

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

MEMORANDUM

TO: William F. Caton
Acting Secretary
Federal Communications Commission

FROM: JoAnn Lucanik *JL*
Chief, Policy and Rules Division
Cable Services Bureau
Federal Communications Commission

SUBJECT: Video Programming Ratings (CS Docket No. 97-55)

DATE: July 1, 1997

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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

We received the following items in anticipation of the Commission's en banc hearing on video programming ratings and v-chip technology that was scheduled for June 20, 1997. We now submit them for inclusion in the public record of CS Docket No. 97-55:

- (1) Presentation for June 20 En Banc Hearing on Industry Proposal for Rating Video Programming and on "V-chip" Technology, CS, Docket No. 97-55, Soundview Technologies Incorporated.
- (2) Compilation of Materials, Professor Tim Collings, Simon Fraser University, School of Engineering Sciences, dated June 18, 1997.
- (3) Content Advisory System for the ATSC Digital Television Standard, Bernhard J. Lechner, dated June 16, 1997.
- (4) FCC Hearings on the Television Ratings System, Stephen Balkam, Executive Director, Recreational Software Advisory Council, June 20, 1997.
- (5) Testimony of Evelyn K. Moore, President of the National Black Child Development Institute, Submitted to the Chairman and Commissioners of the Federal Communications Commission, June 20, 1997.
- (6) Statement of Dr. Joann Cantor, Department of Communications Arts, University of Wisconsin-Madison before the Federal Communications Commission, June 20, 1997.
- (7) Comments of the National PTA on aspects of the TV industry's v-chip ratings proposal and if it meets standards set forth in aspects of the Section 551 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, dated June 18, 1997.

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List A B C D E

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**Presentation for June 20 En Banc Hearing on Industry Proposal for Rating
Video Programming and on "V-Chip" Technology, CS Docket No. 97-55**

Good afternoon, I am Lee Browne, President of Soundview Technologies. Thank you for the opportunity to present to you today the following important facts regarding your consideration of program rating systems:

- 1) First of all a rating system is needed as soon as possible. V-chip technology is available now and the American public's first opportunity to block programming will be from V-chip add-on devices just 3 - 4 months after a rating system is adopted, not the 12 - 18 months it will take to manufacture new televisions.
- 2) Soundview's V Chip Converter™, a set-top unit, is designed to equip the 200 million existing television sets in the United States which otherwise will be deaf to V-chip signals. They are inexpensive (approximately \$60) and give American parents an immediate alternative to buying a new television set.
- 3) There is no need for consumers to wait until new televisions are equipped with V-chips. Through converter boxes, it is most probable that millions of American households will already be benefiting from V-chip technology long before the new televisions are available.
- 4) This technology can accommodate any rating system you approve, however overly complex rating systems impose technical limitations on how converter boxes and television sets can be designed to be easy to use. The simpler the rating system, the more the technology will be used. Our company has been developing products as the rating dialogue continues. We have provided you with photographs of three models, one for the industry proposed ratings, one for a V, S, and L system, and one incorporating V, S, and L categories with the currently proposed rating system. Each of these is relatively simple - only one button needs to be pushed for the proposed rating system, and three buttons, one each for violence, sexual content and language for the other rating systems.
- 5) Indications are that most broadcasters and cable operators will transmit the electronic rating as soon as there are V-chip devices to receive the signals.

- 6) Soundview Technologies wants to take an innovative and unique approach to the sale and distribution of the V Chip Converter™. We have, for example, met with national non-profit organizations and education associations to develop ways that they might participate in making the V Chip Converter™ available to families throughout the country. The goal is to create a national trust fund to benefit education or other childrens' needs with up to 30% of the sales proceeds of the V Chip Converter™. We anticipate having a nationwide distribution program that will benefit youth during the upcoming school year.

With much appreciation of the various views being presented to the commission, we urge the FCC to approve an easy to use rating system as soon as possible so that the public may benefit from the V-chip legislation this coming school year.

David Schmidt will now demonstrate our V Chip Converter™ and we will then answer any questions you may have.

