neurotic single career women (Faludi, 1991; Heide, 1992).

Other top-rated shows have elevated child-bearing to audience-stealing heights. "Murphy Brown" influenced a presidential election campaign by deciding to become a single mother. "Roseanne" tried to get pregnant with her fourth child, while her unmarried sister had a baby. Unrealistic portrayals of motherhood—where new mothers get their figures back the day after giving birth and there is always someone to take care of the baby—may cultivate the idea that women are happiest at home raising children (Morgan, 1987). The typically large families of relatively young parents on TV also may help to establish norms of when it is

appropriate to form a family, and how many children to have (Morgan & Harr-Mazar, 1980). This emphasis on family may serve to idealize motherhood, imbuing it with cultural benefits that outweigh the negative consequences of unplanned pregnancy.

Cable TV/ Videocassettes/ Movies

"Adult programming," i.e., X-rated content designed specifically to portray explicit sexual behavior, is cable television's fastest growing segment (Kaplan, 1992). With the advent of a fiber optic infrastructure, a projected 500 channels are expected to include even more such content. The videocassette player (VCR) also provides greater access to sexually explicit material. In 1993 two of the most frequently purchased videos featured Playboy centerfold Jessica Hahn and the "Playmate of the Year" ("Top Video Sales," 1994).

According to recent content analyses, sex is more frequent and more explicit in movies than in any other medium. Virtually every R-rated film contains at least one nude scene, and some favorites, such as "Fast Times at Ridgemont High" and "Porky's" contain as many as 15 instances of sexual intercourse in less than two hours (Greenberg, Siemicki, Dorfman, et al., 1993). Despite the R-rating, that supposedly restricts viewing to people over 18 unless accompanied by an adult, two-thirds of a sample of high school students in Michigan reported that they were allowed to rent or watch any VCR movie they wanted, and the movies they most frequently viewed were R-rated (Buerkel-Rothfuss, Strouse, Pettey, & Shatzer, 1993).

Music/ Music videos/ Radio

In 1994 the radio industry introduced the "12-24 Radio Network," a confederation of radio stations that program primarily for teens. The industry thus hopes to compete with other media for the lucrative teen market and the advertisers who want to sell them clothes, snacks, and cosmetics. The network offers no programming, only the claim that they'll be able to reach 50 percent more

12- to 24-year-olds than the five-and-a-half-million young people MTV currently reaches (Wilke, 1994).

Even before Elvis was prohibited from shaking his hips on the "Ed Sullivan Show," popular music has been almost synonymous with sex. Especially appealing to youth (Brown, Childers, Bauman, & Koch, 1990), popular music and now music videos contain frequent references to relationships, romance and sexual behavior — the very stuff young people are most interested in as they work on constructing a sense of who they are and what they value (Steele & Brown, in press). Music videos, now available on at least five major cable networks, may be especially influential sources of sexual information for adolescents because they combine visuals of adolescents' favorite musicians with the music. Many of the visual elements are sexual (Hansen & Hansen, 1989). Adolescent girls, in particular, use music lyrics to come to terms with their own sexuality (Garratt, 1990). Increasingly sexually explicit, music lyrics have drawn criticism from groups such as the Parents Music Resource Center (Gore, 1987), leading to some voluntary labeling of recorded music. For some teens, however, such warnings may represent a stamp of approval rather than a deterrent to buy. Roe (in press) proposes a theory of "media delinquency" that suggests some teens may gravitate toward socially-devalued or outlawed media content for the same reasons they resist other aspects of the mainstream culture.

Rap music is particularly explicit about both sex and violence. Perry (1995) argues that the explicit "sexual speak" of Black women rappers follows in the liberating tradition of the "blues," which gave voice to Black women's sexual and cultural politics during the years of Black migration to northern states. This striving for empowerment may explain why some rap musicians have responded to concerns about unsafe sex and have included alternative messages. Some rap music includes talk of "jimmy hats," or condoms. In a song called, "Safe Sex," rapper Erick Sermon chants, "Let's get high as a kite and have safe sex." An album by the female

rap group Salt 'n' Pepa is about the pleasures and responsibilities of sex: it ends with a dramatic vignette, "I've got AIDS," by Weatoc, a Boston teen outreach group.

Frank discussions about sex—ranging from Dr. Ruth's on-air psychological counseling to the sexual banter of disc jockeys hired to capture the teen/young adult audience as they drive to school or work—are common on radio. Content analyses are rare, however, given the diversity of local radio programming and the speed with which local radio personalities rise and fall in popularity.

Magazines

Magazines are another important source of relationship and sexual information, especially for women and adolescent girls. In a survey conducted last fall, more than one-fourth (26%) of women aged 30-49 reported that magazines are the source they most typically rely on (second only to health care professionals) for information about birth control (Louis Harris, 1994). In 1994, the 12 largest women's magazines (including "Better Homes and Gardens," "Family Circle," "Woman's Day," "Good Housekeeping" and the "Ladies' Home Journal ") had a combined circulation of more than 40-million, according to the Audit Bureau of Circulations. Other magazines like "Parents" (circ. 1,837,868) or "Soap Opera Digest" (circ. 1,456,633) also are read by a largely female audience.

Although publishers' statements reveal subtle differences in the market niche each is trying to attract, women's magazines until recently have focused on two broad topics: what a woman should do to get a man (e.g. "Cosmo") and what she should do once she has the man and his children (e.g., "Redbook"). For instance, "Cosmopolitan," claims to deal with the "emotional side" of women's lives, while "Redbook," is edited for "young working mothers with children. . . women who face the challenge of balancing family, home and career." Since the resurgence of feminism in the 1970s, other magazines have attempted to include other aspects of women's lives: "Working Woman" (circ. 764,594) and "Savvy" are

targeted at women who work outside the home; "Gourmet" and "Bon Appetit" are for women (and men) who cook; "Health" (Circ. 939,638) is for "active women who have made the pursuit of good health an integral part of their daily lives." (Consumer Magazines and Agri-Media Source, 1995). But even in these magazines the emphasis remains primarily on women's lives as they revolve around making themselves attractive enough to catch and keep a man.

Despite their focus on women's lives, these magazines rarely cover reproductive issues such as abortion that might alienate readers and, thus, indirectly, advertisers who are looking for large or tightly-segmented circulations. Over the past two decades (1972-1991), as the controversy surrounding abortion escalated, the largest women's magazines published only a few articles about abortion (Ballenger, 1992). "Glamour" and "Mademoiselle" carried more articles (although still only about one a year) than the others. "Family Circle," "Ladies Home Journal," and "Woman's Day" each carried five or fewer articles during the period.

Advertisers exert a great deal of control over magazines—both over editorial content and whether they should/could exist at all—because advertising revenue accounts for at least half of the income of most magazines. According to its editor-in-chief, "Glamour" was able to include more articles about abortion than the other magazines because reader surveys showed that readers were pro-choice and thus, advertisers were less concerned that such content would alienate readers (Ballenger, 1992).

"Ms." magazine, the only women's magazine explicitly dedicated to feminism and responsible coverage of women's sexuality, struggled for 20 years to attract enough advertising. Traditional advertisers, such as cosmetics companies, made such heavy demands on editorial content in "Ms." (e.g. no cover photos of women without make-up; no stories about lesbians) that the magazine has given up

advertising and today relies solely on a hefty subscription price (\$30 for six issues) for revenue (Steinem, 1990). Although now editorially freer, "Ms." has dropped from a circulation of 500,000 to about 170,000 due to the price increase (Braden, 1992).

Teen girl magazines

The teen magazine, "Sassy," initially suffered from an advertiser boycott organized by the religious right after early issues included articles such as "Losing Your Virginity," "Getting Turned On," and "My Girlfriend Got Pregnant." Despite the editors' dedication to providing young girls with "responsible, direct information about sex," and readers' (as well as many parents') overwhelmingly appreciative response, the magazine was forced to remove the "controversial" content in order to stay in business (Larsen, 1990, pp. 96-97).

Today, however, advertisers seem less concerned about adult scruples as they compete to capture their piece of the growing (both in size and spending power) youth market (Cox, 1994). Capitalizing on a sexier, cheekier image, "YM" has more than doubled its circulation over the past four years, putting it within 100,000 copies of "Seventeen," the previously unchallenged leader in the teen girls category. "YM's" name changes over the years — from "Calling All Girls" to "Polly Pigtails" to "Young Miss" to "YM," which stands for "Young and Modern"—underscore its change in philosophy (Carmody, 1994). Content has followed in line. One recent issue beckoned readers with the lure of a "special sealed section," a play on the brown paper wrapper typically associated with pornography. Titled "Getting Intimate," the section featured eight straight-talking pages of factual and anecdotal information about sex. One page was devoted to sexually transmitted diseases—who gets them, how they are spread, what the symptoms are, and how they are treated. Another page relied on a mix of first-person accounts, professional advice, and "surprising sex stats" to help readers answer the question: "Sex: Ready or Not?"

