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_x000B_STUDY: V-CHIP CONTENT RATINGS ABSENT FROM MOST PROGRAMS

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While age-based television ratings are applied in a way that generally reflects programming content, the more detailed advisories known as content descriptors favored by parents and advocacy groups are not used on the majority of TV shows containing sex, violence or adult language, according to a new study released today.

Conducted for the Kaiser Family Foundation by experts at the University of California, Santa Barbara, the study---titled "Rating the TV Ratings: One Year Out"---also found that while children's programs contain a significant amount of violence, most of it is not categorized in a way that would enable parents to prevent children from viewing it using V-chip technology.

"The V-chip was meant to give parents the option of blocking out violent programs, but the system will only work if such shows receive a 'V' rating. If the industry doesn't accurately label its programs, the blocking technology cannot work effectively," said Dale Kunkel, an associate professor of communication at UCSB and the lead researcher on the study.

The study examined more than 1,000 hours of television programming on 11 channels, which were selected to represent network and independent broadcast stations as well as basic and premium cable. Rather than simply counting the number of incidents of violence, sex or adult language in a show, the study analyzed the level and intensity of such content as well as the context in which it waspresented.

Key findings include:

More than nine out of 10 (92 percent) shows with sexual behavior did not receive an "S" content descriptor; these programs averaged two scenes of moderate sexual behavior per show.

Nearly eight out of 10 (79 percent) shows containing violence did not receive a "V" content descriptor; these programs averaged five scenes of "moderate" violence per show.

More than eight out of 10 (83 percent) shows with sexual dialogue did not receive a "D" content descriptor; these programs averaged nearly four (3.9) scenes of "substantial" sexual dialogue per show.

Nine out of 10 (91 percent) shows with adult language did not receive an "L" content descriptor; these programs averaged more than four (4.8 percent) scenes with adult language per show.

Eight out of 10 (81 percent) children's shows containing violence did not receive an "FV" (fantasy violence) content descriptor.

The study found that the failure to flag the majority of TV sex and violence is the result of several factors, including industry policies, NBC's decision not to use content descriptors on any of its programs, and the design of the system as described in the guidelines agreed to by the industry and parents organizations.

The new TV rating system, combining both age-based rating and content descriptors, was launched in October 1997 as the result of an agreement among advocacy groups, parents organizations, policymakers, and representatives of the television industry. The ratings are designed to work in conjunction with the V-chip device, which will enable parents to block shows with certain ratings from their homes. The V-chip will be available in some TV sets by next January, and in all new

sets in January 2000.

Other UCSB researchers who participated in the study include Professor Edward Donnerstein, and graduate students Wendy Jo Maynard Farinola, Kirstie M. Cope, Erica Biely, Lara Zwarun, and Emma Rollin.

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