

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3405

June 30, 1993

George Gerbner, Ph.D.  
The Annenberg School for Communication  
University of Pennsylvania  
234 Golf View Road  
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Dear Dr. Gerbner:

I am writing to ask your assistance on a project to produce a violence report card, similar to what I am proposing in legislation I have introduced in the U.S. Senate. As you know, I have introduced a bill, S. 973, The Violence Report Card Act, which would require the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to publish a violence report card for network and cable prime time and Saturday morning television shows. Under my bill, the FCC would be required to publish this report card on a quarterly basis.

I would like to do a sample report card that accomplishes what my legislation proposes. Specifically, I would like your assistance in creating a report card for a recent week of television. It is my understanding that you have already done a fair amount of research and that you have data collected on the levels of violence on a week of television.

I would like to establish a report card that contains the following elements:

- (1) A listing of all the prime time television shows during one week (whichever week your research reviewed);
- (2) A violence rating for each show, identifying the level of violence occurring in each show in a manner understandable and useable for the average viewer;
- (3) A comparison of the shows, grouped by networks, to show which networks used the most violence; and
- (4) A listing of the program sponsors (national advertisers) with a correlation made with the violence rating of the show(s) they sponsored.

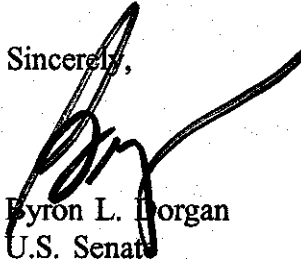
Although you have the data on violence for each show, you may not have any information on who sponsored those programs. However, if you have any suggestions or can be of any assistance on how we can attain that information, I would be very grateful for your guidance.

June 30, 1993  
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I am hoping that you would be willing to use your data and work with me to establish a model report card that rates violence on prime time and Saturday morning television shows and correlates those ratings with program sponsors. The Senate Commerce Committee will be holding a hearing on my legislation in late July. I would like to complete this project in advance of that hearing. This will provide the Committee and the invited witnesses a sample of how my legislation would be implemented.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you. Please feel free to contact me or Greg Rohde on my staff if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Byron L. Dorgan  
U.S. Senator

*Thank you!*

BYRON DORGAN  
NORTH DAKOTA

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*Henry July 28*  
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*1993*

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Sincerely,



Byron L. Dorgan  
U.S. Senator

*Thank you!*

FAX COVER SHEET

TO: Dr. George BERNER (715) 898-2000

*Greg Rolde*

FROM: U.S. SENATOR BYRON L. DORGAN'S OFFICE  
Phone: (202) 224-2551  
Fax: (202) 224-1193

DATE:

SUBJECT:

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:

COVER + \_\_\_\_\_ PAGES TO FOLLOW

THE ANNENBERG SCHOOL FOR  
COMMUNICATION

UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

3620 Walnut Street Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104-6220

July 16, 1993

The Honorable Byron L. Dorgan  
United States Senate

Dear Senator Dorgan:

Attached is a sample Violence Report Card, as requested. All major network prime time dramatic programs for the week indicated are ranked according to a "Violence Score" which is the sum of the rate of violent scenes per hour and the duration of violence in minutes per hour. The two individual measures are also shown.

A total of 60 programs (including movies) were recorded and analyzed. Only 21 contained no violence at all.

There was no time or budget to list Saturday morning shows and the hundreds of commercials during the week, which we also have on tape. Listing commercials would also pose two problems. First, not all advertisers control the placement of their commercials. Secondly, perhaps they deserve a warning before being listed.

There are, however, other more serious problems with such a list. I hope you will consider them seriously and allow us to consult with you before their use because the use of the list can backfire and damage both your efforts and ours. My concerns are the following.

1. The ratings are based on a single episode or movie. This is the least reliable indicator of policy. We do not publish titles of single episodes because they can vary widely. We believe that a representative sample of each show is needed to provide reliable information. We publish aggregate figures for all programs for the sample week, representing network policy trends over the years.

2. An indiscriminate list of titles will be quickly discredited by the networks if it includes legitimate portrayals such as a program about the Civil War (which may even be assigned as a school assignment) as well as the purely commercial gratuitous violence.

3. The powerful public relations machinery of the broadcasters will scrutinize the list not only to discredit what it can but also to quibble with definitions and to find examples that may sound ridiculous to those who have not seen or analyzed the programs. We had such an experience

the first and only time we gave access to actual program titles.

4. Finally, when one gets down to programs with one or two incidents of a few seconds duration, indiscriminately listed along with violence-saturated programs, one is on even more shaky grounds. Perhaps the "top ten" or "top twenty" might be a more acceptable.

Basically, however, we believe that, given time and the opportunity to consult, a sound and defensible "Violence Report Card" can be developed. But a raw list of single programs taken from one week is too vulnerable and may jeopardize the whole effort. I will call you or Greg Rhode to discuss further what might be done.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "George Gerbner".

