

Letter to FCC.

April 24th, 2013

Hello,

I am a retired experimental researcher in education. I am concerned about the possible social effects any policy changes that increase exposure of the public, including children, to unwanted nudity and vulgar speech. I believe allowing the proposed change in policy (13-86) would foster a form of sexual abuse of the public.

While I am supportive of freedom of speech, I believe indecency should not be included as a protected form of speech in public broadcasting, even if the indecency is non-sexual or isolated. I would like to raise five specific issues for your consideration:

1. Private broadcasting of indecency is available to the public to fill any moral or ethical freedom requirement. I believe freedom of speech is a mechanism to ensure the free sharing of ideas. But freedom always requires responsibility, and vulgarity and nudity are irresponsible ways to share ideas. We just don't need public exposure to indecency, and there is no compelling public interest in this proposal.
2. The role of government regulation is to protect the entire public from harm and abuse. The public square, be it a broadcast network or a public building, is a place where we ALL meet together, people with all sorts of beliefs and values. I believe the government should protect the sensitivities of the many diverse groups and individuals who participate in public entertainment and discourse to the degree possible. A sufficiently large percentage of the citizens of the US would find this change abusive and harmful to obligate the government to protect them to the extent possible.
3. Virtual exposure is similar to real exposure. Why do we not allow females (or males) to parade through public buildings in the nude? Because of the problems that can cause, as unwanted exposure to nudity can be offensive to many people. Public is public, if nudity is not allowed in one public venue, why would it be allowed in another? I don't believe indecency in public broadcasting is less important than indecency in other public domains. Many studies of effects of technology, including video/TV, on humans show that virtual exposure to a topic can be just as effective (or in this case, offensive) as real exposure. This is a well known phenomenon in educational technology research (my field).
4. The proposed changes are sexist and degrading to females. Due to the gender bias and invasion of personal values by this proposal, many females would feel humiliated. Males would be put in a superior social position by this, as male nudity is not included in the proposed change, therefore, males would be perceived to have higher value, as they are not reduced to flesh objects in public.

The proposal is sexist, as well as degrading to females (and males), many of whom would object to the broadcasts.

5. Probable outcomes for this change would likely include more negatives than positives. What are the positive outcomes of this type of policy change? What good might come to the public from exposure of all ages to female nudity and vulgar speech? I can not think of any good other than freedom of expression, which as mentioned is already available in private broadcasting (including online). However, the negative outcomes of this type of policy change are obvious. After repeated exposure, young people would be more likely to objectify and trivialize female nudity. Younger people would become conditioned to perceive vulgar speech and female nudity as acceptable in the 'public square.' Who knows where that could lead. Also, those viewers with undiscovered tendencies towards sexual addiction or promiscuity might become stimulated to become curious too young, before they are emotionally and cognitively prepared to deal with the situation. This policy change could have many complex negative outcomes over time that I believe could significantly outweigh any positive benefits.

I believe that to even propose this measure shows a serious lack of clear thinking, and I hope the FCC will take seriously the public comment, including my own, on this matter. Please do not alter the current indecency policies for public broadcasting.

Thank-you for your consideration.

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