

# **THE RUDE AND THE CRUDE**

*Profanity in Popular Entertainment*

*Presented by:*

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return to these topics in further studies to chart the course of what President Clinton has called “the banalization of sex and violence in the popular culture.”

The sample for this study includes (1) 284 broadcast and cable television shows, representing two episodes of every original fictional television series, apart from daytime soaps and children’s programming, that aired during the 1998 - 99 season (one episode in the case of midseason replacement series); (2) 50 of the highest rated made-for-TV movies; (3) 188 different music videos, representing four full days of music video programming on MTV; and (4) 50 top-grossing films that were released in theaters during 1998. The sampling rationale and procedures are described in greater detail in “Merchandizing Mayhem” on pages two through four.

We coded all dialogue containing profanity or coarse language, including scatological humor and euphemistic or slang terms for body parts or aspects of sexuality. We divided this material into three categories. Among curses or expletives, we differentiated between strong or “hard-core” and mild profanity. In addition, we noted the use of coarse terms that were not used as expletives.

The most extreme or hard-core profanity consists of terms that are euphemistically called “four-letter words.” In fact, this category included five of comedian George Carlin’s notorious “Seven Words You Can’t Say on Radio or TV.” This comedy routine was referenced in a 1978 Supreme Court decision (*Federal Communications Commission v. Pacifica Foundation*) that dealt with the FCC’s power to regulate broadcast speech. (We placed two of Carlin’s “seven dirty words” in our

## AMOUNT OF PROFANITY

As Table 1 shows, we calculated a total of 4249 instances of profane or coarse language across all genres we studied. Of those, about three in five (59 percent, n=2507) involved mild profanity. The remaining two-fifths were roughly evenly divided between hard core expressions (23 percent, n=966) and coarse language (18 percent, n=776). Profanity and crudity appeared frequently in all forms of popular entertainment, but there were significant differences among the genres. (See Table 2.) Those without restrictions – first run movies and premium cable stations – purveyed frequent hard-core profanity, while basic cable and broadcast stations had to settle for tamer expressions. Thus, the more expensive forms of popular culture offer their customers the foulest language.

Theatrical movies had the highest overall amount (1933), split fairly evenly between hard-core terms (41 percent) and mild cursing (47 percent), with the remainder (12 percent) consisting of course expressions. But the two most frequently used curses in the 50 movies were both variants of four-letter words. “S\_\_\_” or “bull\_\_\_” had 410 mentions, while “f\_\_\_” or “motherf\_\_\_\_\_” registered 365 mentions. In contrast, broadcast TV, which scored the second highest frequency (n=1464), refrains from using the most extreme expressions. Since mild cursing is as far as broadcast currently goes, three out of five incidents fell into this category. Most of these were “hells” and “damns”. What distinguished broadcast shows from all other genres was their heavy reliance on coarse language. Nearly two in five (38 percent) episodes involved coarse language, more than twice the proportion for any other genre.

**TABLE 2**  
**DISTRIBUTION OF PROFANITY (%)**

|                  | HARDCORE  | MILD      | COARSE    | TOTAL       |
|------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| Broadcast TV     | —         | 61        | 38        | 100%        |
| Basic Cable TV   | 0         | 86        | 14        | 100%        |
| Premium Cable TV | 46        | 42        | 12        | 100%        |
| Movies           | 41        | 47        | 12        | 100%        |
| Music Videos     | 0         | 85        | 15        | 100%        |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>23</b> | <b>59</b> | <b>18</b> | <b>100%</b> |

— = Less than ½ %

## **DIRTY DOZEN THEATRICAL MOVIES**

Among the 50 top-grossing movies that we coded, the dozen with the most profanity ranged in tone from tragedy to farce. (See Table 3.) Few big screen subjects escaped the crudity and cursing that pervades recent box office hits. There was also considerable range in the amount of profanity, compared to other forms of popular entertainment. The entries on this list ranged from a low of 60 to a high of 175 instances of profanity, but all contained hard-core material. For six out of ten films, hard-core cursing constituted over half of all profanity we coded.

“Primary Colors” took the number one spot with 175 episodes, over three in five (62 percent, n=109) of which were hard core. In this thinly fictionalized version of the Bill Clinton presidential campaign, many scenes started with a string of profanity, ranging in tone from anger to humor. Beyond varied and liberal exclamations involving “bitch” and the f-word were such inventive crudities as “I don’t know about his cajonies to judge . . . They’re big, but they’re glass.”