Among the statistics cited:

- The U. S. has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy, teenage birth and teenage abortion of any industrialized nation.
- More than a million teenagers—one in four girls under the age of 18—become pregnant each year.
- Eighty percent of teenage pregnancies are unplanned.
- One out of every six teenagers contracts a sexually transmitted disease.

This combination of peer-talk and solid data about sexual issues in a girls' magazine signals a positive trend.

On the other hand, other studies have found that exposure to sexually explicit material that may promote anti-social behavior occurs at an early age. By the age of 15, 92 percent of males and 84 percent of females have seen or read "Playboy" or "Playgirl". Brown and Bryant (1989) have found that exposure to hard-core magazines begins at the average age of 13.5 years. Boys may find such magazines an important source of sexual and relationship information since so few non-pornographic magazines are directed at them as potential emotional or sexual partners.

Advertising

Paradoxically, many of the same advertisers who have exerted pressure to keep responsible sex information out of the media often use sexual appeals to sell their products. A study of 4,294 network television commercials found that one of every 3.8 commercials include some type of attractiveness-based message (Downs & Harrison, 1985). Although most ads don't directly model sexual intercourse, they help set the stage for sexual behavior by promoting the importance of beautiful bodies and products that enhance attractiveness to the opposite sex. Advertisers like Calvin Klein, Guess jeans, and Benetton have pushed the limits of sexual

suggestiveness with their use of bared flesh, childlike models and intertwined limbs.

The frequent portrayal of women as interested only in attracting men or as prizes to be won, may lead indirectly to the disempowerment of women in sexual relationships. If a woman does all she can to attract a man, can she say no when he wants the sex she supposedly has been offering? And if she does say no, should a man believe her? Such mixed messages may also indirectly lead to increased sexual violence and date rape.

News

Although rarely thought of as sex educators, the news media at the least help keep sexual behavior salient. The American public and policy makers frequently are faced with news stories about abandoned babies, abortion clinic violence, and controversies over the distribution of condoms. Sometimes referred to as agenda setters, the media are in a unique position to get people thinking and talking about specific issues, while keeping other issues from the public eye.

The media sometimes are reluctant to cover issues that do not meet traditional criteria for newsworthiness, including being relevant to middle-class, mainstream Americans (Klaidman, 1990). Because newspapers and news magazines compete for the same kinds of readers, they publish stories that have remained remarkably consistent in subject matter and point of view across the last three or four decades, despite more women in the newsroom (Bleske, 1991). The same has been true for women's magazines which, despite more women (although still few) in high editorial positions from 1975-1985, continued to treat their women audiences in the same "stereotypical ways that men editors had in the 1960s" (Jolliffe & Catlett, 1994).

HIV/AIDS provides an excellent example of the power of media to keep a sexually-related topic off the agendas of both the public and policy makers. Because

the disease was thought to affect only homosexuals and intravenous drug users, groups deemed to be outside of the "mainstream" by many editors and reporters, very few stories on HIV/AIDS appeared until mid-1985, four years after the Centers for Disease Control had reported more than 350 deaths. Editors finally were jolted to attention when movie actor Rock Hudson died of AIDS, and the parents of schoolboy Ryan White, who tested positive for the HIV virus, fought to keep him in school despite other parents' fears that their children might catch the disease simply by being in the same room with someone who had HIV. "The New York Times," an influential agenda setter for both other media and policy makers, was especially slow in covering the topic (Dearing & Rogers, 1992).

During the Republican party's recent "100 Days," we saw agenda setting work in the opposite direction. To a backdrop of rhetoric about cuts in government spending, "teen pregnancy" and "unwed mothers" were put on the policy agenda—ready targets for legislators schooled in the public's concern over "babies having babies." Ironically, the threat of teen pregnancy reaching "epidemic" proportions may have resulted from a lack of care on the part of both social scientists and the news media in reporting valid statistics. No one thought much about teenagers getting married and having children prior to the mid-1970s, but following the release of Guttmacher Institute figures of 1 million pregnant teenagers a year in the U.S. and subsequent meetings and Congressional hearings on the issue of adolescent fertility, references to an epidemic became increasingly common. In fact, the 1 million figure used by Guttmacher in 1976 included married teens who accounted for about 40 percent of then-pregnant 18- and 19-year-olds (Luker, 1991). The framing of the issue as an "epidemic," in combination with growing anxieties about teen sex and rising divorce rates, helped assure teen pregnancy's place on the public agenda.

In sum, all forms of mass media, from prime-time television, to music, music videos, magazines, advertising and the news media include information

about sexual behavior. The media provide a window on a world preoccupied with sex. In this media world heterosexual activity is frequent, recreational, and most often engaged in by unmarried partners. These partners rarely discuss what they are doing or use contraception, yet they rarely get pregnant. If a woman does get pregnant, she rarely considers abortion as an alternative, and even more rarely has one (Roessner, 1994). The financial and psychological problems associated with large, parent-less or single-parent families sometimes are portrayed, but generally are resolved harmoniously and quickly. Thus, we might expect that exposure to such content contributes to the patterns of sexual behavior we see in society: early and unprotected sexual intercourse with multiple partners, and high rates of unintended pregnancies.

Is sexual behavior affected?

At this point, we know more — although still not enough — about what's in the media and how much people are exposed to it, than we know about how media content is interpreted or how it affects sexual behavior. According to classic social scientific methods, an ideal test of the effect of sexual media content would involve either randomized assignment to different media diets, or longitudinal surveys. Such studies would establish whether media exposure or behavior came first, and would allow for generalizations about what kinds of media content cause what kinds of behaviors.

Unfortunately, the perceived sensitivity of sex as a topic has restricted this kind of research. Only a handful of studies have attempted to link exposure to content with audience beliefs, attitudes or subsequent behavior. Research on sexual behavior, particularly with younger people, is difficult. Parents, school boards and health departments are reluctant to let researchers even talk with their children about sexual issues for fear of political fallout. In addition, researchers are bound by

ethical restraints that limit the kinds of experiments that can be conducted to establish that exposure to sexual content in the media causes a specific kind of sexual behavior.

Nevertheless, the few existing studies consistently point to a relationship between exposure to sexual content and sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Ultimately, which comes first may not be the most important question. Of greater significance is the cumulative effect of media saturated with the sounds, images and politics of sex. Traditional communication research and a growing body of interdisciplinary work by psychologists, anthropologists, sociologists and cultural theorists point to a process of cultivation, agenda-setting and social learning that affects every aspect of our lives, both as individuals and as members of society.

Cultivation Theory

According to one influential perspective in mass communication research, television is the most powerful storyteller in the culture, one that continually repeats the myths and ideologies, the "facts" and patterns of relationships that define our world and "legitimize the social order" (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 1994, p. 18). TV tells its stories through prime-time sitcoms and serials, day-time soap operas and talk shows, news and sports, and the steady stream of commercials that fuel the entire television industry. And it does so from cradle to coffin. According to this "cultivation hypothesis," a steady dose of television, over time, acts like the pull of gravity toward an imagined center. Called "mainstreaming," this pull results in a shared set of conceptions and expectations about reality among otherwise diverse viewers. Tests of the hypothesis have found, for example, that "heavy" television viewers are more likely to believe the world is a "mean and dangerous place," apparently because they are exposed to a high frequency of violence on TV (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 1994).

Researchers have found that college students who are soap opera fans are more likely than their non-viewing counterparts to overestimate the occurrence of divorce and illegitimate children. Interestingly, given the paucity of portrayals of such topics on the soaps, viewers also overestimated the number of abortions (Buerkel-Rothfuss & Mayes, 1981), and the incidence of sexually transmitted disease (Buerkel-Rothfuss & Strouse, 1993) in the real world. Other studies have looked at the cultivation of sex-role stereotypes and have found evidence that television nurtures their continuing presence in American society (Morgan, 1982; Rothschild, 1984). Studies of adolescents also have found that heavy television viewing is predictive of negative attitudes toward remaining a virgin (Courtright & Baran, 1980). A variety of other factors also enter the picture—ethnicity, class, and gender affect both program preferences and the meanings that are drawn from media content. But, in general, our culture sells sex without consequences.

Agenda-setting

Other researchers see the mass media as agenda-setters that not only tell people what is important in the world around them, but also how to think about the events and people who inhabit that world (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; McCombs & Shaw, 1993; Kosicki, 1993). Using words and images as their palette, news anchors, reporters and photographers paint pictures of a world peopled by villains and victims, good guys and bad guys. Over time, the many little dramas that make up the day's news events take on a life of their own — the news media's pictures of the world actually become the world in the minds of thousands of viewers and readers. Singular events—say, the shooting death of a black toddler left in a car after midnight while her teenage mother reportedly went inside a "drug house" to make a purchase—become bigger than life when shown on TV or blown up on the front page of a newspaper. People use such stories as reference points against which to

compare what they already know, or think they know, in this case about teenage mothers. The result often reinforces stereotypes, racial and otherwise (Entman, 1994).