THE SOUNDVIEW SOUNDING TV'S WITH HIS OWN IN THE V-CHIP SOUNDS

MODEL C



Soundview's

V-Chip Converter

Model C by Howard Warner, Inc.

blocks program from the network using built

gives visual display of a program rating

temporarily

soundview's gain easy access to all programming

compatible with all video equipment

**SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING SCIENCE
Burnaby, British Columbia CANADA V5A 1S8**

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
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From: Tim Collings
Tel: (604) 291-3817
Fax: (604) 291-4951

Date: June 18, 1997

To: Rick Chessen, FCC
Tel: (202) 418-7042
Fax: (202) 418-1196

(27 pages)

Rick,

I tried to compile as much information as I could to fax to you in preparation for the hearing. Unfortunately there is just so much stuff to try to sort through and so little time. What I have tried to do is assemble some important documents in chronological order.

The first rating system we tested was during a 1994 trial we conducted in Edmonton in 58 homes with only one broadcaster. That broadcaster classified programs in terms of violence, language and sexuality. The trial was mainly a technical test although the broadcaster did attempt to assign the appropriate level in each category as accurately as possible to reflect the actual program material on a consistent basis. Each program was assigned a level from 0 - 8 in terms of the degree of offensive content. To give you an idea of the system, here is the information used for the sexuality category:

Level	Sexuality
0	<i>No</i> nudity or suggestive sexuality.
1	<i>Mild</i> suggestive sexuality, no nudity.
2	<i>Moderate</i> suggestive sexuality, no nudity.
3	<i>Strong</i> suggestive sexuality, brief nudity.
4	<i>Brief</i> frontal nudity or nudity from a distance.
5	<i>Moderate</i> full frontal or vivid nudity.
6	<i>Full</i> frontal nudity with emphasis on breasts and/or organs.
7	<i>Full</i> frontal nudity in a distinctly sexual context.
8	<i>Explicit</i> sexual acts.

You can see that the descriptions are quite precise and provide viewers with a pretty clear guideline of what they might expect to see in the program.

Here is the information used for the violence category:

Level	ViewLevel™ Scale for Violence
0	<i>No violence.</i>
1	<i>Mild slapping, hitting or comic violence.</i>
2	<i>Moderate violence. Non-specific verbal threats.</i>
3	<i>Strong violence. Hand combat, specific verbal threats.</i>
4	<i>Severe violence. Some blood but not very graphic.</i>
5	<i>Extreme violence. Some graphic scenes.</i>
6	<i>Graphic scenes of violence. Violence within a sexual context.</i>
7	<i>Brutal and gory scenes. Violence within a sexual context.</i>
8	<i>Gratuitous violence.</i>

While this system proved to be quite useful for viewers, it was decided (after review by several other broadcasters) that it might be a bit difficult to apply on a consistent basis amongst a group of different broadcasters (see attached 1-page executive summary of feedback from viewers for this system).

Therefore we decided to simplify the system somewhat by reducing the number of levels in the content categories from 0 - 5, and then add an additional category for age-based suitability of the program. The subsequent 8-page document entitled "Television Violence" was produced by Shaw Cable and describes the revised system that was used in a second and third trial involving 6 and 11 broadcasters respectively. We had participation from 2 U.S. broadcasters in each of these tests (KVOS in Bellingham, WA and WUTV in Buffalo, NY). The 5-page "Topline Summary" that follows is probably the most useful report on the topic of rating system feedback.

In addition I have attached an 8-page summary of the CRTC decision in March, 1996 which should also be useful in understanding the context and perspective of the players involved in the debate.

I hope that all of this information is of use to you and you are able to digest it prior to your hearings. I will try to bring some more information with me as well.

The final item is a 2-page press release from the CRTC approving the recently submitted Canadian classification system and allowing Canadian services to use on-screen icons until they are ready to go with encoding. I would encourage you to read the full report on the CRTC home page. In particular there are 3 important points mentioned with respect to the US situation:

The U.S. Situation

28. As noted above, one of AGVOT's objectives has been to ensure that its proposed classification system is compatible with the ratings system being implemented in the United States. In its submission, the Action Group cites its public opinion research and focus group studies, which confirm that viewers want compatibility to lessen confusion in using the rating system along with the V-chip.

