

This Kids Favorite Exposes Young Minds to Adult Content Every 3 Minutes

New research from the Parents Television Council shows that the over 4 million children ages 2-11 who watched ABC's *The Muppets* were exposed to adult-themed content every three minutes and 38 seconds during the first four episodes. The iconic stars of the show, Kermit and Miss Piggy, have delivered nearly half of all sexual innuendos and references on the show. Additionally, one bar scene in the 4th episode was long enough to consume almost one-quarter of the show's screen time, during which Muppet characters were shown drinking and becoming drunk from beer, wine and hard liquor.

Contrast that with *The Muppets* series producer Bob Kushell's recent comments: "We know our audience is going to be families watching, adults watching with their children, so we're not pitching stories or thinking of stories that are, like Norman Lear stories from the 1970s." (Source: TV Line)

Nielsen data indicates that over one million children ages 2-11 have watched *The Muppets* each week. And of the children who are watching, the ratio of young children ages 2-11 is more than twice that of older children ages 12-17.

"Kermit and Miss Piggy, please meet Joe Camel," said PTC President Tim Winter. "It is a tragedy that one of the most iconic children's television shows in history, *The Muppets*, would be so filled with adult content—sexual innuendoes, sexual references, drugs and alcohol, to be exact—that it would become too toxic for children. Our research shows that *The Muppets* isn't a show for kids, yet it was supposedly created for families to watch together. Perhaps that's why ratings for the show have continued to sink every week.

“It’s hard to imagine another primetime TV show that, in theory, should be safe for parents and children to watch together other than *The Muppets*. But you have Miss Piggy talking about having plastic surgery on her breasts and buttocks, Kermit talking about ‘cross-promoting’ with a female character, and a variety of characters drinking at a bar. The disconnect Hollywood has from the rest of America over a definition of ‘family programming’ is astounding.

“Make no mistake, children are inherently attracted to *The Muppets*, and over a million young children are watching the program each week. No matter how ‘edgy’ ABC or the show’s producers want to make *The Muppets*, kids still reasonably believe the show is for them. We urge the network and everyone involved with this program to rethink the dangerous direction of this program. And in the meantime, we urge parents to be warned about letting their children watch *The Muppets*.”

Research Background:

The Parents Television Council’s Research Department reviewed the first four episodes of *The Muppets* for the 2015-2016 Fall season and examined them for adult-themed content and messaging. Violence was not included in the analysis. However, the few instances of violence were mild. Also, there were a few instances of mild language (“suck” and “hell”). These were not counted in the data. Therefore, relative to “language,” only sexual language was included in the study. The episodes included in the study aired on the following dates: 9/22/15, 9/29/15, 10/6/15 and 10/13/15.

Major Findings:

- In just four episodes, there were a total of 33 instances of adult-themed content. That is equivalent to one instance of adult-themed content airing every three minutes and 38 seconds.
- Most of the adult-themed content within the show

consisted of sexual innuendos or alcohol and drug references/depictions.

- Forty-six percent of all the adult-themed content was sexual (45.5 percent).
- Fifty-five percent of all the adult-themed content consisted of alcohol or drug references and depictions (54.5 percent).
- The following Muppet characters delivered sexual, alcohol, or drug-related content: Miss Piggy, Kermit, Fozzie, Scooter, the band, Yolanda, Animal, Rizzo, Sam, Zoot, Dr. Bunsen Honeydew, Bobo, Waldorf, Floyd, Uncle Deadly, Pepe, Sweetums and Swedish Chef.
- Over 70 percent of all alcohol and drug references/depictions aired in the two most recent episodes—episodes #3 and #4 (72.2 percent).
- The number of instances doesn't tell the full story of how much adult-themed content a child watching *The Muppets* would consume. Screen time (the amount of time allotted for a scene, actor, subject matter or show) is also important to consider. One bar scene in the fourth episode of *The Muppets* was counted as one instance. However, the scene was long enough to consume almost one-quarter of the show's screen time. During this scene, the Muppets were drinking and shown becoming drunk from beer, wine and hard liquor.
- Eighty percent of all the sexual content aired in the first two episodes (80 percent) was in the form of sexual innuendos (for example: "too many women, too many towns"); sexual references (for example: "sex it to me sake boy"); and anatomical references (for example: "I'm getting this thing hiked over Hiatus").
- Almost half of all sexual content in the study was delivered by the two most famous, iconic children's characters: Kermit the Frog and Miss Piggy (46.7 percent).

Additional information about this research, including charts,

graphs and dialogue examples, can be found [here](#).