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Focus Words

rating | ban | interact | occur | complex



Weekly Passage

Movies were not rated in the U.S. for many decades. Then in 1968, the Motion Picture Association of America began rating films for children and adults. Ratings are usually given instead of banning or restricting a film. Rating movies is complex because people disagree about the specific factors that should be included in deciding a rating, such as sex, violence, and profanity. In the United States, movies in which sexual activity occurs are often restricted to older viewers, while in countries such as Germany or France sexual content is not such a big deal. However, violent movies receive restrictive ratings or are censored in those countries while in the United States they are not.

Today, video games, books, TV shows, and music also get rated. Those who like the rating system say it helps people decide if a movie is right for them or their children. Parents can tell quickly if a movie might offend them and whether or not it is okay for their children. Parents who are more worried about the moral content of a movie or game, rather than how many times a swear word is used, can use an alternative rating system.

While the names and meanings of the ratings have changed over the years, today there are five possible ratings for movies. G stands for General Audiences. It means that there is no sex, violence, or profanity, and the movie is fine for all ages. PG stands for Parental Guidance Suggested. It means that some of the movie content might not be okay for kids. PG-13 gives parents a stronger caution. It indicates that some of the movie might not be okay for kids

under 13. R is for Restricted. R means you must be with an adult to even get in the theater. Finally there is NC-17 for No One 17 and Under Admitted.

Some people don't like rating systems because they may be used for maximizing profits rather than protecting the public. Movies rated PG and PG-13 make more money than those rated R and some Hollywood executives lower standards for major movie studios to make sure that the film gets a certain rating. Parents who do not interact with their children or pay attention to their interests may not even know what a certain rating on a video game or book means. Furthermore, a young gamer who is stopped from buying a title because it is "too mature" might try to have someone older buy it. Making rating systems work is complex.

What do you think about this? Do you think people should be restricted in what they can buy or see? Are rating systems necessary?

TEACHER

Reading Comprehension/Discussion Questions:

- ▶ What is the purpose of ratings?
- ▶ Why do some people think that rating systems are not fair?
- ▶ Does your family pay attention to movie or game ratings?
- ▶ What do the United States rating systems think is worse, sex or violence?

**Unit 2.16 -
Violence and media:
are ratings systems necessary?
Focus Word Chart**

Word	Meaning	Forms		
		Inflectional	Basic Word Classes	Prefixes/Suffixes
rating	(n.) - a classification, an ordering	rate (n.) rates rated	rate (v.)	
ban	(v.) - to forbid	ban (n.) bans banned banning	ban (v.)	
interact	(v.) - to communicate, to have social contact with	interacts interacted interacting	act	interaction interactive interactively
occur	(v.) - to happen	occurs occurred occurring		reoccur reoccurrence occurrence
complex	(adj.) - complicated; of many parts	complexly	complex (n.)	complexity complexities

Unit 2.16 - Violence and media: are ratings systems necessary? Problem of the Week



Instead of **banning** adult content in movies, the Motion Picture Association of America gives **ratings** to let viewers know what **occurs** in a movie. The **interactions** between a movie's creators and the MPAA can be **complex**. For example, if a movie's creators are unhappy with a rating, they can edit and re-submit their movie to the MPAA until they get the rating they want.

Rating	Average Earnings Per Film 1995 – 2010
PG-13	\$41,237,141
G	\$37,692,288
PG	\$36,591,876
R	\$14,934,641
Not Rated	\$740,664

Option 1: According to the table, which of the following is true?

- A) If a movie is rated PG-13, it will definitely earn more money than a movie rated R.
- B) On average, movies rated PG-13 earned more money than movies rated PG.
- C) On average, movies rated R earned more money than PG-rated movies.
- D) Movies that were not rated did not earn any money.

Option 2: If these average earnings stay true, how much is it worth to a movie's creators to have a rating changed from R to PG-13?

Answer: \$26,302,500

Math Discussion Question: From 1995 – 2010, the average movie with a G, PG, or PG-13 **rating** earned much more than the average movie with an R rating. Why? Here is one possible explanation: for some parents, watching movies is a way to **interact** with their kids. They see a movie together, and then talk about it afterwards. This kind of **occurrence** helps parents and kids build strong relationships. Is this a good explanation? Do R-rated movies earn less money because parents don't take their kids to see them? Or is the situation more **complex**?

Nash Information Services. (2010). Top-grossing MPAA ratings 1995 to 2010. *The Numbers: Box Office Data, Movie Stars, Idle Speculation*. Retrieved on October 26, 2010 from <http://www.the-numbers.com/market/MPAARatings/>

Violence and media: are ratings systems necessary? Debating the Issue



GO!

I. Get ready...

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

A The rating systems in place now provide useful guidance for families.

B The rating systems we use should be improved and expanded.

C Rating systems are unnecessary. People should watch or play what they want.

D The rating systems we have are fine but parents and vendors need to pay more attention.

E _____

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

...because...

I disagree with part of that...

An example might help convince me. Can you give me an example?

What part of the passage makes you think that?

2. Get set...

Be ready to provide evidence to back up your position during your class discussion or debate. Jot down a few quick notes:

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Whatever the debate format, ask students to use academically productive talk when arguing their positions. In particular, students should provide reasons and evidence to back up their assertions. It may be helpful to read these sample positions to illustrate some possibilities, but students should be encouraged to take their own positions about the issue at hand.

Unit 2.16 - Violence and media: are ratings systems necessary? Science Activity

In today's lesson on the brain, Professor Seemy is talking about mirror neurons.