29. In fact, AGVOT's proposed system and the "TV Parental Guidelines" currently being employed by U.S. broadcasters would appear, despite some variations, to be similar enough to avoid undue viewer confusion.

30. However, since the TV Parental Guidelines have not yet been considered by the U.S. Federal Communications Commission, and with the vigorous debate currently underway on this issue in the U.S., the final version of the classification system to be implemented in the U.S. is not certain at this time. AGVOT has stated that, should the U.S. Parental Guidelines be revised, the Action Group would study the changes to determine if they are in keeping with the principles of the Canadian classification system. The Commission expects AGVOT to submit for Commission approval any substantive changes it proposes to make to the classification system.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the request of Shaw Communications Inc., this study was undertaken to obtain feedback and information from a number of households who were testing the Vyou Control ("V" Chip). The current study is phase I of market research to determine the perceptions and attitudes towards the "V" Chip. Phase I, completed in early August, 1995, consisted of a test group of 58 families in the Edmonton area.

Based on the findings of the research, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. 80.6% of the households in this test group feel positively towards the "V" Chip as a form of censorship and towards the "V" Chip concept. Generally, the households tested responded positively to the following:
 - a) Maintaining the current rating system (77.4%)
 - b) Ability to understand the rating system (71.0%)
 - c) Parents having a suitable level of control over the settings (74.2%)
 - d) Current method used to "blank" the screen (71.0%)
2. 54.8% of the households would purchase or rent the "V" Chip if it was made available to the public.
3. The "V" Chip should be targeted to families with children in the four to thirteen age group.
4. Concerns expressed by test households were technical rather than concept related and are as follows:
 - a) Remote control was light/small, not user friendly (32.3%)
 - b) "V" Chip may reset at some point (25.8%)
 - c) Screen "blacked" out completely when the "violence" exceeded the setting (no image at all) - raised by the focus group participants
 - d) Lack of "user friendly" instructions

2nd, 3rd Trials

Television Violence

1. Basic Principle

Shaw's key involvement in the issues of violence in television programming is, as a major cable operator, distributing the broadcast and specialty services of others.

Shaw believes parents are the best television guides, the only visible censors for **THEIR** children. Imposed censorship can never be effective given the plethora of on-air and other video viewing opportunities available in Canada.

Informed management of a child's viewing is thus the best and only long term solution to parent's concerns.

2. Empowering Parents - A Helpful Technology

Many parents live very busy lives and cannot be physically present to manage their children's viewing -- no matter how well informed they are. Others who are extremely concerned about the possible effects of either violent or sexually explicit programming on their children, or the use of vulgar or obscene language, want a system to delete this material they do not want their children to see. And they want this system to be foolproof.

Shaw is therefore participating in trials of V-Chip technology developed in Canada by Professor Tim Collings of Simon Fraser University. The system allows parents to precisely select the kinds of program material they do not want their children to see, input this information, and have the program which meets this criteria deleted automatically. Shaw fully supports the refinement of an easy-to-use classification system, and the implementation of V-Chip technology in set top boxes which would offer parents a simple way of blocking out programming that **THEY** choose as inappropriate for their children.

3. How the V-Chip Works

a) The Classification System

The key to the V-Chip system is a classification system that allows parents to choose to delete programs that precisely exceed their level of tolerance for their children. The grid is adapted from information supplied from the Canadian Motion Picture Distributors Association (CMPDA).

The classification grid has four headings.

- **Audience Category** - four familiar movie style audience target ratings.
- **Violence** - five levels from none through mild to graphic.
- **Language** - five levels from no problem language to strong and explicit.
- **Sexuality** - five levels from none, to full nudity and explicit sexual activity.