George Gerbner  
Professor of Communication and Dean Emeritus

cc: Profs. Michael Morgan  
Nancy Signorielli

VIOLENCE REPORT CARD  
 Sample; not for publication  
 11/7/92-11/13/92 Three major networks

Rank	Title	V I O L E N C E		
		Score (Scenes+ duration)	Scenes per hr.	Duration min. per hr.
1	MAXIMUM SECURITY: LOCKDOWN, NBC, 30 min.	28.10	22.00	6.10
2	THE HARD WAY, NBC, 120 min.	27.18	14.00	13.18
3	MAXIMUM SECURITY: JET THREAT, NBC, 30 m.	20.03	12.00	8.03
4	C.A.T. SQUAD, CBS, 60 min.	12.22	6.00	6.22
5	THE COMMISH, ABC, 60 min.	10.00	5.00	5.00
6	MAXIMUM SECURITY: LARCENY INC, NBC, 30 m.	8.97	8.00	.97
7	BOB, CBS, 30 min.	8.23	8.00	.23
8	CIVIL WARS, ABC, 60 min.	7.73	3.00	4.73
9	MAXIMUM SECURITY: REACH OUT AND ROB, NBC 30 min.	7.10	6.00	1.10
10	FRESH PRINCE OF BEL AIR, NBC, 30 min.	6.23	6.00	.23
11	QUANTUM LEAP, NBC, 60 min.	5.68	5.00	.68
12	SINATRA PART-I, CBS, 180 min.	4.71	4.33	.38
13	LAW AND ORDER, NBC, 60 min.	4.57	4.00	.57
14	REASONABLE DOUBTS, NBC, 60 min.	4.33	3.00	1.33
15	EVENING SHADE, CBS, 30 min.	4.23	4.00	.23
16	HANGING WITH MR COOPER, ABC, 30 min.	4.20	4.00	.20
17	HOMEFRONT, ABC, 60 min.	4.18	4.00	.18
18	COMING TO AMERICA, CBS, 150 min.	3.90	2.80	1.10
19	DOOGIE HOUSER #2, ABC, 30 min.	3.67	2.00	1.67
20	IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT, CBS, 60 min.	3.40	3.00	.40
21	DOOGIE HOUSER #1, ABC, 30 min.	3.23	2.00	1.23
22	SISTERS, NBC, 60 min.	3.08	3.00	.08
23	FAMILY MATTERS, ABC, 30 min.	2.40	2.00	.40
24	MAJOR DAD, CBS, 30 min.	2.33	2.00	.33
25	THE POWERS THAT BE, NBC, 60 min.	2.25	2.00	.25
26	HOME IMPROVEMENT, ABC, 30 min.	2.23	2.00	.23
27	COLUMBO: DEATH HITS THE JACKPOT, ABC 120 m.	2.22	.50	1.72
28	ILL FLY AWAY, NBC, 60 min.	2.17	2.00	.17
29	A DIFFERENT WORLD, NBC, 60 min.	2.12	2.00	.12
30	EMPTY NEST, NBC, 30 min.	2.07	2.00	.07
31	GOLDEN PALACE, CBS, 30 min.	2.07	2.00	.07
32	GOING TO EXTREMES, ABC, 60 min.	2.03	2.00	.03
33	DELTA, ABC, 30 min.	2.03	2.00	.03
34	WINGS, NBC, 30 min.	2.03	2.00	.03
35	DESIGNING WOMEN, CBS, 30 min.	2.03	2.00	.03
36	WILLING TO KILL: THE TEXAS CHEERLEADER, ABC, 60 min.	1.25	1.00	.25
37	KNOTS LANDING, CBS, 60 min.	1.12	1.00	.12
38	LA LAW, NBC, 60 min.	1.03	1.00	.03
39	SINATRA PART-II, CBS, 120 min.	1.02	1.00	.02

Programs with no violence (21 of 60)

BROOKLYN BRIDGE: IN THE STILL OF THE N.	CBS	30
NURSES	NBC	30
LIFE GOES ON	ABC	60
HEARTS AFIRE	CBS	30
BLOSSOM	NBC	30
MURPHY BROWN	CBS	30
FATAL MEMORIES	NBC	120
LOVE AND WAR	CBS	30
NORTHERN EXPOSURE	CBS	60
FULL HOUSE	ABC	30
ROSEANNE	ABC	30
COACH	ABC	30
THE WONDER YEARS	ABC	30
SEINFELD	NBC	30
MAD ABOUT YOU	NBC	30
ROOM FOR TWO	ABC	30
CHEERS	NBC	30
STEP BY STEP	ABC	30
DINOSAURS	ABC	30
CAMP WILDER	ABC	30
PICKET FENCES	CBS	60