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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Aim

The Film and Publication Board's (FPB) main task is to classify films, videos/DVDs and computer games in terms of age appropriateness and to provide information to parents so that they can make informed choices about what their children see. To assist the FPB in raising awareness and educating parents and communities about protecting children from harmful and age inappropriate visual material, the FPB commissioned the Human Sciences Research Council to conduct a study of parental approaches to children's use of visual media. The aim of the study was to provide a picture of the range of parental approaches and practices in relation to children's exposure to visual media in South Africa.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were to explore:

- Children's exposure to films (cinema and video/DVD), computer games and the Internet;
- Parental knowledge, awareness and concern about children's exposure to these visual media;
- Parental intervention in terms of monitoring and control of children's exposure to visual media; and
- Information parents want and need to know about the impact of visual media on children and the most effective means of conveying this information to parents.

Methodology

- Twenty-three focus groups were conducted in three provinces: Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape, with: (1) parents, (2) children 13 to 17 years, (3) children 10 to 12 years, (4) children 8 to 9 years, and (5) children 6 to 7 years. Focus groups were representative of race, socio-economic status and included both rural and urban communities. Focus group participation was on a voluntary basis, and participants were recruited mainly through local school networks.
- The limits of focus group methodology should be clearly understood to prevent misinterpretation and overextrapolation of data. Focus groups can provide a comprehensive picture of the range of attitudes, approaches and practices towards children's use of visual media. However, results cannot be considered representative of the wider population or indicative of certain behaviours among particular groups as the sample is too small, participation was voluntary resulting

in representation biases, and participants' self-representation and opinions are subject to social acceptability bias. We have therefore refrained from attributing certain behaviours to any particular group.

Participants' profile

- A total of 228 people participated in 23 focus groups.
- Participants included 55 parents (29% fathers; 71% mothers) and 173 children (48% boys; 52% girls).
- Racial representation was 39% Black, 18% Coloured, 10% Indian and 23% White (10% did not specify).
- Religious representation was 78% Christian, 9% Muslim, 3% Hindu, 2% Jewish and 5% no religion (3% did not specify). Religion is either important or very important to 70% of participants.
- Among participants who specified their economic situation, 2% do not have enough money for basic necessities, 19% have basic necessities but are short of many things, and 65% described themselves as having most things with two-thirds of these participants reporting they also have enough money at home for luxury goods.

Cinema, Videos/DVDs and Television Viewing Practices

Access

- Except for one participant, all participants have television and 87% have a video or DVD machine at home. Families have the greatest exposure to films on public broadcast television, followed by videos/DVDs and then the cinema. Middle-income urban children have greater access to cinema films than children in low-income, township and rural areas.

Parental awareness and concern

- The younger the child, the more parents are concerned about exposure to inappropriate film material.
- Most parents expressed concern about children's exposure to inappropriate material, but claimed that many parents in their communities are not concerned. Only a small group of parent participants appeared unconcerned. However, these parents still believe that there is material that is unsuitable for children.
- Exposure to high levels of violence and the impact on children's behaviour are key concerns of many parents particularly those who live in communities where violence is common.

- Exposure to sex, its frequency in films, its impact on the behaviour of younger children and the focus on sex to the exclusion of other aspects of relationships are key concerns of many parents.
- Exposure to bad language and its impact on the behaviour of children, particularly very young children, is also a key concern of many parents.
- Other concerns are gratuitous nastiness, assumptions about teenagers being sexually active, stereotyping of girls and boys in particular kinds of roles and the lack of positive values and role models in films.
- Overall, many parents, particularly parents living in difficult social contexts, said they struggle to inculcate a value system in the face of the powerful influence of films and other visual media.

Beliefs about the impact of visual media

- All participants have a strong sense that films and other visual media impact on children, and there is material that is inappropriate at various stages of children's development.
- Participants focused primarily on the impact of films on children's behaviour and then the emotionally traumatizing effect of images on children. Children (6-12 yrs) reported that films, particularly scary films, can have a direct emotional impact on them over a considerable period of time.
- Participants differed in the extent to which they believe films and other visual media can directly impact on children's behaviour. Participants felt the younger the child, the greater the impact on behaviour, and that impact is greater on children living in difficult social circumstances. Parents also felt that the medium, for example, big screen images versus television, has a different effect on children.

Understandings of age ratings and advisories

- Parents were generally aware of, and understood age ratings and advisories. However, there were a number of parents in each focus group who did not know what P (Prejudice) stood for.
- Second language speakers of English reported that people who do not speak English as a first language do not always understand the abbreviations.
- Children (6-7 yrs) were aware of, and could describe the appropriate response to age ratings and advisories although they could not always say exactly what the abbreviations stood for. Children from 8 years upwards were fully aware of age ratings and advisories, could say what they mean and describe the appropriate

action needed. However, there were a number of children in each focus group who did not know what P stood for.