As professional storytellers, the news media not only control which stories get told, they also decide how they get told. Called "framing," this aspect of newsmaking helps shape our understanding of events and may affect behavior (Iyengar, 1991; Neuman, Just & Crigler, 1992). For instance, a headline that reads "College Student Disposes of Newborn in Dumpster: Says Baby Would Interfere with Career Plans" predisposes readers to think of the girl as a monster, an "anti-mother" who should be charged with murder. A different reaction would probably result from this headline: "Fetus Found in Dumpster: Distraught Student Has No Recollection of Birth." Reading this, a person might feel sympathy for the mother, and think that psychological counseling rather than a jail sentence was called for. An analysis of this real-life incident and other "monster stories" (Tsing, 1990) illustrates how the media can shape people's interpretations of events. Although the headlines used here are fictitious, they could be real and they underscore the power of the words and images that, in effect, bring us the world.

The example also demonstrates how gender- and sex-charged topics take on new dimensions when presented as "news" rather than "entertainment." Highly-charged issues such as abortion or teen pregnancy require careful treatment by newsmakers. Rather than framing them as juicy controversies — the stuff on which ratings are built, editors and reporters would do well to examine their motives and methods before fueling the deep rifts that divide society on these issues.

A story recently distributed by the Knight Ridder News Service provides a good example of how the press can responsibly approach controversial issues. During the height of debate over how many abortions surgeon general nominee Henry Foster Jr. had performed, the wire service moved a story that focused on two

Detroit physicians with a "passionate commitment to serving adolescent girls." The hope of these doctors, the reporter explained, was that the spotlight during Foster's confirmation hearing would "turn from the single issue of abortion to broader awareness of adolescent health concerns" (Anstett, 1995). Her story did just that by interspersing human interest material ("...the kind of doctor who keeps tissues for tearful patients") with a heavy dose of historical background and statistical data ("Almost 90 percent of all teen pregnancies are unintended. . . Even among adults, 60 percent of pregnancies aren't planned.")

In a detailed account of how the abortion debate developed in Fargo, ND in the 1980s, anthropologist Faye Ginsberg describes what happens when the media sacrifice socially-responsible coverage for "good TV: "By picking up violent or near-violent action as 'newsworthy,' to the neglect of the less dramatic but more representative work, most coverage of the abortion issue unwittingly colludes with the radical behavior of a vocal minority—for whom visibility is a preeminent goal—even when condemning it" (Ginsburg, 1989, p. 117).

By framing issues in particular ways, the media contribute to the creation of moral panics (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke & Roberts, 1978) over perceived social threats (e.g, the teen pregnancy "epidemic"). As Blumer (1969) put it, a "social problem exists primarily in terms of how it is defined and conceived in society" (p. 300). By applying the "epidemic" label to teenage pregnancy, the media help to create an environment that justifies the use of stringent, authoritarian measures to fight a social disease somehow brought on by its "victims." When coupled with people's "common knowledge" about epidemics and disease, the media framing of the issue makes it relatively easy to blame teenage mothers for failing to take reasonable precautions rather than looking for ways to improve the material conditions of teenage mothers or the effectiveness of health education programs

(Neuman, Just and Crigler, 1992). Either way, the media can be and often are central to the process.

Social Learning

Few studies have directly considered the question of most fundamental concern: Does exposure to sex in the media cause those who see it to engage in sexual behavior, earlier, and in riskier ways? Two studies have found correlations between watching higher doses of "sexy" television and early initiation of sexual intercourse (Brown & Newcomer, 1991; Peterson, Moore, & Furstenberg, 1991). Although neither study was designed to sort out effectively which came first—the exposure to sexual content or the sexual behavior—both suggested that exposure to sexual content is related to early sexual intercourse among teens.

This isn't much evidence to go on, but both studies support a powerful theoretical perspective, cognitive social learning theory, that has been applied to the study of media effects for two decades. Basically, the theory predicts that people will imitate (model) behaviors of others when those models are rewarded or not punished for their behavior. Modeling will occur more readily when the model is perceived as attractive and similar and the modeled behavior is salient, simple, prevalent, has functional value and is possible (Bandura, 1994). Thus, the theory would predict that teens who spend more time watching television programming that includes graphic depictions of attractive characters who enjoy having sexual intercourse with each other and rarely suffer any negative consequences will be likely to imitate the behavior. Others have suggested that media may also provide cognitive "scripts" for sexual behavior they may not be able to see anywhere else (Gagnon & Simon, 1973). Teens may watch to fill in the gaps in their understanding about how a particular sexual scenario might work (e.g., asking a girl for a date; having sex with a new partner).

Media-violence, media-sex analog

Social learning theory has been applied most extensively to questions of how depictions of violence in the media effect aggressive behavior. Almost two decades of social scientific analysis of the role of the media in violent behavior serve as an excellent analog to the question of the media's effect on sexual behavior. More than 1,000 studies, using a variety of research techniques, including laboratory and field experiments, cross-sectional and longitudinal surveys, and meta-analyses consistently have found small positive relationships between exposure to violent content in the visual media (primarily television and movies) and subsequent aggressive and antisocial behavior (Comstock & Strasburger, 1993). Both the 1972 Surgeon General's Report and the 1982 National Institute of Mental Health Report concluded that exposure to media violence can increase aggressive behavior in young people. Meta-analyses estimate the size of the effect of media violence on aggressive and antisocial behavior as somewhere between 5 and 15% (Comstock, 1986; Comstock & Strasburger, 1990). As some theorists have pointed out, although such an effect may seem small, media are one of the many factors that contribute to human behavior that could be modified most readily (Comstock & Strasburger, 1993).

One of the most compelling of the naturalistic studies (Centerwall, 1992) found that the homicide rates in three countries (U.S., Canada, and South Africa) increased dramatically 10-15 years after the introduction of television. Although early television is not remembered as particularly violent, the earliest content analyses conducted in the mid-1960s in the United States reported the number of violent acts per hour at rates similar to current fare (remember all those cowboy shoot 'em ups?) Despite statistical controls for expected alternative explanations, Centerwall found that television remained an important predictor of the homicide rate. Centerwall estimated that exposure to television violence is a causal factor in

about half of the 21,000 homicides per year in the United States and perhaps half of all rapes and assaults.

Would analyses of the incidence of unplanned pregnancies and the introduction of TV draw similar conclusions? It is not an unreasonable expectation. Sex, like violence, is frequent and positively portrayed. Further studies of the impact of the media on sexual behavior very likely will find patterns of effects similar to those established for violent content.

Using the media

At this point it also is productive to begin thinking about the media as allies, rather than solely as culprits. Could the media be used effectively to reduce the incidence of unplanned pregnancies? The results of efforts to use the media to address a variety of other health concerns (e.g., cardiovascular disease [Flay, 1987], drunk driving [DeJong & Winsten, 1990], and HIV/AIDS [Edgar, Fitzpatrick, & Freimuth, 1992]) suggest that the answer is yes. Syndicated columnist Ellen Goodman (1995) calls for engaging the "conglomerate known as Hollywood" in "some sexual truth-in-advertising: one part passion to two parts diapers." Victor Strasburger (1995), a pediatrician and adolescent medicine specialist echoes a similar allies-not-adversaries theme in his call for more aggressive use of the media for health campaigns and prosocial purposes.

Health advocates have developed three basic strategies for using the mass media in the interest of healthy behavior: 1) public information campaigns; 2) media advocacy; and 3) entertainment-education.

Public information campaigns

Public information campaigns are the most common form of intentional use of the mass media for non-commercial purposes. Effective campaigns typically are similar to campaigns for commercial products in that they use a number of media channels and are designed to generate specific effects in a relatively large number of

people within a specified period of time (Rogers & Storey, 1987). An on-going campaign to reduce teen pregnancy in Maryland provides an excellent example.

In 1988, a media campaign aimed at 9- to 14-year-olds was launched in Maryland to promote sexual abstinence and responsibility among young people. The campaign's goal was "to keep kids from having kids." Television and radio commercials (more than \$4 million in paid advertising and \$3 million per year in scheduled public service advertising time and space), billboard and mass transit advertising, posters, brochures, videos, lesson plans, and special school events were used.

The attention-grabbing messages were designed by a commercial advertising firm, and included billboards that read "VIRGIN" in 10-foot-high red letters with the tag-line: "Teach your kids it's not a dirty word," as well as hard-hitting television spots. Rates of birth and abortion dropped in the first three years of the campaign. By 1991, the state was reporting a 13 percent decrease in teen pregnancies statewide and a 10 percent decrease in Baltimore City, where pregnancy rates had been among the highest in the country. Although Campaign for Our Children, the private non-profit corporation formed to spearhead the media component of the campaign, does not claim sole credit for the positive results, most observers say the campaign has made a difference. Research conducted in 1990 by the Baltimore City Health Department showed that 94 percent of students and teachers at five middle schools were aware of the program and could repeat campaign messages and slogans verbatim. Three-fourths of the young people reported that the campaign helped them talk with their parents about sex, family life, and related issues (Governor's Council on Adolescent Pregnancy, 1993).