The action-adventure flick “Lethal Weapon 4” placed second with 153 instances of profanity, 45 percent of them (n=69) hard core. In the fourth installment of this long-running series, newly promoted police captains Riggs and Murtaugh investigate several crimes linked to a dangerous gang that is smuggling immigrants from China. The subsequent car chases, fight scenes and explosions are accompanied by frequent curses and coarse language. Profanity in this movie had a notably casual tone. Typical lines include “The general’s gonna be s\_\_\_ing kittens,” and “Consider this a down payment on a future ass chewing.”

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Following in third place was the sex-heavy comedy “Something About Mary.” Just over half (52 percent) of its 128 instances of profanity were hard core. Much of the profanity punctuated the movie’s frequent sexual jokes, comments and gags surrounding the love-struck Ted as he attempted to win the heart of the gorgeous girl he had worshiped since high school. Like many other movies on this list, the f-word in all its guises was de rigeur. Among the more distinctive terms were “You insensitive pr\_\_k,” “Take a look at what this dumb nuts did,” and “How am I driving? Call 1-800 EAT S\_\_\_.” This film was especially fond of scatological language such as “buttplug” and “dips\_\_\_.” It is the sort of film in which characters don’t simply use a restroom when they need one. Instead they announce, “I gotta pee.”

In fourth place was another police drama “The Negotiator,” with 127 episodes of profanity, 67 percent (n=83) of them hard-core. This movie had the highest proportion of hard-core cursing on our list. The profanity in this film pervaded both its violent and nonviolent scenes, as the main character took over a section of police headquarters in an attempt to unmask the department’s conspiracy against him. The common use of the f-word and other colorful language was presented as a sign of toughness. Aside from standard declarations of “bull\_\_\_\_\_” and “goddamnit,” viewers were treated to graphic phrases such as “When she sucks that fat pr\_\_\_’s c\_\_\_.”

At number five was the romantic thriller “Out of Sight,” with 113 episodes of profanity, about three fifths (n=67) hard core. Cursing and crudity laced the plot of a debonair bank robber’s prison break and the kidnaping of a female U.S. marshal who pursued him. In an ecumenical

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Number eight was the critically acclaimed WWII drama “Saving Private Ryan.” It registered 83 instances of profanity, about a third (n=28) hard core. Profanity pervaded this bloody film that is known for its gritty and realistic portrayal of ordinary soldiers on a dangerous mission behind enemy lines. Situations are described as a “God awful s\_\_\_ty mess.” One character is told to “think about the poor bastard’s mother.” The film’s profanity count was reduced by the men’s frequent use of the acronym FUBAR, which is eventually revealed to mean “F\_\_\_ed Up Beyond All Recognition.”

Close behind in ninth place was “Snake Eyes” with 70 instances of profanity, 30 percent of them (n=21) hard-core. This film features Nicholas Cage as an Atlantic City cop who pursues the assassin of the Secretary of Defense. Cursing and coarse language are spread throughout this violent film as Cage unravels a complex criminal conspiracy. But the language is fairly diverse compared to other action movies. Along with basic “hells” and “damns,” technology is described as “bitchin’.” Coarser phrases included “You’re practically giving me the knob job” and “I had my eyes buried in some girl’s tits.”

In tenth place was “Armageddon,” with 65 instances of profanity, only eight of them hard-core. The premise of this disaster film is that an approaching meteor threatens to destroy the earth. NASA sends a team to plant a nuclear warhead inside the meteor to destroy it. The unlikely crew is a team of working-class misfits who establish this blue-collar bona fides by acting and talking crudely. Sample phrases: “She’s a vicious life-sucking bitch;” “You’re the guys who dream up this

## **BROADCAST TV'S DIRTY DOZEN**

The list of the broadcast series with the most profanity demonstrates that parents can't protect their kids from objectionable language by shielding them from adult dramas. In fact, over half of the series on our list were comedies. And one – “Family Guy” – had one of the few examples of hard-core cursing in broadcast shows. (See Table 4.) Five out of these series came from the Fox network alone, including those that ranked first and second. CBS had three shows on the list, two were syndicated series, one each appeared on UPN and ABC, and the WB and NBC were absent from the list. In contrast to movies, the range of profanity among these shows was fairly narrow, from a low of 11 to a high of 24 incidents.

