

Media Watchdog Warns of 'Unprecedented' Sexualized Kids Content

In the wake of controversy over a same-sex kiss in Netflix's animated series "Jurassic World: Camp Cretaceous," a media expert is sounding the alarm on increasingly sexualized content in kids' shows.

Melissa Henson, program director at the Parents Television and Media Council, a media monitoring organization devoted to protecting kids and families, told CBN's *Faithwire* she believes two converging trends are at the heart of this troubling phenomenon.

"One is the infantilization of adults, and the other is the sexualization of children, and those have sort of met in an uncomfortable place," Henson said. "At the same time, we're seeing networks producing animated programs that they claim are for adult audiences. They're mature-rated, but the themes and the characters involved are often minors."

She continued, "We're looking at programs like 'Big Mouth' on Netflix or 'Human Resources' on Netflix, which sexualize children in some very troubling ways."

Henson said some of these series are rated TV-MA, indicating the content is for "mature audiences," yet invoke younger characters or themes.

"Either they're lying about who the target audience is for these programs, or they're encouraging adult viewers to sexualize and view children—you know, 12, 13-years-old—as sexual objects. Either way, it's pretty disturbing."

These issues, Henson said, have become increasingly concerning

throughout the COVID pandemic, as families and individuals increasingly turned to streaming platforms to consume entertainment.

“The difficulty is ... this is an unregulated industry,” she said. “Broadcast television was subject to FCC indecency regulations. Even original cable programming, while not subject to FCC regulations, was held in check by advertisers.”

With streaming services overwhelmingly supported by subscriber revenue, Henson said “anything goes” when it comes to content, lamenting the sexual and adult themes emerging on a scale “you would never have seen on broadcast or cable television.”

But it’s the aforementioned inclusion of younger characters in these stories that is elevating these concerns.

Find more help and guidance on the Parents Television and Media Council website.

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