This campaign illustrates most of the key attributes of successful media campaigns (Freimuth, 1992; Rice & Atkin, 1994): 1) Messages were targeted to and appealing for specific groups; 2) appropriate and multiple media channels were

used; 3) the campaign was sustained long enough to achieve saturation; and 4) the media messages were integrated with interpersonal communication.

Evaluations of numerous information campaigns over the past 50 years have concluded that media will be most effective at the knowledge or awareness stage of an idea. Interpersonal communication and the support of significant others in the environment (in this case, parents, schools, and probably friends) are necessary for enduring behavior change. Such reinforcement was part of the approach used in Maryland.

The Maryland campaign probably was successful also because it purchased advertising space and time despite generous donations of "free" time by the media, thus ensuring the target audience would be reached. Most campaign planners now believe that purchasing time is vital both for targeting and leveraging donated time (Donovan, Jason, Gibbs, & Kroger, 1991).

Ensuring exposure to campaign messages is especially critical when the media environment is full of competing messages. In California, the state-government supported initiative to reduce smoking has spent about \$14.5 million annually on television and billboard advertising in direct competition with the cigarette industry's massive advertising campaigns. This major investment appears to be having an impact: cigarette sales and consumption have declined three times faster than elsewhere in the country (Adelson, 1994).

Reliance on public service announcements is also problematic because only non-controversial messages will be aired or printed. The CDC has had to fight to include the word "condom" in their messages about HIV prevention, and their more explicit recent campaign is getting even less exposure because media gatekeepers consider it too risqué (Hall, 1994). Family planning advocates have run into similar problems even for paid advertising for contraceptive products in the past (Goldman, 1993). Despite polls showing that most American adults believe

more open discussion of sexual topics would lead to fewer teenage pregnancies, and that messages about birth control should be on television, the networks until recently have forbidden the marketing of contraceptives on television (Louis Harris and Associates, Inc., 1985; McNichol, 1994). The networks have begun to loosen up their restrictions, however, saying they will allow contraceptive advertising ironically, as long as it is "tasteful" (Goldman, 1993).

Media advocacy

Some health activists have begun to use the media as tools for bringing health issues to the attention of the public and policy makers. Media advocacy calls for understanding how the media work and using that knowledge to get issues on the media agenda. Rather than waiting for the media to cover an issue or to run a public service announcement, health activists generate news that attracts the attention of the news media. The focus of this approach, sometimes called "media advocacy" (National Cancer Institute, 1988) is on public policies that affect health rather than on individual health behaviors (Wallack, 1990). The underlying rationale is that individuals will not be able to change unhealthy behavior unless policy supports the desired behaviors. Thus, for example, public policies that affect access to and affordability of sexuality education, contraception and abortion could be important targets of media advocacy. Policy makers also could help make research monies available for development of more effective contraceptives, and work with media to ensure more responsible information about sex and reproduction.

Entertainment - Education

One of the most promising ways of reaching the public is to incorporate socially responsible messages in popular entertainment programming, television, movies, and music. Such strategies have been effective in promoting family planning in a number of developing countries in Africa, and in other parts of the

world (Gilluly & Moore, 1986; Lettenmaier, Krenn, Morgan, Kols, & Plotrow, 1993). In India, popular soap operas have included long-running plots about family planning that have increased visits to family planning clinics and the use of contraceptives (Singhal & Rogers, 1989).

In the United States popular musicians, such as the female rap group Salt-N-Pepa, and rapper Queen Latifah independently have produced songs such as "Let's Talk About AIDS," and "Coochie Bang" (that includes the lyrics: "brothers, bang strapped, and ladies, don't let 'em in if they don't have a condom") that promote the use of condoms. Some groups, such as the Washington, D.C.-based Advocates for Youth also have worked with writers and producers as advocates for more socially responsible sexual portrayals in the media. For example, Advocates for Youth funds the Media Project in Los Angeles that has assisted writers for "Roseanne" as they developed episodes focusing on the unmarried older daughter's request for contraception. The hit show "90210," with editorial consultation from Advocates, has included a number of episodes in which the high school characters either agree to wait to have sex, or use contraceptives.

Although the impact of such messages has not been evaluated systematically in the United States, the results of similar efforts in other countries and with other topics here suggest that entertainment-education can be an effective strategy. The Harvard School of Public Health's campaign against drunk driving, which generated more than 80 television episodes that included dialogue or depiction of designated drivers, was successful in increasing awareness and use of designated drivers (DeJong & Winsten, 1990). In an experimental study of the effectiveness of embedding messages about the use of contraceptives in soap opera scripts, Walsh-Childers (1991) found that teens who watched a version in which contraception was not discussed were less likely to believe the couple used contraceptives than were

those who watched versions in which contraception was discussed either vaguely (e.g., "protection") or explicitly (e.g., "did you bring a condom?").

The insertion of socially responsible messages in entertainment media is a potentially powerful way of affecting sexual behavior because the "selling" of a particular behavior isn't as obvious as it may be in a public service advertisement, and thus, audiences may not be as likely to resist the message. "Edutainment," as it is sometimes called, also is more likely to reach and attract the attention of target audiences. The longer formats also allow more time for developing more complex messages, such as how to negotiate condom use, or how to choose an appropriate birth control method (Brown & Walsh-Childers, 1994). The primary drawback to such a strategy in the United States, however, is that the media are unlikely to include portrayals they consider potentially controversial (Wallack, 1989).

Suggestions for the future

In sum, existing research supports a qualified yes to the question: Do media affect sexual attitudes, beliefs and behaviors? At this point we know more about what kinds of media portrayals of sexuality are available than we know about how they affect their audiences. Key communication theories (cultivation, agenda setting and social learning) and years of research on other kinds of communication effects suggest, however, that the ubiquitous, consistent, and increasingly explicit depictions of frequent and consequence-free sexual behavior in all forms of mass media do affect Americans' sexual beliefs and behaviors.

Yes, we need more research that fills in some of the gaps in our understanding about how media may affect sexual behavior. Here are some conclusions to guide future investigations:

1. *Television is not the only medium of concern.* Most previous communication research has focused on television entertainment programming, to the relative

exclusion of other media. Although television remains the dominant medium in the United States, it is not the most important medium for some important subgroups. As we have documented here, teenagers, especially, turn to other forms of media, particularly music, movies and magazines, as they seek clues about who they want to or should be in the larger culture. Women rely heavily on women's magazines. These are important sources of sexual information that we should know more about. We also should begin looking more closely at new forms of communication, including the Internet, which some claim is becoming an important new source of sexual information.

2. There is no such thing as "the" media audience. As media grow increasingly fragmented and specialized, so do their audiences. Previous research shows that audiences often select different media diets based on ethnicity, gender, age, and class. Blacks are more likely than whites to watch television shows, listen to music, and read magazines that feature black actors, musicians and topics of interest to them. Women's magazines rarely attract male readers; and parents can barely stand the music their teens listen to. More highly educated people are more likely to pay attention to news and public affairs; people who do not work during the day watch the soaps and day-time talk shows. Future research should focus on who is watching what, and why? What aspects of media content are most relevant to the audience of concern?

3. Media effects will not be uniform across audiences. Researchers need to pay closer attention to developmental, lifestyle and cultural issues. It is reasonable to expect, for example, that more sexually active teens or teens anticipating having sex, will seek out sexual media content because it is relevant. A likely scenario is that individuals who are interested in sex will notice sexual messages in the media, may be influenced and act on them, and then may look for more of the same in the future (Brown, 1993). A series of qualitative studies lends credence to such a

hypothesis. In one study, girls who had not yet begun menstruating were much less interested in sex or sexual content in the media than girls who were more sexually mature. At the same time, girls who *were* interested in sex sought sexual content in the media and frequently surrounded themselves with images of media males they found attractive (Brown, White, & Nikopoulou, 1993).

Possible cultural differences in interpretation of sexual content were clear in a study of one of rock star Madonna's earliest controversial videos, "Papa Don't Preach" (Brown & Schulze, 1990). White college students, particularly women, thought the video was about a pregnant girl telling her father she is pregnant and wants to keep her unborn child. African American males, in contrast, frequently retold the story as a girl asking her father's permission to be with her boyfriend. For them, the "baby" in the refrain, "I'm going to keep my baby" was a boyfriend, not an infant. Learning more about differences in interpretation also will add to our understanding of media's effects on sex and sexuality.