Opinions and use of age ratings and advisories

- Every participant agreed that age ratings and advisories are important and useful. Almost all participants use them to make judgements relating to film selection. Age ratings and advisories are of considerable assistance to parents in making decisions about appropriate films for their children.
- Some parents strictly apply age ratings, while others also take into account the emotional development of the child, the artistic merit of the film, and how close in age the child is to the film's age rating. Parents believe it is their right and responsibility to decide what is appropriate for their particular child.
- A common practice is to loosely apply age ratings allowing children to watch films that have an age rating close to their current ages. For example, 10 to 12 year olds are allowed to watch films with a 13 age limit, but not a 16 age rating.
- Parents also apply advisories differently. Children reported that some parents apply the sex (S) advisory, while others are more concerned about violence (V).
- Parents apply age ratings more strictly to younger children. Children report that parents are less likely to apply age ratings and advisories to children 16 years and older.
- Participants felt the criteria for assigning age ratings and advisories are neither clear nor consistent. They also felt age ratings and advisories are too simplistic and do not indicate the emotional challenges children may experience in a film. Age ratings were generally felt to be too low, and participants felt there should be age ratings below 10 years to protect very young children.

Viewing practices and parental intervention

- When choosing a cinema film and attending the cinema, the younger the child, the more likely parents will exercise control over choice and accompany the child to the cinema. Children (13-17 yrs) reported that, in general, parents are less concerned about controlling what they see or accompanying them.
- At home, the younger the child, the more parents and other household members monitor and control exposure to films on video/DVD and television. From approximately the age of 16 years, children reported that parents might express disapproval of their choices, but do not usually exercise much control over what they watch.

- A small proportion of parents said they do not monitor or control what their children watch. Their opinion was that it is impossible to control exposure as children will watch films when their parents are not present or see films at other people's houses.
- Parents and other caregivers control exposure by checking content and age ratings of videos/DVDs children want to hire or buy, preselecting programmes, films or videos/DVDs and/or designating specific times for children to watch television. Some parents and other older household members react to inappropriate material when it occurs and cover children's eyes, tell them to leave the room or switch off the television. This practice appears to upset and alienate some children.
- Exposure to inappropriate material occurs when parents or other household members want to watch their own programmes/films exposing children to adult content, when the television is switched on all the time, parents work and are therefore absent from home, children are in other people's homes, or the television is used as a babysitting device where parents do not monitor what their children watch. Parents are generally not familiar with technological devices that control children's access and exposure. Children admitted that they find ways of viewing inappropriate material without their parents knowing.
- Older siblings and other household members also play a role in younger children's exposure. Some caregivers and older siblings prevent children watching inappropriate material, while others allow them to do so.
- Parents adopt different styles in preventing children seeing inappropriate material. Some parents stop children without giving any reasons, while others try to engage children in understanding the consequences of seeing inappropriate or harmful material. Among families who engage in relatively open discussion, some children self-regulate their exposure choosing not to watch what their parents might disapprove of or what they know will make them feel uncomfortable. Both parents and children felt parental mediation, communication and trust are key to protecting children and helping them to control and cope with exposure to visual media.

Computer Games and Internet Use

Exposure to computer games

- Economic level is a limiting factor in children's exposure to computer games. Lower income groups have less access.

Parental awareness, concern, attitudes, beliefs and intervention in computer games

- Parents are not yet as familiar with computer games as their children. Parents, particularly those who have little experience with computer games, are not always aware of what is available and the content of computer games.
- Because of different levels of exposure, parents vary in their levels of concern. Parents, who have more experience of computer related technology, are more aware and concerned about children's exposure.
- Parents are mainly concerned about the addictive nature of playing computer games and to a lesser extent content. Concern about content is mostly focused on the violent nature of computer games. Some parents are concerned about possible impact on behaviour, but many parents have not yet considered how computer game content might impact behaviour especially in the long term.
- Parents and children believe that computer games are more likely to impact on the behaviour of younger children, and that there are some computer games that are not suitable at younger ages. However, they do not think that computer games directly cause violent behaviour. Other social factors make an individual vulnerable to being influenced by violent computer games.
- Parental intervention ranges from no intervention to careful control over children's exposure to computer games.
- Levels of intervention depend on parental knowledge and children's age. Among most groups, children reported that parents seldom monitor or intervene if children are older than 15 or 16 years of age.
- Parents and children, who have little exposure to computers and computer games, are not aware of age ratings and advisories on computer games. Participants, who are familiar with computer games, are aware of age ratings and advisories.
- Parents, who intervene in children's use of computer games, stop younger children from playing or buying computer games with age ratings. Parents also try to limit use of play stations.
- Parents and children pointed out that it is very difficult to monitor and control computer game exposure because of the nature of electronic media as it is easily accessible, easily transferred or shared and easy to hide.
- Parents and children stressed communication and trust between parents and children as key to protecting children and equipping them to deal with exposure.