Television Violence

Page 2

a) The Classification System (Continued)

V-Chip Grid

Audience Category	Violence	Language	Sexuality
5.	Graphic	Explicit	Explicit Sexual Activity
4. R - Restricted	Violence	Strong	Full Nudity
3. A - 16+	Brief	Coarse	Mild Sexuality
2. PG - Parental Guidance	Mild	Mild	Brief Nudity
1. G - General Audience	Comedic	Suggestive	Mature Theme -
0. E - Exempt	None	None	None

This simple V-Chip grid is used by the broadcaster to code programs and by parents to select the program profile acceptable to their family. For the current tests, broadcast personnel pre-screening a program simply code according to the grid. In other words, if a program contains only one or two scenes of brief violence, it is coded under violence at the appropriate level (3). Same with language and sexual material. If a program displays coarse language, (3) is inputted. Interestingly, coarse language that would be coded includes the use of language that could offend ethnic or other minorities. Once the program is coded, the ratings stay with it ready to respond automatically.

b) How Parents Input Their Choice

Setting individual levels of choice is simple. The V-Chip is in a set top box and the system comes with its own one-key remote. The grid appears on the screen and the parent inputs the maximum level of tolerance under each category.

For instance, a parent might not want any program that has violence at all and so inputs (1), but is less concerned about sexual content and can tolerate some, so chooses (2). Once levels are set the V-Chip blocks programs that are classified higher than the level the parent inputs.

When such a program is airing, the grid appears on the screen with the levels set by both the parent and the broadcaster so the parent can see why it was blocked. If the parent wants to remove the blocking function it is easily done during the program with the remote. Pre-set levels stay in the memory until changed.

Informed Choices - Our Shared Responsibility Page 3

At Shaw Communications Inc., we recognize our responsibility and the role we can and should play in helping to find a long term solution to the issue of violence on television. We believe consumers themselves, and not governments or corporations, are best able to make the right choices about what is appropriate viewing for their family. That is why we remain committed to developing and implementing tools and technologies, like the V-Chip, that will empower viewers to make programming decisions on their own and for their own families in an informed and responsible manner.

1. What is the V-Chip?

The V-Chip (the "V" stands for Violence) is a computer chip which when combined with a program rating system empowers parents to screen out television programs that they consider to be inappropriate for their children to watch.

2. How does it work?

The V-Chip is a relatively simple device developed by Professor Tim Collings of Simon Fraser University. The system is based on encoding programs at the point of transmission with an identifying electronic signal designating the intended audience as well as the level of violence, nudity and offensive language. This special rating code is inserted in line 21 of the vertical blanking interval - the black bar between each frame of video. The V-Chip reads the signal on a given program, compares it to the level pre-authorized by the viewer/parent and then either blocks or allows viewing of the program. The rating code data is re-transmitted every three to five seconds to enable blocking capability as soon as possible after tuning into a channel.

3. How are the programs classified?

In this particular system there are four classification categories for each program including: (1) intended-audience-by-age, (2) violence, (3) language, and (4) nudity/sexuality. Within each category there are six levels numbered from zero to five.

The systems uses a descriptive approach to classification based on clearly defined criteria; it provides objective information to the viewer on how certain material in a program is treated, thereby reducing subjective value judgements. This ensures that it is viewers who ultimately determine what programs they or their children are prepared to watch. This approach, also facilitates consistent classification. For the purpose of the V-Chip tests currently underway, each broadcaster is responsible for the classification and encoding of their programs.

Informed Choices - Our Shared Responsibility Page 4

4. Is it easy to use?

The system has been designed to be user-friendly. Each V-Chip equipped converter comes with a simple one-key remote control. By pressing down on the key the viewer can easily select/modify any of the categories and/or the threshold setting within each category. The level will be permanently set once the remote key is released. This information is stored into memory until such a time as the viewer wishes to change their preferred level of viewing. Blocking can be removed quickly and easily.

5. Does the V-Chip block entire programs?

Yes. In the current testing, entire programs will be blocked. While the V-Chip system is capable of blocking individual scenes only, consumers in the Phase 1 tests made it clear that they did not want scene blocking as they felt it was too disruptive; they indicated a clear preference for complete program blocking only.

6. What will I see on my screen, if a program is blocked?

When a program is blocked, an information screen will appear in its place. This screen will show the rating of the program in each of the four categories as well as the viewer's own threshold selections.