4. Interdisciplinary research will be most valuable Increasingly, researchers are recognizing that media effects are best understood when studied from multiple perspectives within the context of everyday life. Psychologists, developmental theorists, anthropologists, cultural studies theorists, sociologists, political scientists, health professionals and mass communication researchers have all made important contributions within their own disciplines to our understanding of how cultivation, agenda-setting and cognitive social learning occur. What new breakthroughs in theory might be forged by bringing multi-disciplinary teams together to study how the media affect our everyday lives?

5. Media producers should be held accountable The economics of the media industry cannot be ignored. Advertisers, publishers, movie and television producers, and investors in the huge media conglomerates all have one thing in common. They do what they do to make money. As media channels expand over

the next several years, will we be looking at a proliferation of the same old sexual themes and images? Will some segments of society become information rich, while other segments become information poor? Industry officials and academicians need to be asking much more frequently and earnestly, what can reasonably be expected of media owners and producers. What are the ethical implications of programming and business decisions? What form should social responsibility take?

We should continue to address these questions. The sexual health and happiness of future generations will be affected by whether we consider the media only a backdrop or an important piece of the cultural fabric.

LAURIE HUMPHRIES, M.D.
FOR THE
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF CHILD AND ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRY
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT,
RESTRUCTURING, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
MAY 8, 1997

My name is Laurie Humphries, I am a child and adolescent psychiatrist and a member of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. I appreciate this opportunity to appear before this subcommittee to discuss the impact of television on children and adolescents. Your continued examination of this issue will provide a lasting and timely basis for your legislative efforts.

In preparing for this testimony, I remembered when I was nine years old and recalled the shows that were my favorites --"Fury," "Victory at Sea," and "Omnibus." These television shows had a great influence on my role models, and my parents watched both "Omnibus" and "Victory at Sea" with me.

Do you remember the shows you enjoyed when you were nine years old? Do you recall whom you identified with in those shows? Did you imitate the characters you saw in those shows, either attitude, appearance, behavior or style? Or did you not have television as an influence?

We know from Piaget's studies in cognitive development that a nine year old is focused on the concrete aspects of television, and they would imitate the behaviors they see. The behaviors I have been asked to respond to involve the sexually explicit programming, and the overwhelming amount of it found on regular broadcasting.

I must ask you, do you recall in your favorite shows, did you see sexual intercourse? If you were a nine year old today, you would see at least and estimated 4,000 incidents of sexual intercourse

from ages six to ten just in today's television programming. What is the affect of this viewing?

We know that children imitate and they don't have an understanding of abstract concepts like love, but if you put together the word love or I love you with these 4,000 exposures to sexual intercourse, by twelve we have established a firm connection in a twelve-year old that sexual intercourse by itself equals love. The behaviors that result are not positive ones.

Parents in this country would like to have the ability to be informed about what their children are watching and have some ability to control their access to viewing adult sexual behavior. Today, we do not have that. The "v" chip is a step towards this but will be incomplete without an accurate, content-based rating system. We must put forth the broad public health implications of today's television programming.

Why do we have the highest rate of teen-aged pregnancy in the Western industrialized counties? Why do we have the highest rate of sexually transmitted diseases in the Western industrialized countries? I would suggest to you it is because our school-aged children have been exposed to sexual intercourse on television as something that is normative behavior with no negative consequences. We know that behaviors and attitudes regarding these issues are set into development early. Children integrate these behaviors and act on them -- the consequences are evident at puberty.

I understand that Washington is concerned about recent incidents of grade-school children engaging in sexual activity in school. Ask yourself how much exposure these children had to this activity. It is not uncommon to have a scene set in a classroom and in the scene the characters engage in sexual behavior.

Children see these behaviors and imitate them, especially younger children. They see the behavior as a form of loving and bonding. The solution to this issue is not getting a case manager or a psychiatrist or therapist, the solution is understanding that children must be protected from adult programming. There is curiosity and experimentation, but this is secretive

and usually for males, and when both genders are involved, it occurs at a younger age -- pre-school age -- and involves curiosity and does not involve pretend sexual activity.

Children who are exposed to this content are not able to develop normal loving relationships. It ends with these children often having a higher divorce rate and being unable to parent their own children. What is the economic price that we pay as a country for exposing our children to sex without narrative, without consequences, and with an understood acceptance. This can only be changed or adjusted if we have a consistent public policy based on public health knowledge.

Thank you again for calling these hearings that focus on children and what they are exposed to on television in 1997, and for sponsoring legislation designed remove impediments to better programming guidelines that inform parents and allow them to make knowledgeable decisions for and with their children.

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Government and Television: Improving Programing Without Censorship
May 8, 1997

Testimony given by
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Director of Education
Center for Cognitive Therapy
Department of Psychiatry
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Director
Social Action Committee
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Senators, I'd like to tell you a story.

This afternoon, twelve year old Sam (red haired and freckled) could come home from school and, while he is waiting for mom and dad to finish making the meatloaf and mashed potatoes, he could watch some television. Across town, ten year old Amelia who has finished her dinner (and she ate all her carrots), may watch a little television before starting her American history homework.

What might Sam and Amelia watch between 5:00 and 6:00 or between 7:00 and 8:00? According to a study by the Annenberg Public Policy Center, 44% of 12 year olds and 29% of 10 year olds are watching Hard Copy, Entertainment Tonight, Extra and other Tabloid News Magazine shows.

What images have TV producers sent for Sam and Amelia to absorb this evening?
Sam might watch:

Call girls to the stars naming names.

Pamela Anderson Lee demonstrating her most passionate sex positions in the back seat of a car.

The entertainer formerly known as Prince ripping the dress off an female and starring at her underwear underneath.

Drew Cary being described as having a passion for "strippers and raunchy sex".

Nude photos of Faye Resnick from a pornographic magazine with banners inserted over her nipples. She says that she shared these pornographic pictures with her child. The interviewer, engaging in psycho babble, says about Resnick that "posing for Playboy has allowed her to put the past behind her."

Amelia might watch:

A pornographic model teaching young females "how to be a Playmate" including being advised to take the pornographic magazine with her when she travels on an airline and show the nude photos to the captain so he will let her into the cockpit.

Rebecca Treman, nude from the waist up, on the cover of a "subscriber's only" issue of GQ with a Black man's hands painted over her breasts.

An ex-madame and prostitute discussing her book on sex advice with 6 close-up shots of women's crotches and photos of women in sexual arousal/sexual climax back-arching positions.

A women with artificial breasts saying 'I really love my enormous breasts' and plastic surgeon Michael McGuire from St. John's Hospital in Santa Monica speaking about his role in giving women artificial breasts, describing women's bodies this way, "If I am part of the special effects that make Hollywood what it is, then I think that is very appropriate."

All of these examples have come from a content analysis of Tabloid News Magazine shows such as Hard Copy, Extra and Entertainment Tonight which was conducted in January and February of 1996 and repeated in January and February of 1997. The content was coded for references to the sex industry, pornography, especially Playboy magazine and sexist body messages. This content supports pathological messages which are connected to depression, low self-esteem, eating disorders, sexual dysfunction and body image disorders in women and are connected to permission-giving beliefs for sexual violence against women and children.

Sam and Amelia's parents, if they are like other adults, may not want them to view such topics. A significant percentage of adults rated as unsuitable for children topics on TV such as prostitution (72%), striping (65%), rape (71%), and child molesting (58%).

Despite the fact that adults feel this content is unsuitable for children and the fact that children are watching in large numbers, we found that in January and February of this year, Tabloid shows aired 105 codable segments, of these, 30 segments were of Playboy magazine, 19 segments were of the sex industry and other pornographic materials and 56 segments were of sexist body messages. In February, Entertainment Tonight had 65% of its episodes with a codable segment, Hard Copy and Extra had 80 % of their episodes with a codable segment.

The Tabloid News Magazine Shows are not the only shows which feature and normalize the sex industry. Malony, Millennium, NYPD Blue, Wings, Spin City, and Friends, just to name a small sample, have had frequent episodes with sex industry themes. One show, Dave's World, which is promoted as a family-friendly show, has had two recent episodes which feature the sex industry. One episode involved a trip to a strip club in which Dave, the main character was arrested because of a fight. His visit to the strip club is discussed in the kitchen with children present and there is only one sentence which could, in any way, be construed as disapproval from his wife. In another episode, Dave interviews a pornography model, and children come to look over the fence, clearly knowing about Playboy magazine, complaining that the model isn't nude. In Dave's World, pornography is an everyday thing of which no one disapproves, of which children are familiar, and no wife finds this visual infidelity troubling, pubescent, offensive, degrading or psychologically unhealthy.

What might be the consequence of all this exposure to pornography and the sex industry? I would like to talk a little about my work as a psychotherapist. For the last 12 years, I have

specialized in the treatment of sexual violence victims and perpetrators. I have treated rapists and rape victims, sexual harassers and sexual harassment victims, incest survivors and pedophiles, prostitutes, strippers, and pornography addicts. In 12 years, I have not treated one case of sexual violence that did not include sex industry materials as a substantial factor. In every case of sibling incest that I have treated, the sex industry materials were sex magazines like Playboy, Penthouse, and Hustler, etc. Research also supports this connection.