Exposure to the Internet

- Access to the Internet is also governed to some extent by economic resources. However, children from lower income families have access to the Internet through school and Internet cafes.

Parental awareness, concern and intervention

- Parents who are familiar with the Internet and its possibilities are more concerned about children's exposure than those who do not have much experience. However, many children felt their parents, even those who have experience, do not know much about the Internet and need more education.
- Parents' main concern was children's exposure to pornographic material over the Internet.
- Parental intervention ranges from no intervention to strict monitoring and control of Internet access. Again the younger the child, the more control. From about 15 years onwards, children report that parents do not intervene much. Internet use for young children is often restricted to research for school projects, games, stories and downloading songs and pictures. Parents of children up to about 12 years of age generally supervise Internet use. Parents also check the history of Internet usage, utilize passwords and have investigated software blocking devices.
- Parents are particularly concerned that as computer and Internet technology gets very sophisticated and linked to other technologies such as cellular telephones, exposure is harder to monitor and control.
- Parents are concerned about Internet access outside the home, especially Internet cafes where children are not monitored.

Parental awareness and education

What parents should know

- Parents and children felt that there is a need to raise general levels of awareness about the need to monitor and the impact of visual media on children.
- Parents felt there is a need to increase specific knowledge about the impact of visual media on children's development, psychological wellbeing and behaviour.
- Participants felt it is important to furnish parents with the tools and skills to monitor and intervene to protect children. They emphasized that parents need both technological knowledge as well as parenting skills, particularly approaches to parental-child communication to protect children.

Ways of raising awareness and educating parents

- Participants agreed that not enough is being done to educate South African parents about protecting children from inappropriate and harmful visual material.
- Participants suggested that age ratings and advisories need to be made more prominent and reinforced by explaining what they stand for on a regular basis. They should also be announced in all languages in ways that attract viewers' attention, made larger and kept on throughout films. Schools can also educate children and parents about age ratings and advisories.
- Participants suggested that parents need to know more about the content of films before letting children watch. Reviews geared towards informing parents in previews at the cinema, on television, radio and on DVD/video boxes would help parents. This information should be given in all languages.
- Participants felt that the most effective way of reaching parents was through more debate in the media on why parents should be concerned about what their children see. Parents and children felt that debates, advertisements and documentaries about the impact of visual media, particularly on television, would reach parents. They also suggested putting information on pamphlets, billboards, bills such as telephone or electricity bills or before the main feature of an adult cinema film.
- Participants emphasized that public discourse needs articulation within communities to encourage behavioural change. Schools, churches and other community organizations could play a role by educating parents at meetings or workshops.
- Participants felt that the FPB could play a role by continuing their discussions with parents, establishing a helpline for parents, connecting with schools and other institutions and creating learnerships to educate parents and communities about protecting children.

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Introduction

This study investigates parental approaches to children's use of visual media. It has been conducted for the Film and Publication Board (FPB), a statutory body established by the Films and Publications Act of 1996 replacing the old Directorate of Publications. While the FPB's main task is to provide age ratings and advisories on all film material¹ distributed in South Africa, it is also concerned with providing parents and communities with information to make informed choices about how to protect children from harmful and age inappropriate visual material in films (cinema and video/DVD), computer games and on the Internet.

1.1 Purpose of study

To inform the FPB's development of appropriate information that has maximum reach and impact on parents and communities, this exploratory study looked at four key issues:

1. Children's exposure to films (cinema and video/DVD), computer games and the Internet;
2. Parental knowledge, awareness and concern about children's exposure to these visual media;
3. Parental intervention in terms of monitoring and control of children's exposure to visual media; and
4. Information parents want and need to know about the impact of visual media on children and the most effective means of conveying this information.

1.2 Methodology

Twenty-three focus groups were conducted in three provinces: Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape, with: (1) parents, (2) children 13 to 17 years, (3) children 10 to 12 years, (4) children 8 to 9 years, and (5) children 6 to 7 years. Focus groups were representative of race, socio-economic class and included both rural and urban communities. Focus group participation was on a voluntary basis, and participants were

¹ Television broadcasters have their own regulatory body.

recruited mainly through local school networks.² Focus group facilitators used local contacts at schools to approach principals, educators and parents. Facilitators sent letters and spoke to parents asking for parents and children to volunteer. Focus groups had between six and ten participants each and ranged from one to two hours in length. Focus group participants had to fill out a short anonymous participant profile questionnaire before the discussion (See Appendix B). Focus group discussion questions were developed in consultation with the FPB and adapted to be age appropriate (See Appendix A). Fieldworkers fitted the profile of the communities in which focus groups were conducted and used the local language(s). They received briefings on the background and aims of the study from the FPB and underwent training with the HSRC.