“Costello” (Fox) led the list with 24 instances of profanity. This blunt and crude short-lived sitcom was based loosely on the comedy routine of its star, the standup comic Sue Costello. The show's tone undoubtedly echoed the ever-increasing edginess of standup comedy. Costello played a rough talking, hard-boiled bartender who wants to better herself. She trades a continuous stream of quips with patrons and family members that includes comments like “That's a pissar,” “She's screwing around,” “buttwipes,” and “What's the bug up your ass?”

Close behind in the number two spot was another Fox show, “The Family Guy.” This animated sitcom managed to slip a hard-core curse word (bulls\_\_\_) by blotting out the last two letters with an off-camera sound. Despite this editorial manipulation, it was impossible for viewers to miss the word. Like its predecessor “The Simpsons,” this show lampoons trends in American culture



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through the use of a comically dysfunctional family. The father is a lumbering master of the faux pas, while the youngest child is a paranoid megalomaniac with the body of an infant and brain of a master criminal. Add in an alcoholic talking dog, and you have a recipe for offending everyone. “Hells” and “damns” proliferate the show, along with such phrases as “fired my ass.” Other episodes have included such memorable moments as the dog impatiently yelling in a bar, “Who do you have to hump to get a drink around here?”

In third place was the high-tech cop show “Viper,” with 18 instances of profanity. One of two syndicated series on the list, this show revolves around a secret team of cops who use a Dodge Viper sports car that is equipped with various built-in weapons, armor plating and remote controlled surveillance that helps catch the bad guys. Profanity here is a background feature for the frequent fights and gunplay. “Hells” and “damns” are frequent expressions of anger, along with crude exclamations such as “remind me never to piss you off” and “Sit your ass back down.”

One of three CBS shows on the list took fourth place. “To Have and To Hold,” with 17 incidents of profanity, is a comedy-drama focusing on two newlyweds. One is a police officer, the other a defense attorney. This combination of love and work allows for much colorful commentary on personal and professional situations. In one episode, a lawyer says, “I don’t want to defend Mr. No Balls. We called him that because he used to steal everyone else’s because he had no balls himself.” Among common examples of profanity were “I’ll kill you, you bastard,” and “Open the door before my dumb ass brother breaks his shoulder.”

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usual “hells” and damns,” the audience hears about a guy “banging every broad in the building” or “some lousy hump.” Among the more conventional uses of profanity were “You kicking me in the nuts and all,” “proves he’s a d\_\_\_,” and “dirty son of a bitch.” This is also one of the few broadcast series that shows obscene gestures.

The four remaining shows on the list each had 11 episodes of profanity. Among them was another short-lived Fox sitcom, “Living in Captivity.” This notably coarse juvenile sex comedy about life in a gated community made frequent reference to sexual and scatological practices, as well as colorful descriptions of the male and female anatomy. Examples include, “You can bounce a quarter off her ass,” “I’m defending a man who crapped in my lawn because my dog crapped in his.”

The retro sitcom “That ’70s Show” (Fox) focuses on the decade of disco and exaggerated fashions. Mild profanities and coarse language have a light comedic tone. One character declares, “I love your little butt, Eric. It’s so little,” and “Leisure suits are for dumbasses.” The CBS police show “Nash Bridges” generally engages in low level “hells” and “damns,” along with such current favorites on broadcast series as “You crazy bastard.” The one UPN show, “7 Days,” is a violent sci-fi action series in which characters journey back in time to change history. The mild profanity here is part of the action, such as “What the hell happened to him?” and “That damn fool.”

**TABLE 5**  
**DIRTY DOZEN CABLE TV SERIES**

| CABLE                            | ALL/ (HARD CORE) | RATING* |
|----------------------------------|------------------|---------|
| 1. OZ (HBO)                      | 67 (54)          | TV-MA   |
| 2. Sopranos (HBO)                | 45 (34)          | TV-MA   |
| 3. Rude Awakening (SHO)          | 35 (14)          | TV-MA   |
| 4. Lincs (SHO)                   | 17 (1)           | TV-MA   |
| 4. Pacific Blue (USA)            | 17               | TV-PG   |
| 6. Arliss (HBO)                  | 11 (7)           | TV-MA   |
| 6. LA Heat (TNT)                 | 11               | TV-14   |
| 8. Compromising Situations (SHO) | 8 (1)            | TV-MA   |
| 8. Any Day Now (LIF)             | 8                | TV-PG   |
| 10. The Net (USA)                | 7                | PG-14   |
| 10. Farscape (SCI-FI)            | 7                | TV-14   |
| 12. La Femme Nikita (USA)        | 5                | TV-14   |

\* NR = no rating; split rating reflect different ratings for 2 episodes.