The kinds of problems I treat are occurring at epidemic levels. Among the industrialized nations, we are the most sexually violent nation on the face of the earth. One in eight women is raped, 50% are sexually harassed on their job, by the time a female in this country is eighteen years old, 38 % have been sexually molested.

Will Sam and Amelia find any healthy sexual messages on TV? Its hard. In an informal observation, I found 3 prime time episodes which had healthy messages. On Promised Land a married couple of 25 years talked about their desire to make love to each other and their wish that the kids would spend the day out so that they could have some privacy. It seemed clear that what they were doing was loving, embedded in their relationship and growing. They showed no shame about sex but clearly felt it was private. The same messages were found on an episode of Touched by an Angel. In these two shows, the people having sex were married people, the sex industry was not portrayed as part of normal lives, and people who were tempted to have sex with someone other than their spouse, decided it was not such a good idea.

A third example of healthy sex was an example of non sex. On Early Edition, a young unmarried man is strongly attracted to a young unmarried female who because of circumstances, will spend the night at his apartment. It is clear in the morning that they slept in separate rooms and had decided not to have sex despite their obvious strong attraction for each other.

What is healthy sexuality? From a psychologist point of view, in real life, unlike what is seen on TV, healthy sex is emotional intimacy expressed as physical intimacy, its about commitment, communication and trust. Sometimes it creates human life. It is supposed to be the glue that holds men and women together and helps them keep their promises to each other. It should weave together mind, heart, body and soul. It is sacred and is intended to be the nectar of heaven. The media portrays it as the junk food from hell.

If Sam and Amelia were my little boy and my little girl, I would want them to grow up to be psychologically and sexually healthy. I would wish for them to love deeply with passion, humor, friendship, respect, tenderness, honesty, and sensuality. For this to happen, however, we would have to make changes in the images that we are planting in their minds. If we do not, I am likely to end up not as their mother but as their therapist.

I want to ask TV producers to see themselves as "citizen broadcasters". I want them to take a personal Hippocratic Oath: First do no harm. If they will help the parents of Sam and the parents of Amelia, producers can become the kinds of heroes for which this country so deeply hungers.

And maybe Sam and Amelia will invite them to their wedding.

Statement of
Sarah S. Brown, Director
The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy
Washington, DC

Good morning and thank you for including me in this important hearing today. My name is Sarah Brown and I am the director of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, a private and nonpartisan group whose goal is to reduce teen pregnancy by one-third over the next ten years. Our chairman is former New Jersey Governor Thomas Kean, and our Campaign President is Isabel Sawhill, Senior Fellow at the Urban Institute. I have appended a bit of information about the Campaign to my prepared statement (and ask that it be entered into the record of this hearing) and want to acknowledge that one member of this Subcommittee, Sen. Joseph Lieberman, serves on the Campaign's Senate Advisory Panel. We are very grateful for his interest and support.

I want to commend the Chairman and the Subcommittee for convening this morning's hearing on television viewing and sexual behavior. My focus today will be on teen pregnancy and how the media can contribute to its reduction. I realize fully that teen pregnancy is not the only problem that concerns us all. In the reproductive health field alone, other key issues include the spread of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, smoking among pregnant women, and other topics as well. But teen pregnancy is a particularly important issue to focus on because it is so widespread and it casts such a cold shadow on our future. Remember that the United States has the highest rate of teen pregnancy and births of any country in the industrialized world; about 1 million teenaged girls become pregnant every year and about half of them give birth. These children are at high risk for both health and developmental problems -- largely because their teen mothers are themselves barely out of their own childhoods and are often unable to provide their babies and toddlers with the nurturing, stimulation and care required for healthy development. At present, 45 percent of all first births in the nation are to mothers who are teenagers, unwed, or lacking a high school diploma (National Campaign, 1997). What is our nation's future, or our hope for a strong competitive standing internationally with such figures as these?

So it is most appropriate to search far and wide for ways to remedy this problem. I'd like to divide my remarks into four brief sections today; what we know from good research about the effects of media viewing -- or "consumption," as some say -- on sexual behavior; what kinds of research we need; what experience and common sense suggest; and what we can do now, while we wait for better data.

Point one: What do we know? The 1995 Institute of Medicine report, *The Best Intentions: Unintended Pregnancy and the Well-Being of Children and Families*, covered this area in some detail so I will only summarize its main messages. As that report suggested, our media give young people (and adults as well) very mixed messages: popular American media (network programming, music videos, advertising, etc.) are filled with sexual material; yet, there is a noted absence of equal attention to abstinence, contraception, responsible personal behavior, and values in sexual expression. The United States has, in effect, a media culture that glorifies sexual activity (especially illicit, romantic sex between unmarried people), but is squeamish about contraception

and gives little support or assistance in understanding sexual feelings, defining responsible sexual behavior, and learning respect for themselves and for others.

That the media are saturated with sexual material is incontestable. (Dr. Jane Brown will, I am sure, provide ample data on current content.) For example, a 1991 study -- admittedly now a bit dated -- of sexual behaviors on network prime-time television (i.e., ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox) found an average of 10 instances of "sexual behavior" per hour. Given that a full 98 percent of American households have a television, many more than one, and that 71 percent of U.S. households are tuned in to a network television program during prime time, the exposure level is clearly very high. Moreover, the promotional messages for other prime-time programs that surround regular programming also include high rates of sexual behavior. When the sexual behavior in promos is added, the rate of sexual behaviors per hour increases from about 10 to more than 15.

With regard to cable television, videocassette, music videos, and movies, the picture is similar. For example, "adult programming" (i.e., X-rated content designed specifically to portray explicit sexual behavior) is cable television's fastest growing segment. With the advent of a fiber optic infrastructure, a projected 500 channels are expected to include even more such programming.

The videocassette recorder (VCR) also provides greater access to sexually explicit material. Moreover, according to recent content analyses, sex is more frequent and more explicit in movies than in any other medium. Virtually every R-rated film contains at least one nude scene, and many contain numerous instances of sexual intercourse. Despite the R-rating that supposedly restricts viewing to people over 18 unless accompanied by an adult, two-thirds of a sample of high school students in Michigan reported that they were allowed to rent or watch any VCR movie they wanted, and the movies they most frequently viewed were R-rated.

In sum, all forms of mass media, from prime-time television to music videos, magazines and advertising include vivid portrayals of sexual behavior. Sexual activity is frequent and most often engaged in by unmarried partners who rarely appear to use contraception, yet rarely get pregnant.

The key question here, of course, is: does exposure to such content contribute to early or unprotected sexual intercourse with multiple partners and high rates of unintended pregnancies among adolescents (or, for that matter, adults)? At this point, more is known about what is in the media and how much people are exposed to it than is known about how the media's content is interpreted or how it affects sexual behavior. According to classic social scientific methods, an ideal test of the effect of sexual content in the media would involve either randomized assignment to different media diets or longitudinal surveys. Such studies would establish whether media exposure or the specific behaviors of interest came first. Unfortunately, the sensitivity of sex as a topic has restricted the kind of research that has been done, particularly with regard to adolescents.

In a comprehensive review of the literature in this area, Brown and Steele (1994) concluded that "the few existing studies consistently point to a relationship between exposure to sexual content and sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors." For example, studies of adolescents have found that heavy television viewing is predictive of negative attitudes toward remaining a virgin. Two studies have found correlations between watching high doses of "sexy" television and early initiation of sexual intercourse (Brown and Newcomer, 1991; Peterson et al., 1991).

There probably are useful lessons to be learned from reviewing the rich literature on the role of the media in violent behavior. Violence and sex have been used throughout the short history of television, and for a longer time in other media, to attract attention and arouse viewers, keeping them interested enough so that they will attend to the advertising. Both violence and sex are frequently and positively portrayed. More than 1,000 studies have consistently found small positive relationships between exposure to violent content in the visual media (primarily television and movies) and subsequent aggressive and antisocial behavior. Both the 1972 Surgeon General's Report and a 1982 report from the National Institute of Mental Health concluded that exposure to violence in the media can increase aggressive behavior in young people. Further studies of the impact of the media on sexual behavior may well find patterns of effects similar to those established for violence.

In short, we have some research that suggests a relationship between one's media diet and sexual behavior, but we are far from having a solid base here. However, if the lessons of the violence research are any guide, it is probably safe to say that additional investigation will confirm these early hunches.