The limits of focus group methodology should be clearly understood to prevent misinterpretation and overextrapolation of focus group data. Focus groups do not constitute a representative sample. They do not provide sufficient numbers to extrapolate to the wider population or attribute behaviours to certain groups. We have therefore refrained from claiming that certain behaviours are characteristic of a certain socio-economic class or race based on 23 focus groups. Focus groups were also voluntary creating certain biases in terms of representivity. Participants who volunteered may have been particularly concerned about children's exposure, particularly parents of younger children. Moreover, focus groups are subject to social acceptability biases and the ability of participants to reflect on their own behaviour. For example, parents or children may have overstated or understated parental protection and concern depending on the attitude of other parents or children in the groups. Consequently, it is important not to interpret results as representative of the larger population or indicative of the behaviour of a certain group of people. Rather, these focus groups provide a picture of the range of attitudes, approaches and practices towards children's use of visual media in South Africa.

1.3 Outline of report

The results of focus group discussions are presented in chapters 2 to 5:

Chapter 2 - Participants' Profile

Chapter 3 - Cinema, Videos/DVD's and Television Viewing Practices

Chapter 4 - Computer Games and Internet Use

Chapter 5 - Parental Awareness and Education

² The IRB of the Human Sciences Research Council granted ethics approval for this study. All parents of children who participated gave written consent. Children younger than 10 years old were asked to give verbal assent. Consent forms for parents and children can be found in Appendix C.

Participants' Profile

2.1 Focus groups

A total of 23 focus groups were conducted. Table 1 shows where focus groups were conducted, area type and economic status. Only two focus groups were conducted with children 6 to 9 years of age as children in this age group usually provide limited information. Focus groups were racially mixed except for those held in township and rural areas.

Table 1: Focus groups (N=23)

Province	Economic Status	Area Type	6-7 yrs	8-9 yrs	10-12 yrs	13-17 yrs	Parents
Gauteng	Middle Income	Urban	/	/	/	/	/
Gauteng	Middle and Low Income – Township	Urban			/	/	/
KwaZulu-Natal	Middle Income	Urban			/	/	/
KwaZulu-Natal	Low Income	Urban			/	/	/
Western Cape	Middle Income	Urban			/	/	/
Western Cape	Low Income	Urban			/	/	/
Western Cape	Low Income	Rural			/	/	/

2.2 Participant type, age and education

Two hundred and twenty-eight people participated in the focus groups. Of these 55 (24%) were adults and 173 (76%) were children. Among parents, 16 males (29%) and 39 females (71%) participated. The gender imbalance is due to men not generally being available when the focus groups were conducted. Table 2 shows the age range of parent participants. Seventy-five percent of the children of parent participants were under 13 years of age.³

³ As the majority of parents had children younger than thirteen, this could lead to certain emphases in the resulting focus group data.

Table 2: Age range of parent participants (N = 55)

15-19	20-30	31-40	41-50	51-60
1	18	23	9	4
1%	32%	42%	16%	7%

Among children, there were 83 male (48%) and 90 female (52%) participants. Ninety-two children (53%) (13-17 yrs), 64 children (37%) (10-12 yrs) and 17 children (10%) (6-9 yrs) participated.

Tables 3 and 4 present parents' level of education and children's school grade. Among parents, 64% had completed school (matriculated) and 40% had some form of tertiary qualification, while 36% had not matriculated.

Table 3: Parents' level of education (N = 55)

Grade	Number	Percentage %
Std 4-Std 5/Gr6-7/ABET 3	6	11
Std 6-Std 7/Gr8-9/ABET 4	5	9
Std 8- Gr 10/N1	3	5
Std 9/Gr 11/N2	6	11
Std 10/Matric/N3	13	24
Diploma(s)/ Occupational certificate(s)	9	16
First degree (s) higher diploma (s) honours	8	15
Masters	3	5
Doctorate	2	4

Table 4: Breakdown of children by school grade (N = 173)

Grade ⁴	Number	Percentage %
1	8	4
2	9	5
3	0	0
4	19	11
5	16	9
6	18	10
7	22	13
8	24	14
9	5	3
10	20	12
11	27	16
12	05	3

2.3 Participant race and language

Tables 5 and 6 give breakdowns of participants by race and language.

⁴ The voluntary and snowball nature of recruiting participants resulted in some grades not being well represented.