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characters are involved in politics as lobbyists, congressional aides, etc. Profanity here is typically sexual, as in “You don’t ask a woman who is giving a blow job what she is doing.” Viewers hear one woman called an “a\_\_hole,” while another is derided as a “low down scuzzy bitch.”

“Pacific Blue” shared fourth place with 17 incidents of profanity, but none were hard core. Still, this show had the most profanity of any on basic cable. The “Baywatch”-style series chronicles the adventures of attractive police officers, who patrol a California beach on bikes. The profanity here is distinctly mild. “What the hell are you doing?” “That’s a damn shame,” and “I don’t need this crap” illustrate the relative tameness of this show. In an attempt at humor, one character complains, “I’m dressed like Richard Simmons and my butt hurts.” In another comment on this same general topic, a character describes someone as a “Nice package. That is definite proof that God did not make all butts equal.”

The rough-talking world of professional sports is the setting for “Arliiss”(HBO), which took sixth place with 11 episodes of profanity, seven of them hard-core. Series star Arliss Michaels is a sports super-agent with a penchant for Armani suits and a high moral code in a field known for scoundrels. The gimmick of this series is its tongue-in-cheek profiles of various real life sports celebrities, like New England Patriots’ Willie McGinest, who usually play themselves. Like most premium cable series, this one uses the f-word liberally, as in “f\_\_ing a client’s wife,” and “Here comes Barbie and f\_\_ing Ken.” “No s\_\_” is another signature hard core expression. Milder profanity took the form of “I look like goddamn Gorbachev.”

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Based on a successful movie of the same title, the show follows the continuing adventures of Angela Bennett, a computer programmer who discovers that the computerized record of her existence had been wiped out by the secret organization. Its agents try to kill her before she can reveal their plot to take over the world. Most of the profanity and coarse language are mild. Examples include “What kind of Houdini crap was that?” and “You son of a bitch.” “Damns” and “hells” also lace the dialogue.

Also tied for tenth was “Farscape,” a standard-issue “battle among the stars” series from the Sci-Fi network. In this series an astronaut is flung into the midst of an intergalactic war. He and his allies fight the bad beings with laser blasts and other sci-fi effects. The foul language is limited to minor profanity and coarse terms, such as “You fart helium,” and “Close encounters, my ass.”

Last on the list with five instances of profanity is USA Network’s “La Femme Nikita.” Based on a French movie of the same name, this series is a high tech, slightly dark and foreboding spy drama. The profanity is usually very low level, on the order of “What the hell are you doing?” and “I could care less about this crap.”

**TABLE 6**  
**DIRTY DOZEN MUSIC VIDEOS**

| TITLE                      | NUMBER OF SCENES |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| 1. What's So Different     | 7                |
| 2. Wrong Way               | 3                |
| 3. No Scrubs               | 3                |
| 2. Here We Come            | 3                |
| 2. Flagpole Sitta          | 3                |
| 6. Changes                 | 2                |
| 6. Ghetto Superstar        | 2                |
| 6. Gimme Some More         | 2                |
| 6. Slippin'                | 2                |
| 6. How Do I Deal           | 2                |
| 6. My Name Is              | 2                |
| 6. Under the Bridge        | 2                |
| 6. Why Don't You Get a Job | 2                |

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memoir include “Cops give a damn about a Negro,” and “Who the hell cares?”

Also in this cluster was “Ghetto Superstar” (Pras, featuring Old Dirty Bastard and Mya). The song is the soundtrack from the political movie “Bulworth,” starring Warren Beatty. But politics in the music video is limited to shots of a political rally and aides who rush both Beatty and Pras all over the facility until they reach a concert hall where Old Dirty Bastard is performing. Examples of foul language are milder than the stage name of the artist, such as “Who the hell wants to stop me?” and “Who the hell wants to see me?”

“Gimme Some More” (Busta Rhyme’s) continues the artist’s humorous approach to material, a rare element on our top ten list. In the past, he has spoofed popular movies such as “Lethal Weapon,” “Coming to America,” and the disco-martial arts movie “The Last Master.” In this music video, Rhyme becomes a small childlike demon who chases a woman around a house. Other scenes portray him as a cowboy, a police officer, a muscleman and an executive. The tone is cartoonish and profanity runs to phrases like “licking my ass.”

