

May 30, 2019

Michael Powell, JD
President and CEO
NCTA – The Internet and Television Association
DBA TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board
25 Massachusetts Avenue, NW - Suite 100
Washington, DC 20001

Cc: Ajit Pai (FCC Chairman), Michael O'Rielly (Commissioner), Brendan Carr (Commissioner), Jessica Rosenworcel (Commissioner), Geoffrey Starks (Commissioner)

Dear Mr. Powell,

First, we would like to briefly introduce ourselves. We have spent our entire careers studying media effects. We first met under unfavorable circumstances. In the wake of the Newtown school shooting, we both served on an advisory committee to the National Science Foundation on youth violence. Our committee published a report on youth violence that was distributed to each member of Congress and to each state Governor. An article that extends that report was published in *American Psychologist*.

Bushman, B. J., Newman, K., Calvert, S. L., Downey, G., Dredze, M., Gottfredson, M., Jablonski, N. G., Masten, A., Morrill, C., Neill, D. B., Romer, D., & Webster, D. (2016). Youth violence: What we know and what we need to know. *American Psychologist*, 71(1), 17-39. DOI: 10.1037/a0039687

Our report included recommendations to revise the media ratings system. Since then, we have published articles together on media content.

Bushman, B. J., Jamieson, P. E., Weitz, I., & Romer, D. (2013). Gun violence trends in movies. *Pediatrics*, 132(6), 1014-1018. DOI: 10.1542/peds.2013-1600

Romer, D., Jamieson, P. E., Bushman, B. J., Bleakley, A., Wang, A., Langleben, D., & Jamieson, K. H. (2014). Parental desensitization to violence and sex in movies. *Pediatrics*, 134(5). DOI: 10.1542/peds.2014-1167

We both feel very strongly about media ratings, and wrote an Op Ed piece for the Washington Examiner, which we have enclosed. In our view, media ratings have two primary purposes: (1) inform parents, and (2) protect children. The current ratings system used in the U.S. does a poor job on both.

As you know, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) recently concluded its review of the ratings system and its oversight, as well as its report to Congress. <https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/0516777006411/DA-19-423A1.pdf>

We were glad to hear that the FCC was not able to conclude: (1) that the content ratings are accurate, and (2) that the industry has provided sufficient “oversight” of the system.

As we describe in our Op Ed, we think now is the time to update the ratings system. We offer four major recommendations, modeling the current system used in The Netherlands:

- (1) Use the same rating system for all forms of media (e.g., TV, movies, video games)
- (2) Use simple age-based ratings (e.g., 12+ for ages 12 and older)
- (3) Use easy-to-understand symbols for content-based ratings (e.g., fist for violence, syringe for drugs)
- (4) Have ratings assigned by child development experts rather than the entertainment industry

We hope you will consider our suggestions. We also would be happy work with you and the industry to improve the ratings system.

Sincerely,



Brad J. Bushman, Ph.D.
Rinehart Chair of Mass Communication, The Ohio State University, USA
Professor of Communication, The Ohio State University, USA
Adjunct Faculty Associate, Research Center for Group Dynamics, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, USA



Dan Romer, Ph.D.
Research Director, Annenberg Public Policy Center, University of Pennsylvania, USA
Director, Adolescent Communication Institute (ACI), University of Pennsylvania, USA