Table 5: Race group of participants (N = 228)

Race	Number	Percentage %
Black	90	39
Coloured	42	18
Indian	22	10
White	52	23
Not specified	22	10

Table 6: Home language profile of participants (N = 228)

Language	Number	Percentage (%)
Afrikaans	41	18
English	92	40
African language	63	28
Bilingual	27	12
Other	5	2

2.4 Participant religion

Table 7 shows participants' religious affiliation with the majority of participants being Christian. Table 8 shows participants' religious commitment with 70% of participants saying that their religion was important or very important to them.⁵

Table 7: Religious profile of participants (N = 228)

Religion	Number	Percentage (%)
Christian	178	78
Hindu	7	3
Jewish	4	2
Muslim	21	9
Tamil	1	.0
No Religion	11	5
Not Specified	6	3

Table 8: Importance of religion (N = 228)

Religion	Number	Percentage (%)
Not important at all	3	1
Slightly important	18	8
Somewhat important	20	9
Important	45	20
Very important	114	50
Not applicable	11	5
Not specified	17	7

⁵ The number of committed religious participants could also have resulted in certain aspects receiving greater emphasis in the data.

2.5 Economic status

Table 9 shows the broad economic status of participants.

Table 9: Economic status (N = 228)

Economic status	Number	Percentage (%)
We do not have money for basic things and clothing	4	2
We have money for food and clothes, but are short of other many things	43	19
We have most of the important things but few luxury goods	53	23
We have money for extra things and luxury goods	97	42
Don't know	24	11
Not specified	7	3

2.6 Media access at home

Table 10 shows participants access to different visual media in the home. Almost all participants have television (99%) and video/DVD (87%) facilities in their homes. Over half of participants have computers and computer games, and just over a third have access to the Internet at home.

Table 10: Access to visual media at home (N = 228)

Media	Number	Percentage (%)
Television	227	99
Video/DVD	198	87
Computer	130	57
Computer games	120	53
Internet	82	36

Cinema, Videos/DVDs and Television Viewing Practices

This section explores: 3.1 Children's exposure to films at the cinema, on videos/DVDs and on television, 3.2 Parental awareness and concern about children's exposure, 3.3 Beliefs about the impact of visual media, 3.4 Understandings, opinions and use of age ratings and advisories, and 3.5 Viewing practices and parental intervention.

3.1 Children's exposure to films at the cinema, on videos/DVDs and on television

3.1.1 Access to films at the cinema, on videos/DVDs and on television

Of these three visual media, children have greatest access and exposure to public broadcast television, followed by videos/DVD's and then cinema. Children from lower income groups, and those in rural areas and townships, are less likely to attend the cinema, have their own videos/DVDs, or access DSTV and other subscriber channels.

Middle-income children regularly attend the cinema. Cinema attendance for pre-adolescents occurs mainly in the holidays with the release of children's films or when a children's film comes on circuit. Older children (13-17 yrs) attend the cinema more frequently ranging from once every two months to once a week. Most middle-income children have video or DVD machines at home and their own video/DVD collections. They also hire videos/DVDs and borrow from relatives or friends. Generally, they watch more films at home than at the cinema. All participants have public broadcast television, and some children have access either to DSTV or MNet. Access to subscriber television is common but by no means universal among this group.

Cinema attendance among lower income children varies from regular attendance to hardly ever, in rural areas and townships where there are no cinemas. However, in the rural community, the local community centre and the schools occasionally screen films. At least half of township children interviewed said they do attend the cinema, although not on a regular basis. Children in lower income groups have regular access to videos/DVDs hired from video shops, borrowed from friends and relatives or bought at flea markets, but not everyone has access to video/DVD machines in their homes. Some

township children indicated that they exchange among friends and hire videos through informal businesses around the neighbourhood.

Sometimes I hire them from my next-door neighbour and watch them at home (Children 10-12)

Children in lower income groups are mainly exposed to public broadcast television. ETV is an important source of films for children who have less access to videos/DVDs. However, up to half of focus group participants in lower income areas had DSTV or MNet.

3.1.2 Films children watch at the cinema, on videos/DVDs and on television

Examples of films very young children (6-9 yrs) said they have watched are: Thunderbirds (PG – theatre/cinema and video/DVD rating), Finding Nemo (A), Shrek 1 and 2 (A – theatre/cinema rating; PG – video/DVD rating)⁶ and The Cat and the Hat (A; PG). Children (8-9 yrs) mentioned: Brother Bear (A), Garfield (A), The Matrix (13V), Driven (PGL), Honey (PGLV; PGV), Lion King 2 (A), Dragonball Zee (A), Beethoven's Fifth (A), Scary Movie 1 (16L; 16LSV), 2 (16LP; 16L) and 3 (13LV; 10LV), Men in Black (PG10), Jurassic Park 3 (PGV; 13) and Charlie's Angels (PGV; 10V) as some of their favourite and most recent films.