“How Do I Deal” (Jennifer Love Hewitt) is another film soundtrack, this one from “I Still Know What You Did Last Summer.” The scenes focus on Hewitt in different outfits and sexually suggestive situations. Actors from this scary movie are shown running and screaming. Illustrative of the mild repetitive profanity is “Everybody’s telling me what the hell I have to do.”

## **RATES OF PROFANITY**

It is difficult to compare the sheer volume of profanity across diverse genres of entertainment. Even within a single format, such as television series, comparisons may be misleading, due to the varying number of episodes we viewed and the lengths of time they ran. The sample included half-hour and hour-long TV shows, movies of varying lengths, and music videos that play for only two to three minutes. Therefore, to produce a valid comparison, we calculated the rates of total profanity and hard-core material per hour of actual running time in each genre.

As Table 7 shows, the results highlight the heavy use of profanity in premium cable series – nearly twice as much as in any other genre. By contrast, basic cable shows contained the lowest rate of profanity in all genres. Broadcast television had a low overall rate of profanity, but there were sharp differences among the major networks. The leader – Fox – featured a rate of profanity nearly double that of CBS, the laggard. And after correcting for their different running times, movies and music videos – the longest and shortest formats – featured similar levels of profanity.

Not surprisingly, the two premium cable television channels stood out for both their overall profanity and their hard-core cursing. Together they averaged 31 incidents of profane and coarse language per hour, about once every two minutes. Of those, nearly half (15) involved hard-core profanity. HBO was especially aggressive, with 39 episodes per hour, about three in five of them (n=24) hard-core. Showtime not only had a lower overall rate (26 incidents per hour), but the



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difference was even greater in the amount of hard-core material. Usage of four-letter words was over three times as frequent on HBO as on Showtime (24 versus seven instances per hour).

The premium channels were responsible for upping the total rate for all cable channels. The overall cable average was 15 incidents per hour, including four instances of hard-core profanity. But basic cable registered only eight scenes including profanity per hour, almost none of them hard-core.

This was the lowest rate of any genre, including broadcast television. Among basic cable channels, the Fox Family Channel had no measurable profanity of any kind. MTV, TNT and TBS each averaged 12 episodes per hour. They were followed by USA with 10, Lifetime with seven, and the Sci-fi channel with five episodes of profanity.

Music videos followed closely behind premium cable in terms of overall profanity, with 18 incidents per hour. However, none of these terms were hard-core words. Movies had a similar rate of 17 instances per hour, but this total included an average seven hard-core terms. Broadcast TV averaged 11 incidents per hour, almost none of them hard-core. Fox led among the networks with 20 incidents per hour, reflecting Fox's domination of the list of shows containing the most profanity. Close behind Fox was NBC, with 16 incidents per hour. Next came WB and ABC, with 11 each. CBS and UPN each averaged 10 per hour. Syndicated shows contained the least profanity, averaging nine incidents per hour.

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How reliable did the ratings prove to those concerned about exposure to profanity in feature films?

With some exceptions, the ratings generally worked as a deterrent (assuming that most parents would not want their underage children exposed to frequent hard-core profanity). Of the dozen movies with the most profanity, all but three were rated "R." The exceptions were "Rush Hour," "Armageddon," and "U.S. Marshals," all of which received PG-13 labels. The latter two ranked tenth and twelfth in overall profanity and were also lowest ranked in the use of hard-core terms. "Rush Hour" is a different story. This movie, which had 85 incidents of profanity, about a quarter of them hard-core, outscored three other films that were rated "R." These included "Saving Private Ryan," with 83 incidents of profanity, "Snake Eyes," with 70 incidents, and "Blade," with 60 episodes of profanity. However, all these films had a higher proportion of hard-core material than "Rush Hour" (especially "Blade," in which 62 percent of the material was hard-core).

In practice, of course, it is difficult to imagine that R-rated movies such as "Something About Mary" and "I Know What You Did Last Summer" attracted only adults and teenagers accompanied by their parents. But enforcement of the rating is a separate issue. TV series and movies are rated by a separate system that is derived from MPAA categories but employs somewhat different criteria.