7. How much will the V-Chip cost?

The V-Chip itself is inexpensive, costing only a few dollars. It can be built into various receivers: television sets, VCR's, converters and decoders. Manufacturers of home electronic products could be encouraged to build V-Chip technology into their products, the way in which closed captioning capability is now available in new television sets. (V-Chip technology uses the same bandwidth). Future digital decoders and TVs will be able to emulate the V-Chip using software rather than an actual chip.

8. When will it be available?

A V-Chip type of system is now technologically feasible and economically affordable. The technology is simple and can be easily adapted to all types of receivers. Currently two of Canada's leading cable operators, Shaw and Rogers are participating in Phase 3 of testing the V-Chip. Phase 1 of the test established that the equipment and concept work. Phase 2 expanded the trial to a larger number of viewers in more cities across Canada with many more broadcasters participating. Phase 3 is a three month trial, scheduled to commence February 15, 1996 in Victoria, Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto and Ottawa with more than one hundred and twenty-five families and at least eight broadcasters.

The Classification System

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The classification grid has four headings.

- **Audience Category** - four familiar movie style audience target ratings.
- **Violence** - five levels from none through mild to graphic.
- **Language** - five levels from no problem language to strong and explicit.
- **Sexuality** - five levels from none to full nudity and explicit sexual activity.

View Level	(C)	(V) Violence	(L) Language	(S) Sexuality
5		Graphic	Explicit	Explicit Sexual Activity
4	R	Violence	Strong	Full Nudity
3	A	Brief	Coarse	Mild Sexuality
2	PG	Mild	Mild	Brief Nudity
1	G	Comedic	Suggestive	Mature Theme
0	E	None	None	None

E (Exempt) - Includes sports, documentaries, news, etc.

G (General Audience) - Suitable viewing for all ages.

PG (Parental Guidance) - (Advised below 13 years of age.) Themes may not be suitable for children. May contain strong violence, coarse language, mature themes and/or suggestive scenes.

A (16+) - (Suitable for 16 years of age and older.) Parents are strongly cautioned. Those under 16 should view with an adult. Will likely contain graphic violence, vulgar language, and/or full nudity.

R (Restricted) - (Restricted to 18 years of age and older.) Content not suitable for those under 18 years of age. Contains graphic or gory violence, foul language and/or sexual activity.

Violence

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1. Comedic

Generally this would apply to any program in which violence is clearly dealt with in a comedic manner. The key criteria here is that there is violence, i.e., fist-fights, gun-battles, etc., but no one gets hurt and the viewer is not meant to take it seriously. Often this will mean that the violence is exaggerated or spoofed. It is important to note that just because a program may be considered a comedy, it doesn't necessarily mean that any violence in it is comedic. The violent acts must be judged on their own.

2. Mild

This would be a program with a low-level of violence; fist-fights, slapping, hitting, slugging, hold-ups, and gun-shot wounds for example. The fact that there is some violence should be noted for viewers; however this is not hard-core, non-stop action with violent deaths.

3. Brief Violence

This classification would apply to programs that may only have one or two short scenes of violence. Nevertheless the viewer should be made aware of this; it will not be mild violence because neither the violent act nor its consequences were mild... for example someone may have died as a result of violence. If there are more than two or three brief scenes of violence then it should have a higher classification.

4. Violence

This would be any program where one of the dominant elements is violence. It means that the violence is pervasive and an integral part of the story. Basically, if the violence isn't mild and it isn't brief then it should receive this advisory.

5. Graphic

This is violence that leaves nothing to the imagination. This classification does not pertain to how many such scenes there are in a program nor how briefly it is shown on screen. If it is graphic, the viewer should be so advised. Examples include guts spilling out... decapitation... impalement... bodies being blown up... throats being sliced... close-ups/slow motion shots of gun wounds, etc. The key definition is, as previously stated, that the violence leaves nothing to the imagination... you see it all. Often the viewer's reaction is an involuntary grimace or a "yech" response!

Language

Page 7

1. Suggestive

Any dialogue of a suggestive nature; especially topics/issues that parents could be concerned about their children watching, e.g., sex... birth control... drugs... abortion... etc.

2. Mild

This would be a program that includes mild expletives, profanity and blasphemy.