Children (10-12 yrs) watch a wide variety of films including action movies with Bruce Lee and Jacky Chan and traditional children's stories such as Winnie the Pooh (A), 101 Dalmations (A) and 102 Dalmations (A) as well as other animated films such as The Lion King (A), Shrek 1 and 2 (A; PG), Popeye (A) and Pokemon (A). Other films children in this age group mentioned were: Body Guard from Beijing (16V), Harry Potter and the Philosophers Stone (PG), Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (PGV; 10V), Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (PG), Spiderman 2 (PGV; PG), The Medallion (10LNV; 10V), Mr Bones (PGV; 10LP), Mrs Doubtfire (A), James Bond (A), Fly Away Home (A), Spy Kids 2 (PG), Catch that Kid (PGLSV; PG), Snow Dogs (PG; A), Down with Love (PGL; PG), Lord of the Rings (10V; A), Too Fast Too Furious (13; 13V), Terminator 3 (13V), Johnny English (PGLV), You Got Served (PG), The Day After Tomorrow (PG), Walking Tall (13V), Jerry Maguire (13LS), We Were Soldiers (16V), Bridget Jones' Diary (13L), Tomb Raider (10V; 13V), Pirates of the Caribbean (10V), Good Boy (A), Jeepers Creepers (16V; 16LV), Scary Movie 1 (16L; 16LSV), 2 (16LP; 16L) and 3 (13LV; 10LV); Daddy's Day Care (A), Freaky Friday (A), Rocky 5 (10V), Catwoman (PG; PGV), Mean Girls (PGL; PG), Ella Enchanted (PG), The Matrix (13V), Blade (16), Anaconda (13V), The Hulk (10; 13V), Blood Sport (16V), The Ring (16LV; 16),

⁶ The FPB sometimes gives different ratings to cinema and video/DVDs versions of the same film as the impact of audiovisual material may differ between big screen and television.

Thomas the Tank Engine (A), Lady and the Tramp (A), Cinderella (A), Beauty and the Beast (A) and Brother Bear (A). Some parents said that girls watched 'pre-teen girlie' films, and some parents had taken children to see 'art films' such as The Song Catcher (PG). Comedies were also popular.

Children (13-17 yrs) watch a wide variety of films including "art films," action, thrillers, comedy, true-life adventure, romance, horror, "factual drama" and fantasy. Children in this age group say they enjoy action, bloodshed, special effects, science fiction, horror, fighting, killing, romantic films and films that "make you think." Favourite and recent films include: Chronicles of Riddick (13V; PGV), Freaky Friday (A), Thirteen Going on Thirty (PGL; PG), Ella Enchanted (PG), Jackass Vol. 3 (13), Scary Movie 1 (16L; 16LSV), 2 (16LP; 16L) and 3 (13LV; 10LV), Man on Fire (16V), Finding Nemo (A), Bad Boys 1 (13L), Bad Boys 2 (16LV), Tortilla Soup (PG; PGS), Terminator 3 (13V), Brother Bear (A), Blade (A), Honey (PGLV; PGV), Brown Sugar (PGL), Ten Things I Hate About You (PG; 10), Kings of Comedy (A), You Got Served (A), American Pie (16; 16S), The Passion of Christ (16V), Head Over Heels (PGL; PGLV), Saving Private Ryan (16V; 13LV), Cannibal Holocaust (18SV), Godzilla (PG), Yesterday (PG), Catwoman (PG; PGV), Nude Girls (A), Garfield (A), Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind (13L), Soul Plane (16LS ; 16L), Eyes Wide Shut (18), Lord of the Rings (10V), The Patriot (16V; 13V), Jeepers Creepers (10), Too Fast Too Furious (PG), Romeo Must Die (16LV), Club Dread (18; 16LSV), Rush Hour (PG10; PG), Spiderman 2 (PG), Harry Potter and the Philosophers Stone (PG), Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (PGV; 10V), Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (PG), Blade (A), The Matrix (13V), Freddy v/s Jason (16LNSV; 16LSV), Once Upon a Time in Mexico (16V) and Desperado (18SNV). Music videos are also very popular. Some children in both the 10 to 12 and 13 to 17 age groups have had exposure to soft pornographic films on etv and pornography on videos distributed among friends or hired from local video shops.

3.2. Parental awareness and concern about children's exposure

3.2.1 Parental awareness and concerns

Many parents make an effort to know and are aware of what their children watch both in and outside the home. In general, parents of children 15 years and younger are more concerned about children's exposure to visual media than parents of children above 15 years. Some parents think very carefully about their children's exposure in relation to age and emotional and moral development. As children get older and become more independent, parents generally become less concerned. Parents said they are not always able to monitor and consequently remain informed of what their children see as they become more independent. Parents are well aware that their children may watch inappropriate material when parents are not around or access films such as

pornographic films they are not allowed at home in other people's homes. Parents stressed that it is impossible to know about everything their children are exposed to and to completely prevent exposure.