"When I touch my ear, neurons fire," Professor Seemy says. "When I watch *you* touch *your* ear, something interesting **occurs**. Some of those same neurons fire again. We call these neurons *mirror neurons*."

Professor Seemy continues. "Mirror neurons help us **interact** with other people. When we see someone smile, mirror neurons remind us what it feels like to smile. They also help us imitate **complex** behavior, like dance steps."

Jamal has been studying media violence, and he has an idea. "Hey, mirror neurons could explain why TV violence makes people violent in real life," he says. "When a kid watches Spiderman punch, mirror neurons help her understand punching, and also help her imitate it."

"Wait, Jamal. Does TV really make people more violent?" asks Jennifer. "If it does, I could understand why some people want to **ban** extreme violence in the media."

"A great question," says Professor Seemy. "Let's take a look at the data!"

Question:

Does TV-watching lead to violence?

Hypothesis:

Children who watch more TV will be more violent later in life.

Materials:

- ▶ data set from 750 children, who were observed for 17 years



This activity is designed to help you practice thinking like a scientist and to use this week's focus words. Sometimes the data are based on real research, but they should never be considered true or factual.

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Real Research

-The article cited below describes the long-term study whose results appear in the WG table. The authors of the study, Jeffrey Johnson of Columbia University and his colleagues, recorded the childhood viewing habits of over 700 subjects starting in 1975. The authors claim that even when other variables are controlled for (such as parental income and education levels), a significant effect of TV-watching on violent behavior remains. The article notes that TV may contain up to 25 violent acts in a single hour.

Mone, G. (2002, March 29). Excessive TV-watching during adolescence may lead to violent behavior in adulthood. *Scientific American*. Retrieved on February 19, 2010 from <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=excessive-tv-watching-dur>

-The literature review cited below concludes that, while there are still questions about how media violence affects people, "the overall size of the effect is large enough to place it in the category of known threats to public health."

Huesmann, L.R. and Taylor, L.D. (2006, April). The role of media violence in violent behavior. *Annual Review of Public Health*:27: 393-415.

-The interview cited below summarizes a neuroscientist's research into mirror neurons and explains his hypothesis that they play an important role in imitative violence.

Lehrer, J. (2008, July 1). The mirror neuron revolution: Explaining what makes humans social. [Interview with Marco Iacoboni]. *Scientific American*. Retrieved on February 26, 2010 from <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=the-mirror-neuron-revolut>

Classroom Discussion

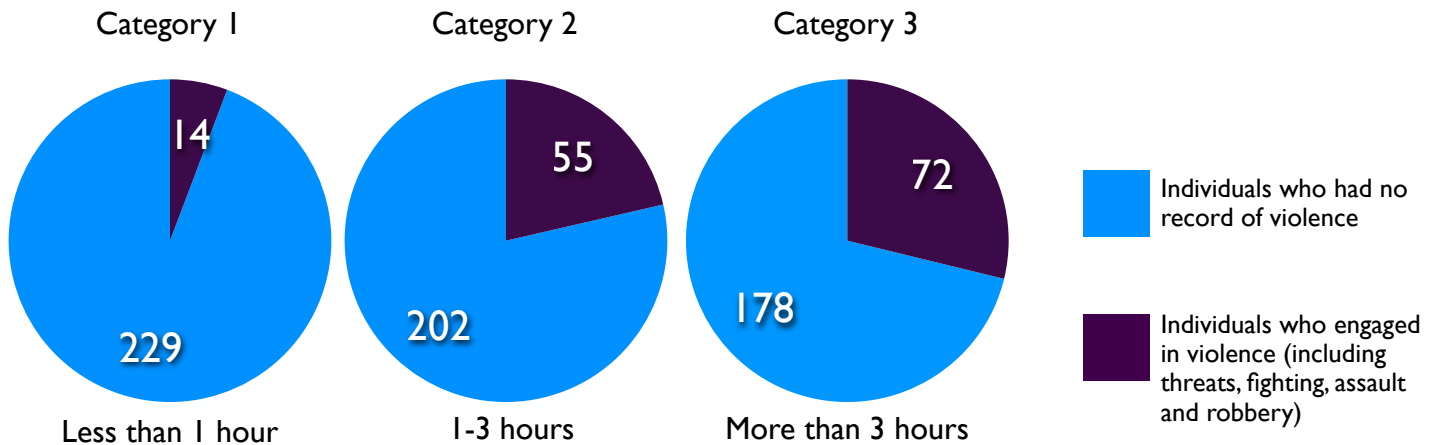
Summarize the real research. (Excessive childhood TV-watching corresponds to more violence later in life.) Are students surprised by this finding? Why or why not? How does the finding connect to this week's topic? Which side(s) of the debate could it support?

Procedure:

1. Divide subjects into categories according to childhood TV habits.
2. Count the number of subjects in each category who committed a violent act.

Data:

Daily Childhood TV Watching



Conclusion:

Is the hypothesis supported or not by the data?

Supported

What evidence supports your conclusion?

More childhood TV-watching corresponds to more violence later in life.

How would you make this a better experiment?

Encourage students to consider sample size, number of trials, control of variables, whether the procedure is a true measure of the question, whether the experiment can be repeated by other scientists, data collection and recording systems, and other potential explanations for the outcome. Students should understand that these simple experiments represent the beginning of an exploration, not the end. If time permits, have students suggest how the experiment could be strengthened, emphasizing the use of the target words in the discussion.