3. Coarse

This would apply to any program which contained stronger expletives - basically the "f#!" word and/or language that would be offensive to minorities and ethnic groups. Even if such words are only used once, a program should be given this advisory.

4. Strong

If offensive language is used extensively throughout a program, then this should be the classification. For example; "f#! this... f#! that... f#! you... motherf#!er..."

5. Explicit

This designation can be reserved almost solely for "rap movies" where the language both spoken and on the soundtrack is extremely explicit and creative.

Sexuality/Nudity

1. Mature Themes

Programs with story lines that deal with sensitive and controversial issues (particularly in regards to children watching) including: incest... molestation... child abuse... drug/alcohol abuse... rape... kidnapping... satanic worship... suicide... homosexuality... etc.

2. Brief Nudity

Brief flashes of bare breasts and bare buttocks.

3. Mild Sexuality

Hugging, kissing and "light" touching in a sexual context. Some nudity.

4. Full Nudity

Scenes showing full frontal nudity, male and/or female, not necessarily in a sexual context. Extensive showing of bare breasts, not necessarily in a sexual context.

5. Explicit Sexual Activity

Extensive touching in a sexual context, with or without clothing... simulated intercourse... and other such activities.

3rd Trial Response

**AN EVALUATION OF
PARTICIPANT REACTION TO
THE CURRENT V-CHIP FIELD TRIAL**

TOPLINE SUMMARY

A total of five (5) focus groups were conducted, one each in Toronto, Ottawa, Calgary, Victoria and Vancouver. The objective of this qualitative research was to evaluate participant reaction to the current V-Chip field trial. All of the respondents in this research had received V-Chips and used them in their homes for a period ranging from one month to three months. The respondents had a range of children (and foster children) aged 2-17 years.

Results indicated the following:

OVERALL EVALUATION OF V-CHIP TRIAL

- Reaction to having a V-Chip in their home was generally positive. Most respondents agreed with the concept of the V-Chip and felt that it was useful in enabling them to monitor and control their children's viewing habits. Those respondents who were less positive tended to feel that the V-Chip was not necessary for their households ("my children monitor what they watch themselves") or that they did not watch enough television to make it worthwhile.
- The majority of respondents indicated that they would want to continue using a V-Chip. Those people who did not want to continue using the V-Chip felt that it was not necessary in their homes. Response was approximately evenly divided between wanting to purchase a decoder box for a one time fee of approximately \$60.00, or paying \$1.00-\$2.00 per month in addition to their regular cable fees. The majority of people also agreed that they would want to purchase a television with a built-in V-Chip, when they were next buying a television set (assuming that there was no price difference between a set with or without a V-Chip).

Usage Behaviours

- Most respondents said that the description of the classifications was sufficient for them to make their initial classification decisions. A few respondents did not read the instructions or misplaced them. In general, it appeared that most people left the V-Chip initially at the settings they had selected when the installer was present.
- Over half the respondents never changed their settings from their initial selections. The remainder tended to make only one or two changes, based on their ability or inability to see specific programs. Thus, respondents tended to raise or lower levels when they felt that a program was acceptable or not acceptable for their children.
- Most respondents tended to keep the remote on top of the television set or in a high place in the same room with the television set. A few respondents kept it on their key chain because, if they were not in the home, another adult would then be unable to change the classifications or unblock the V-Chip.
- Only a few of the children in the households indicated any interest in using the V-Chip. Children who did try and use it were generally unable to figure out how the classification system worked. A few children (8-10 years) did use the V-Chip by themselves. Most parents did not feel the need for any security on their V-Chip, although they agreed that having a pin number would solve any security concerns.
- Those respondents with children in different age groups tended to base their classification settings on the age of the youngest child in the home.
- There was a wide range of difference in the perceived age appropriateness of the V-Chip. Some respondents (particularly in larger centres) felt that a V-Chip was only necessary in homes with children under 10 years. In contrast, some respondents in smaller centres (particularly Victoria) felt that the V-Chip was appropriate and important to monitor their teenagers viewing habits.