Point two: what kind of research is needed? The answer here is, quite simply, *high-quality* research. The only thing sadder, in my mind, than doing no research at all is doing research that is of poor quality. From the violence field and others, we have in recent years refined a variety of methods for assessing the complicated relationship between media and behavior, and it is time now to apply these methods to the area of sexuality. Fortunately, we have also developed a set of excellent institutions in the United States for conducting high-quality research, and it is essential that these groups be given a leadership role in fostering the kind of investigation now required. For example, the National Institutes of Health, through their Institute of Child Health and Human Development, and the Centers for Disease Control, both have well-developed systems for spending hard-earned taxpayer dollars in efficient and careful ways. Their emphasis on peer review, in particular, ensures that funded research will meet the highest standards and that results will be made available to the public through both printed and electronic means. They are well-accustomed to working with the best university-based research institutes to pursue an organized research agenda, and they also have a solid track record in collaborating with private foundations to chip away at complicated questions such as the one before us.

Point three: even though the data are still thin, what does experience suggest about the relationship between media and behavior? Here, I think, the consensus is powerful. Kids and adults alike all say that one of factors (though obviously not the only factor) that lies behind the nation's high rates of teen pregnancy is that the current media environment is quite accepting of teen pregnancy. Over the last two months, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

has conducted focus groups in three cities, composed mainly of parents and adults who work with teens. Without exception, the adults in these groups point to the media as a major influence on their kids' attitudes and even behavior. They also suggest that media images and messages can contribute to teen pregnancy.

Let me explain the connection between media and pregnancy. The leadership of the National Campaign has concluded that one of the main reasons that this country has such high levels of teen pregnancy is that the nation is not 100% behind the concept that kids must grow up and finish school before taking on pregnancy and parenthood. That is, the consensus is less robust than many realize -- not only among teens but among some adults as well. Let's face it: there has been a sea of change in attitudes and behavior over the past few decades with the result that teen sexual activity and out-of-wedlock births are now commonplace and acceptable. Partly as a result, not all young people place a high priority on avoiding teen pregnancy. When asked why they became pregnant, many teenaged girls say, "it just sort of happened," or, "I wasn't really planning it but I guess it's sort of ok to be pregnant..." A few even seek it out. This sort of wishy-washy ambivalence is, in truth, an important reason why we have such high levels of teen pregnancy. It takes a lot of will power (or, as some say, "won't power") to avoid pregnancy, and unless we are crystal clear about what we expect -- unless we support a strong message that babies need grown-up parents -- all subsequent prevention efforts will be hamstrung. Accordingly, goal number one for the National Campaign is to build and strengthen a clear, explicit and powerful standard in this country: adolescence is a time for education and growing up, not pregnancy and parenthood.

Now, why is it that the consensus is less robust than we wish or hope? Why is it that teen pregnancy is sort of "ok," not completely mainstream perhaps, but certainly not as terrifying or unacceptable as it was 20 years ago, for example? Individuals all around the country have spoken to the National Campaign about this very issue, because we've asked them point blank: why do you think we have so much teen pregnancy and unmarried child-bearing? The most frequent response has been that those who set the cultural tone in the nation -- the sports stars, the celebrities, the music idols, and, in particular, the television and movie gods and goddesses -- have helped to create an environment that is accepting of teen pregnancy. They may not actively encourage it, but by being so casual or even humorous about teen pregnancy and child-bearing -- by making casual sex and unprotected sex so commonplace -- the stage is set for the high rates that we now see. How can we encourage teens to postpone pregnancy and child-bearing when their idols and role models in the media engage in sex with little enduring meaning? Sex with no serious consequences?

My fourth and final point: the media *can* be part of the solution. The National Campaign is committed to engaging the media in showing kids both the real consequences of pregnancy and positive alternatives to pregnancy and parenting -- not only through public service announcements, but also through the content of entertainment programming itself. In its first weeks, the National Campaign established a Media Task Force (a list is attached) comprised of leaders in entertainment media, advertising, public health communications, and journalism. They focus year-round on creative ways to involve their colleagues in getting the word out. So far, they have guided the National Campaign through its first phase of message development, helping turn

our core concepts into a set of messages that resonate with adults, parents, opinion leaders and others whose active involvement with the National Campaign is critical to our success. The common theme is simply that kids need to finish growing up before they become parents.

In its media work, the National Campaign's goal is to catalyze different media efforts by sharing our data, focus group research, polling information, program evaluation, and lessons learned from site visits and from hundreds of practitioners hard at work on this problem. We offer media leaders information about what the numbers are, and what parents, kids and communities are saying about teen pregnancy. We recommend a set of themes that we stand behind, and we help different media organizations build on the themes that resonate most strongly with them. We do not, however, prescribe one single message or one "magic bullet" solution -- teen pregnancy is a complex problem that requires a diverse array of messages delivered simultaneously and intensely. Research tells us that no single strategy will work for every teen, every family or every community. Teens must be surrounded by a *variety* of messages that all reinforce the same idea: that they must take deliberate action to avoid pregnancy.

Here are some examples of efforts the National Campaign has already catalyzed with specific media leaders on this issue; we hope to enlarge this list as the months proceed:

- **Black Entertainment Television (BET)** hosted a live, 2-hour town meeting this past Saturday, May 3, with 300 teenagers and celebrities ranging from television stars to hip-hop artists to discuss teen pregnancy prevention and male involvement in prevention efforts. BET also created four original public service announcements which will air throughout the summer, and will devote three more shows on its Teen Summit program to teen pregnancy prevention issues. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton recognized BET's efforts at a White House ceremony last Friday.
- **MTV** has made a commitment to create and air original public service announcements on teen pregnancy prevention.
- **ABC Daytime Programming** writers and producers will meet with the National Campaign to discuss ways to build characters and story lines into their programs that are consistent with teen pregnancy prevention messages.
- **The Executive Producer of Beverly Hills, 90210** will speak at a National Campaign conference this summer on state-based media campaigns, to help local practitioners from across the country think about new ways to engage the media on teen pregnancy prevention.

These early commitments from industry leaders show that the media are, in many ways, just like the rest of us: concerned about young people and about the future of the country. This reservoir of good will can and must be widely harnessed to the issue of reducing teen pregnancy. After all, teen pregnancy is a challenge that goes to the very core of our culture and values -- far too big a problem to be solved by small community programs that are typically fragile and under-funded. Now more than ever, we need the power of the media. Without it, we are unlikely to make major progress on tough social problems such as those we are discussing this morning.

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Fact Sheet

Mission: To prevent teen pregnancy by supporting values and stimulating actions that are consistent with a pregnancy-free adolescence.

Goal: To reduce the teenage pregnancy rate by one-third by the year 2005.

What the Campaign is Doing:

- taking a clear stand against teenage pregnancy and attracting new and powerful voices to this issue;
- enlisting the help of the media to reduce teen pregnancy;
- supporting and stimulating state and local action to reduce teen pregnancy;
- leading a national discussion about the role of religion, culture, and public values in teen pregnancy prevention in an effort to build common ground; and
- making sure that everyone's efforts are based on the best facts and research available.

Organization and Leadership: The National Campaign is a completely private (non-governmental), nonprofit, and nonpartisan effort led by a distinguished National Board. The Board Chairman is Thomas Kean, President of Drew University and former Governor of New Jersey. Isabel Sawhill, Ph.D., serves as the Campaign's President and Sarah Brown as its Director. The work of the National Campaign is conducted through four task forces and a small staff.

Origins and History: The initiative was stimulated by President Clinton's challenge in his 1995 State of the Union address that "parents and leaders all across the country ... join together in a national campaign against teen pregnancy to make a difference." In February 1996, the first meeting of the founding Board of the National Campaign was held. Since then, the National Campaign has built a stable funding base; begun to build partnerships with national, state, and local groups; launched the activities of its four distinguished task forces — Effective Programs and Research, State and Local Action, Religion and Public Values, and Media; and commissioned a number of important studies.

Current Status: In May 1997 (which is National Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month), the Campaign will hold a series of public events, including a Capitol Hill forum, and publish several new reports, including one describing the Campaign's outreach to states and communities.

For Further Information or to get on the Campaign's mailing list, please write to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2100 M Street, N.W., Suite 300, Washington, DC 20037.

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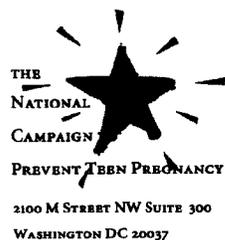
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**Statement of
Elayne Bennett, President
Best Friends Foundation**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

There is much discussion today about the moral decline in our communities and the troubled state of our youth. Increased sexual activity during the last three decades has not only brought us a nearly 30% rate of out of wedlock births but also dramatic increases in sexually transmitted diseases (150% rise in penicillin resistant gonorrhea among women in New York City alone). AIDS statistics indicate that it may soon become the leading cause of death among teens. For our country, this is a recipe for disaster.

In 1987, as a faculty member at Georgetown University's Child Development Center, I began to realize that something had to be done to provide guidance to our adolescent girls. Premature, underweight babies born to younger and younger mothers caused concern among the staff. In addition, many adolescent girls referred for counseling seemed to have emotional problems which evolved from sexual promiscuity. The messages from television, movies and magazines were overloaded with sexual encouragement. I began to wonder who was telling girls they did not to have sex as teenagers. In fact, that they could lead healthy and happy lives if they did not.