Parental guidelines for TV series and movies contain six categories. Two of these, which are specific to children's programs, did not appear on our lists: "TVY" is for shows deemed inappropriate for all children, while "TVY7" shows may contain fantasy or comic violence that

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In general, we found that television shows with the most profanity and coarse language nonetheless received a “PG” rating, unless they contained hard-core cursing. Almost all of the hard-core material was on the premium cable channels Showtime and HBO. Broadcast shows were fairly consistent in their ratings, but specific designations for foul language were sporadic and inconsistent. Among the dozen shows with the most profanity, all but three carried “PG” ratings. Both episodes of “NYPD Blue” that we viewed had a “TV14” rating and were specifically labeled for strong language. This series, which ranked around the middle of the list, averaged 12 episodes of profanity. One episode of “Nash Bridges,” which made the bottom of the list, was rated “PG,” while another scored a “TV14.” This series had an average of 11 instances of profanity. However, neither “Nash Bridges” episode was labeled for strong language. Finally, the syndicated series “Babylon Five” was not rated.

Overall, four out of 12 of the top ten broadcast shows were not designated for foul language. These included “Viper,” which was number three on the list and had 18 instances of profanity, “Babylon 5,” which ranked fourth with 17 instances, and “Holding the Baby,” with 14 instances. “7 Days” rounded out the list with 11 instances of profanity. Shows that were labeled for language included the top ranked “Costello” (n=24) and the number two “Family Guy” (n=20), both on Fox. “To Have and to Hold,” with 17 instances of profanity, was also labeled for foul language. Both episodes of “Becker,” which had 13 instances of profanity, were labeled. So were “Living in Captivity” and “That ’70s Show,” which each had 11 instances of profanity.

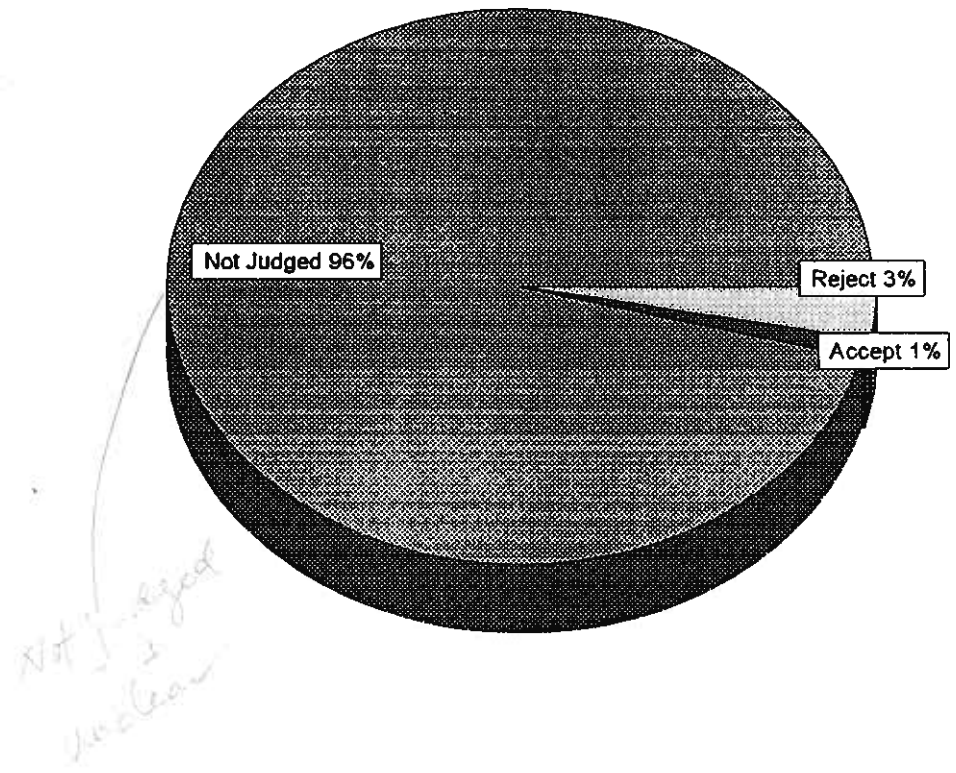
## PROFANITY IN CONTEXT

Because the contextual aspects of profanity that we examined were similar across all entertainment genres, we combined the results into one overall table. (See Table 8.) First, we examined the purpose or motivation that was served by the use of strong language. We designated three major types of situations in which profanity was used. The first was simple banter, including flirtation. Another usage of profanity involved teasing or ridicule of particular individuals. Finally, there was profanity expressed in anger.