Reaction to Classification System

- Most respondents felt that the current four level classification system was appropriate. Similarly, they felt that it was generally clear and easy to understand. There was no preference between a numerical versus a letter/word classification system.
- All of the respondents were familiar with the movie ratings classifications. However, the large majority agreed that this classification system is inadequate and often misleading. They felt that there are not enough discrete levels and that they frequently disagreed with some of the ratings. They cited PG or PG13 as examples where there are huge ranges of levels of sexuality and violence within the same classification.

- Because of the dissatisfaction with the movie ratings, respondents were particularly pleased to have the option to make their own selections based on violence, sexuality and language. Most people felt strongly that all of these classifications should continue to be available. They felt that the one classification system which they would be willing to dispense with was the movie ratings classification. In larger centres (Toronto, Ottawa, Vancouver) respondents tended to be more concerned about levels of violence while in Calgary and Victoria, respondents tended to be more concerned with levels of sexuality. These concerns may, however, have been based on the ages of their children in some cases. Both of these classifications were deemed extremely important. Respondents in the larger cities were less concerned with levels of language, reasoning that "they hear it on the street all the time", although respondents in smaller centres felt that this classification was also very important.
- The majority of respondents agreed that violence, sexuality and language were sufficient classification for television programs. A few respondents also suggested additional classifications, including "scariness" (for younger children), "sexism" and "substance abuse".
- There was considerable dissatisfaction with the perceived inconsistency of some of the V-Chip classifications. For example, respondents noted that Superhuman Samurai should have been rated for violence (in their opinions) but was at zero.
- The respondents agreed that an alternate classification system based on the age of the viewer was inadequate because "all kids are different" and because they felt that they should be the decision makers for what their children watched, regardless of age. There was no consensus on types of programming which were appropriate at different age levels or on age groupings.

EVALUATION OF THE SCOPE OF V-CHIP

- Respondents were unanimous in agreeing that the V-Chip should be operational 24 hours a day. They reasoned that children were sometimes watching during the day (because of illness, etc.) as well as late evening (because of holidays, etc.). Similarly, they strongly believed that the V-Chip should be operational on all channels. In fact, they said that they would be unlikely to get a V-Chip if it was only useful for certain channels because they could then not control what their children were watching when they were not present.

- Similarly, respondents believed that the V-Chip should be operational for all programming, although a few people questioned whether it should be operating on the news. Most people believed that they would rather have it operating on all programs and have the option of unblocking it, rather than risk having their children see things which they would rather were not available.
- Respondents strongly believed that there should not be different classifications for Canadian programming versus American programming. Most felt that their children watched both Canadian and American programming indiscriminantly and they could not understand why there would be different classifications. They felt that this would create confusion and difficulty in use.
- Many respondents expressed a concern about who would be doing the classifications of the programming. They felt that there should be input from the general population and that it should be monitored by a government or quasi government agency.
- Respondents were generally positive about the cable companies offering access to the V-Chip. Most agreed that this presented cable companies as responsible and concerned, although there were a few who expressed cynicism about why the cable companies would charge for the V-Chip.

PREFERRED MARKETING VEHICLES

- Respondents were asked how they would like to receive information about the V-Chip. Generally, they suggested that the most appropriate marketing or advertising vehicles would be on television, or in the TV Guide. Others also suggested that information be included in their cable bills, although most agreed that they tended not to read this type of notice. Some also indicated that a trial period of use would be important to them in helping them make their decision, particularly if the trial period included free specialty or pay channels.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the V-Chip trial appeared to have been successful for the current trial participants. They agreed that the V-Chip did operate, in general, as expected and that it did enable them to monitor the television their children were viewing. There was a strong desire to continue with a multi-level classification system, as opposed to one overall classification system.

Based on this research, it appears that, with the appropriate modifications as described above, the V-Chip will be extremely appealing to some members of the general population, particularly those who have a strong concern about television violence or sexuality. It is appealing among parents with children up to 16 years, although the strongest appeal is for those with children under the age of 10 years. It is recommended that future trials be done using alternate classifications (one expanded scale) and that more channels participate in the study in order to evaluate it in a "real life" environment. It is also recommended that modifications be made to the remote to make it more "user friendly".