The problem is that I'm not there all the time, so I can't control everything they watch, even though I tell them not to watch certain programmes (Parents)

Although most parents were clearly very concerned about their children's exposure, a small group of parent participants did not appear to worry too much.

I let my [14-year-old] daughter decide when she wants to watch. If she wants to watch something – even if it's age rated, it's fine with me, she knows, as long as she doesn't go and do things (Parents)

Parents also said that there is a significant contingent of parents within their respective communities who are not concerned and allow their children to watch unsuitable films and programmes.

I'm fairly strict about the content of movies, specifically with regard to violence, and a lot of my friends or relatives have a much laxer view, so there's often an awkward situation, and you don't want to alienate your child in the process. You can't really demand that it stop in someone else's home, so it's difficult (Parents)

Among focus group participants, there were some parents who said they are concerned, but can do little to stop their children from watching, so assume they watch everything. Some parents appeared not to be too concerned about their children being exposed to almost anything, although they expressed concern about what children see and felt that there is visual material that is inappropriate for certain ages.

Parents were generally concerned about children's exposure to material that contains violence, sex and bad language. Some parents were also concerned about other values films express.

Violence

Many parents were very concerned about children's exposure to violence. While parents expressed concern, they reported that many parents are less concerned than they are, and appear to be unaware of the potential impact of violence on children. High levels and frequency of violence in films are major concerns. Parents were also concerned about previews showing violence before children's films and during children's television, violence in cartoons, in action films and in reality television. Parents criticized marketing of films and popular film characters to all ages when these films have violence requiring age restrictions. They were particularly concerned that young children see this violence and imitate it, not understanding the consequences. The problem of reality wrestling shows and children's imitation of what they see was raised

in many parent focus groups. In one community, parents reported that children's imitation of reality wrestling has become endemic, and children have been injured. Parents also pointed out that violent cartoons, such as Dragonball Zee, and other cartoons with gratuitous violence and nastiness, have had similar effects on their children's behaviour. Gratuitous, decontextualized violence is most worrying for parents particularly because films containing this violence are shown on public access channels such as etv. Parents were also worried about children's exposure to violence in the visual media in communities where there are high levels of violence and aggression. Parents in these communities pointed out that popular action films often show killing as a way to solve problems, and violent responses are a real danger in communities where unemployment rates, alcoholism and drugs are serious social factors.

Sex

Parents were also concerned about children's exposure to sex. Parents criticized the frequency of explicit sex scenes and promiscuity in many films.

It [exposure to sex in films on TV] influences their behaviour. Girls who might still be playing with dolls find themselves pregnant – at the age of fourteen (Parents)

Parents heavily criticized etv's public access broadcasts of "pornographic" films as they labeled them.

I think that they should do away completely, irrespective of the time, with the pornographic material on etv ... (Parents)

I stopped watching etv because I find it absolutely appalling that after eight, violence and other inappropriate sex was on so early in the evening (Parents)

While some parents felt that showing sex is simply wrong, other parents disapproved of the way in which the portrayal of sexual relationships puts across values about sex and relationships that are in their opinion wrong and counter the kinds of values they are trying to teach their children. Parents were critical of the way in which relationships are always represented in terms of sex to the exclusion of other features of relationships. Love and sex are immediately and automatically linked, and responsible sexual behaviour, specifically safe sex, seldom feature. Parents were also concerned that children are exposed to sex before they have the maturity to handle such exposure, and this exposure could lead to children experimenting.

Language

Language was also a focus of parental concern. The casual and ubiquitous use of bad language and blasphemy in films and on television influences children particularly

younger children. Parents said they found it difficult to stop children using bad language because of its prevalence in the media.

They swear a lot on TV... We tell our children not to swear, but there's a lot of it on TV. My sister chased her child out of the house for swearing. She told her to listen to the swearing going on in her house on the TV (Parents)

Again parents emphasized the conflict between values taught at home and those seen in films and other visual media.

Values

The general promotion of problematic values was also a concern of many parents. Gratuitous violence and nastiness in cartoons where nastiness is portrayed as cool, values underlying sexual relationships, too much emphasis on sex and showing violence as a solution to problems were some of the most common examples of values parents cited.

Even in the cartoons, it's this gratuitous, revolting manner that people engage with one another that has no lesson at the end, you don't get anything out of it (Parents)

Parents were critical of the ways in which films and other programmes' portrayal of sex and behaviour made assumptions about societal norms and values. For example, the assumption that it is normal and expected for all teenagers to be sexually active, or that certain styles of behaviour are characteristic of teenagers, influenced and put pressure on children. Parents also raised other concerns about stereotyping. Problematic role models for girls in visual media was raised but was not a common criticism. Role models for boys, where heroes engage in violence and promiscuity, also worried parents particularly in the context of children's lived experience of violence, early sexual encounters and peer pressure.