The result was the Best Friends Program, based on the concept of girls supporting one another in waiting to have sex and rejecting drug use with guidance from parents and teachers. We emphasize the joys of pre-teen and teen years free from the complications of early sexual activity. Through our six part curriculum Best Friends provides 110 hours of personal attention, guidance and skills that adolescent girls need to lead happy and healthy lives. Best Friends provides positive and upbeat messages, "You will succeed in life, if you set your goals and maintain your self-respect." Best Friends is now operating in 50 schools in 15 cities nationwide.

From ten years working with girls in Washington, DC public schools and training educators from throughout the country, we have learned that most adolescents want guidance. They want to learn skills for saying "no" to things that will harm them --

drugs, sex, violence. They need messages and role models to counteract the images of violence and sexual messages they see on television. Most girls want to hear messages of abstinence from sex and drugs and that they will respond to a program that fosters self-respect by promoting self-restraint. As Marian Howard of Atlanta's Emory University found when she asked 1,000 teenage mothers what they wanted to learn in sex education, 82% of the girls responded "how to say 'no' without hurting my boyfriend's feelings." An overwhelming number cited the cause of their pregnancy as "an inability to say no." And they need to learn safety skills to avoid dangerous situations and individuals who prey on the young and vulnerable. We -- our schools and communities -- must provide them with the guidance that they need.

Today, sex has replaced violence as the prime time obsession. Of the 58 shows monitored by *US News and World Report*, almost half contained sexual acts or references to sex. In an extensive study, Robert Lichter and Associates found a sexual act or reference occurred every four minutes on the average during prime time.

The Media Research Center found that portrayals of premarital sex outnumbered sex within marriage by 8 to 1. Lichter found in his study that only 1 in 85 sexual references concerned birth control, abortion or sexually transmitted diseases. Moreover, casual sex was almost always condoned.

The prevailing theme on television is "act on your desires." There is no praise for restraint or delay of gratification. The time spent by the average teenager during a week indicates that the average teenager spends an average of 21 hours a week watching television compared to only 1.8 hours per week reading and 5.6 hours per week on homework. And we all know that adolescents often make decisions without thought to possible consequences or consideration of alternatives. Piaget's developmental research has shown that "...teenagers have a very limited ability to make decisions and a superficial understanding of their sexual relationships." Researcher Wanda Franz defines the problem-solving dynamics of Piaget's development stages as the movement from the "Concrete Operations Stage" to the

"Formal Operations Stage " During the Concrete Operations Stage of Development, usually up to age 13, adolescents are:

- Overwhelmed by immediate concrete experience
- Cannot anticipate future outcomes
- Process in haphazard ways. They don't use deductive reasoning.

It making a decision about sexual activity, Franz maintains, that concrete thinkers will be most concerned with immediate sexual gratification. They will disregard future risks, and will fail to evaluate options and responsibilities for actions.

The goal for Best Friends girls and all adolescents is to reach the "Formal Operations Stage of Development" where they:

- Anticipate possible outcomes
- Weigh the value the outcomes
- Test systematically
- Consider complex interactions
- Associate behavior with outcomes.

During this time of growth from concrete operations to formal operations is when adolescents are most in need of strongly defined standards of behavior and societal support of mature decisions. We should offer guidance by teaching them effective problem-solving skills, similar to the processes taught in math and science courses, and by providing the support system so they can make good decisions.

Aristotle said it first: "The best friend to have is the one that encourages you to be a better person." Let's contrast this with the messages our youth are getting on television today. The television show, "Friends, one of the most popular on television

today, is laden with plots that portray or refer to casual sex. The actors are talented but talk of little else. It is obvious that these "friends" are not encouraging each other to be better people.

Even the members of the "Hollywood Elite" are recognizing the impact sexual messages on television are having on young people. According to a *US News and World Report* study, 56% of Americans say that they believe that television has the greatest influence on children's values -- more than parents, teachers and religious leaders combined. Other findings were:

- 81% of Americans feel that television contributes to the decline of moral values and 46% of Hollywood leaders agree.
- 90% of Americans express concern that portrayals of sex or sexual references contribute to young people having sex. And surprisingly 63% of Hollywood leaders agree.
- 76% of Americans believe that television contributes to the problem of teen pregnancy and 37% of Hollywood leaders agree.
- 94% believe that portrayals of sex contribute to violence against women and 61% of Hollywood agree.

According to a 1988 Louis Harris study, analyses of the content of television indicated that during prime afternoon and evening hours the three largest networks broadcast a total of more than 65,000 sexual references each year. The average American now watches 14,000 references to sex in the course of a year.

According to Newsweek's David Gelman "...teenagers face more adult strength stresses than their predecessors did at the time when adults are much less available to help them. With the divorce rate hovering near 50% and 40-50% of teenagers living in single parent homes headed mainly by working mothers, teens are more on their own than ever.

Unfortunately, many girls' first sexual experience is forced. The Alan Guttmacher Institute reported that two-thirds of teen mothers said that they had sex forced upon them earlier by adult men. The National Center for Health Statistics reported in 1992 that of 185,000 births to girls 10 to 18 in 1992, 70% were fathered by adult men. In many states adult men having sex with our without consent of underage girls constitutes statutory rape. Unfortunately, during the past decade, statutory rape laws have been rarely enforced. Knowledge of contraceptive techniques is not going to help these girls because the adult men are "hitting on" younger and younger girls because they don't want to use protection. They know young inexperienced girls are much less likely to have an STD and they are often unconcerned about impregnating them. Furthermore, when young girls have been used for sexual gratification, these "father figures" -- and I use "father" very reluctantly -- have set these girls up for the destructive dependent cycle of love-hate which almost inevitably leads to a girl becoming another sad statistic in the growing domestic violence in our country.

Best Friends addresses the issue of sexual abuse through our videos and discussions, which emphasize that sexual abuse is wrong and never the victim's fault. We talk about common-sense safety rules, that unfortunately, children don't hear much these days. We encourage the girls to never go anywhere alone, to never hitchhike or accept rides from strangers, to leave the room when pornography is present, and to never keep a secret that makes them feel uncomfortable. We are certain that Best

Friends girls are far more capable of determining what is acceptable or unacceptable behavior in their boy friends. And because of this ability we believe they are far less likely to become victims of abuse and physical violence.

It puts our children at risk. How is it affecting our adolescent girls and boys. What does it teach them that girls want? Even in elementary school --

Story of Winston Elementary School

Story of boys with condoms in their shoes at Greencastle Elementary

Television and videos can play a positive role in educating and entertaining our children. At the core of the Best Friends curriculum are 14 videos on the topics of friendship, love and dating, decision-making, self-respect, handling stressful situations, taking responsibility, and the importance of physical fitness and nutrition and avoiding alcohol abuse, drug abuse and AIDS and STDs. Each one was developed by enterprising filmmakers and marketed through educational video companies. Paramount Pictures was most cooperative in working with us on our "Love and Dating" video "How Can I Tell If I'm Really in Love?" with Justine Bateman and Ted Danson. Whoopi Goldberg narrates the video, "AIDS: Everything You Should Know" which promotes abstinence as the only sure way to avoid AIDS through sex.

We recently showed one of our drug videos, "The Drug Knot," a Disney Educational production, featuring David Toma, who tells graphic stories of self-inflicted pain, death and suicide, all caused by drug use. It is a dramatic story which grips your attention. The girls are always anxious to discuss what happened and how it could have been avoided.

At Best Friends we have messages that we know work -- "friends help each other make good decisions," "boys and girls often have different agendas in their romantic relationships," girls need to know that -- "without self-respect it is difficult to say NO to anyone or anything," "tomorrow is the first day of the rest of your life," past mistakes do not mean that one must continue in the same pattern," -- a very important one -- "sex is never a test of love," and another important one "the decision to take drugs is a good one." With these messages we operate within the public schools.

And we have evaluation data that shows that girls aged 11-18 do respond to such messages. A 1994-95 independent study examined the effectiveness of the Best Friends Program in District of Columbia schools and compared it to two similar studies -- a 1993 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBSS) and a 1992-93 Washington, D.C. Extensive Study, HIV Survey (ES, HIV). All three studies utilized anonymous self-report, a method determined to be highly reliable by D.C. Public Schools. The comparison study, conducted by Dr. David Rowberry of the University of Colorado, Boulder, found that 4% of Best Friends girls had experienced sexual intercourse by age 15 compared to 63% of their peers in DC public schools. Among Best Friends girls there is a 1% pregnancy rate compared to 26% among their peers. A 1996 national survey of 1,100 Best Friends girls found similar results -- only 56 girls or 5% of Best Friends girls reported have had sex.

We know that sexually promiscuous messages from the media, combined with the lack of parental support, is leaving many adolescents without the kind of information and guidance they need to make responsible decisions about sex and its consequences.