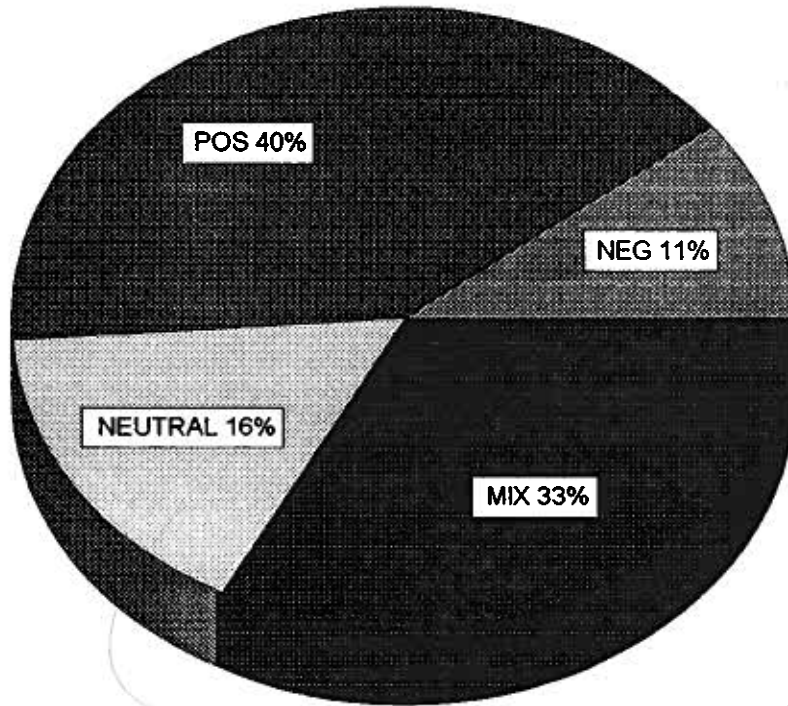
In the event, anger was the single most frequent impetus we found in popular entertainment. Forty-two percent of all instances we coded fell into this category. This is not surprising, since profanity is traditionally an expression of hostility. Notably, however, the majority of cases (58 percent) involved no anger. Thirty percent were part of casual banter, and the remaining 28 percent involved teasing or ridicule. This reflects the “normalcy” or mainstreaming of coarse or racy language. Words once reserved to register strongly negative emotions have become the standard lingo of movies, TV shows and music videos. Rhett Butler once raised eyebrows by not giving a damn. Today no one would notice if he did.

This tendency was reinforced by the lack of any judgment on the use of profanity in most scripts. (See Table 9.) Fully 96 percent of scenes containing profanity or coarse language provided no response as to the appropriateness of such terms. Only in three percent of relevant scenes did

**TABLE 9**  
**JUDGMENTS OF PROFANITY**



**TABLE 10**  
**PLOT FUNCTION OF PROFANITY**



*unknown*

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“That ’70s Show,” “Family Guy,” and the since-canceled “Costello.” The amount of crude language heard on Fox is almost double that of the overall average for broadcast television (11 per hour).

Among the top-grossing theatrical films, the use of profanity was heaviest in cops-and-robbers features, teen grossout movies, and military epics. But the most foul-mouthed film was “Primary Colors,” a thinly fictionalized account of Bill Clinton’s presidential campaign. It contained over 100 scenes with four-letter words and 175 instances of crude language overall. “Primary Colors” was followed by “Lethal Weapon 4” (153 instances of profanity) and “Something About Mary”(128).

If movies and premium cable were the industry leaders in profanity, they were also most likely to tell parents and other viewers what to expect. Every premium cable show on our “dirty dozen” list of the 12 most foul-mouthed shows was rated TVMA, the strongest parental advisory rating.

Similarly, nine of the 12 most profane movies were rated R, including the top half dozen.

Conversely, nine of the 12 broadcast television series on the dirty dozen list were rated PG, one was not rated, and only two carried TV14 ratings, the rough equivalent of a PG13 movie rating.

Finally, the entertainment industry mainstreams crude language not only by using it frequently, but also by using it in ways that emphasize its acceptability. A majority of the time, profanity was used not in the heat of anger, but in the context of casual banter, teasing, or flirtation. Positive