I have worked for the Parents Television Council for over twenty years. Over the past two decades, I have been involved in both tracking content on primetime broadcast television and in producing research reports and studies on TV content. But I am also mother to a ten-year-old son, so although initially my interest in this issue was professional; now, it’s personal.

Professionally, I got involved with this issue shortly after the TV ratings system and V-chip were first introduced. I personally have witnessed how the TV networks have hidden behind the TV ratings to start introducing increasingly violent and sexually explicit content while simultaneously working to dismantle any kind of accountability or oversight. I was in a congressional hearing room when a network executive questioned whether the FCC should even be in the business of enforcing decency standards, now that we have TV ratings. I’ve seen the arbitrary and inconsistent way the ratings and content descriptors are applied, or not applied at all. I’ve seen the same episode of the same show given one rating when it originally broadcast, and another rating when it appeared in syndication. Over the last 20 years, I’ve seen G-rated programming all-but disappear from TV, and PG-rated programming becoming more and more edgy and less and less suitable for family viewing; I’ve seen the over-broad TV-14 rating applied to everything from the relatively mild innuendo on “The Big Bang Theory” to the graphic violence on “Hannibal” and “The Walking Dead” to the nudity and sexual situations on “Dating Naked.”

I have learned to discount the ratings entirely when viewing with my family because I’ve learned that they seldom provide a thorough or accurate appraisal of the content. Most episodes of ABC’s “The Muppets,” for example, included drug and alcohol references as well as sexual innuendo or anatomical references – none of which would have been acceptable, in my view, for my child to watch – but none of those elements seemed to have factored into ABC’s decision to rate episodes TV-PG.

The ratings system has been used and manipulated by content creators and distributors. It was meant to help families, but families are not being served by system as it exists today.