Ottawa, 14 March 1996**Public Notice CRTC 1996-36**

In the 3 April 1995 Notice of Public Hearing, the Commission stated that, in order to achieve its long-term objectives, it is essential to give individuals the tools to make informed programming choices for themselves and for their families. The Commission notes the strong support expressed both in the written submissions, and in the representations at the public hearing and regional consultations, for the implementation of a meaningful, parent-friendly rating system for television programs, as well as for the introduction of parental control technology, in particular the "V-chip".

The Commission is encouraged by the progress made by the cable industry in testing the V-chip and commends the efforts of Shaw Communications Inc. (Shaw), Rogers Communications Inc. (Rogers) and CF Cable TV Inc. (CF Cable), as well as those broadcasters taking part in the trials. The Commission is also encouraged by undertakings made at the hearing by the Action Group on Violence on Television (AGVOT), the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) and cable representatives to continue to work within their industries, as well as with their U.S. counterparts, to establish a television program classification system. The Commission further notes commitments made by the cable industry that affordable V-chip devices will be available to consumers once a rating system is in place.

The Commission agrees with the comments made during the consultations and at the hearing that, in order for a V-chip based rating system to be a truly effective tool for parents, it must be applied to programming on U.S. services distributed in Canada as well as to programming broadcast on Canadian services. The Commission notes in this regard that approximately 25% of viewing of English programming in Canada is to U.S. signals.

Recent developments in the United States on the political, industry and academic fronts toward implementing a V-chip based rating system, coupled with strong public support in that country, indicate that differences between American and Canadian efforts in either timing or approach are quickly narrowing. The opportunity now exists for both countries to work together to implement a practical and affordable parental control system to combat TV violence.

The Commission notes the commitments made at the public hearing, in particular by the Canadian cable industry, to work with U.S. counterparts to develop a North American classification system. The Commission is also confident that, even if a North American rating system is not achieved in the near future, the cable industry will work with U.S. border broadcasters and U.S. services delivered by satellite to ensure that their programming is rated in a manner that is compatible with Canadian V-chip technology. The Commission is especially encouraged by the participation of two American broadcasters in the current V-chip trials, and by the willingness of U.S. border broadcasters, as communicated to U.S. trade officials, to participate in a classification system.

In light of these developments and commitments, the Commission is satisfied that, rather than implementing interim measures such as those suggested in Notice of Public Hearing CRTC 1995-5, the industry can move directly to common solutions with the U.S., characterized by a determined and accelerated joint effort to implement a practical and affordable parental control system. It is this strong measure of confidence that forms the basis for the Commission's policy on TV violence.

I. THE COMMISSION'S POLICY ON TV VIOLENCE

The main objective of the Commission's approach has been to protect children from the harmful effects of television violence, while preserving freedom of expression for creators and choice for adult viewers. To accomplish this, the Commission has adopted a cooperative strategy, with a reliance on industry self-regulation. The Commission's approach has also been guided by the principle that all elements of the broadcasting system should appropriately contribute to the attainment of the objectives so that Canadian children will be protected from harmful programming regardless of its source.

The Commission has focused its efforts in three specific areas. In particular, it has:

- enlisted the cooperation of the broadcasting industry to develop strong, credible, self-regulatory codes;
- focused on giving individuals the tools to make informed programming choices for themselves and for their families; and
- encouraged the involvement of all players, including the broadcasting industry, parents, teachers and the medical community, to change attitudes through public awareness and media literacy programs.

In keeping with this approach, and taking into consideration the comments presented during the public process and relevant developments in the area, the Commission announces the following policy on television violence.

Providing Tools for Parents

In accordance with commitments set out at the hearing, the launch date for an industry-wide parental control system shall be September 1996. As of that date, licensees of programming undertakings will be responsible for encoding a rating for violence in the programs they broadcast (in the categories set out below), using a system that is compatible with the V-chip.

For their part, distribution undertakings will be responsible by the same date for making affordable V-chip devices available to subscribers. V-chip technology enables individuals to set a threshold level of violence that they deem to be appropriate, and will ensure that all programming with a rating above this level will not appear on their television screen.