Parents were also critical of films with mindless content where there is no possibility of engagement, no lessons to be learned and no resolution. Some parents felt that it is preferable to have films where parents and children can engage with the film's story or messages even if it is potentially difficult for children. Parents felt that films, with positive values of empathy and understanding of people as well as good role models, should feature more in order to create a positive influence on children.

I think films or programmes about different religions are good because children learn more about one another's faith and get a better understanding (Parents)

Political films and documentaries bring us to a better understanding of one another – uniting people who had different experiences (Parents)

Overall, many parents struggle with trying to inculcate a value system in the face of the powerful influence of visual media and the difficult social context in which they live. Parents felt that children are pushed to their limit as to what they can cope with visually and emotionally.

3.2.2 Children's perceptions of parental awareness and concerns

Children (6-7 yrs) and children (8-9 yrs) said their parents were concerned that they should not watch violence, hear swearing or see nudity. Children (8-9 yrs) said their parents were also concerned about them seeing sex. They felt that their parents concern about violence, sex and bad language is good because they might get scared or start behaving like they do in films or on the television.

Children (10-12 yrs) confirmed that most parents want to know what they watch at the cinema and on video, and that their parents are concerned about what they watch.

I tell my parents what movie I'm watching... they look in the guide and see if it's suitable, and then I go and watch it (Children 10-12)

However, some children said that some friends' parents do not worry what their children watch or are not as strict as their own parents. Children felt parents ought to know what their children watch and pay more attention to what they are doing. They reported that their parents are concerned about films that might scare them, nudity, violence, sex, bad language and other "bad habits."

My parents don't want me to watch sex movies. When I see an S, I take my game and play (Children 10-12)

Children said some parents are particularly concerned about violence and horror films.

My parents don't want me to watch creepy movies, but I watch (them) (Children 10-12)

Children also reported that parents are concerned about how films impact on their behaviour. Some children said that their parents are concerned about the influence of images relating to beauty and fashion and want children to be themselves rather than imitate or emulate what they see. Children (10-12 yrs) felt that films with swearing, nudity, violence (especially horror and action films with 18 age ratings and reality violence such as wrestling) and sex (especially pornographic films) or films that might scare children are not suitable for them or younger children to watch particularly as younger children's behaviour is easily influenced.

The children see fighting and swearing on TV, then they come to school and do the same (Children 10-12)

I don't think children should hear ugly language and watch sex on TV because later their heads will be mixed up and they will also do those things (Children 10-12)

However, some children reported that sometimes they watch films and other programmes that their parents said they could not watch. They thought that parents are not aware that they do so. Parents are also not usually aware of what they watch at friends' houses.

According to children (13-17 yrs), parents vary considerably in their awareness and concern about their children's exposure to films. Some children said parents are not at all aware or concerned about what they watch, while others reported that parents remain very concerned.

If it was a 16 movie, my parents would let me watch it because there is no hardcore stuff and that, but by my friend's house, if you're just one year under the age restriction, they chase you out of the room, they will literally throw you out of the room if you're watching a movie rated 16 (Children 13-17)

Generally children in this age group indicated that parents are no longer as concerned about what they watch as when they were younger. Younger participants, up to about 15 years of age, felt that parents are still concerned, while 16 and 17 year olds felt that parents have now passed on this responsibility to them to judge what they feel is appropriate.

I don't know if they have a say but they always give their opinion (Children 13-17)

They [parents] know movies are just movies, unless you are stupid (Children 13-17)

They felt that their level of maturity meant they are no longer susceptible or vulnerable to influences from films.

Among children who said their parents let them decide what they want to watch, some children said parents are sometimes aware that they watch pornographic and very violent films, but are not concerned or do not seem to mind.

Now that we're older they don't really care (Children 13-17)

However, some children reported that parents still remain concerned about their exposure to nudity, sex, bad language and violence, and that exposure to inappropriate material might impact on their behaviour. Some parents are only concerned if the film is very violent, while other parents only object if there is sex and do not mind violence. Some children in this age group indicated that they do not tell their parents what they watch and practise various forms of deception in order to watch films their parents might not approve of.

My parents do restrict me from watching porno movies, but I do watch them while they're sleeping (Children 13-17)

Children felt it was impossible for parents to be fully aware of what they see as they have access outside their homes, and in some cases, children have their own televisions in their bedrooms making it difficult for parents to have any knowledge of what they watch.

Some children still felt that violence and pornography could be 'bad' for children in the 13 to 17 year age group. Children admitted that there are some films that are very disturbing even to them, for example, Cannibal Holocaust and The Passion of Christ. Female teenagers were concerned about the gender bias in pornographic films. They were critical of the fact that women are seen completely naked while men are not, and that women who have multiple partners are portrayed as sluts. They were concerned about their male counterparts' attitudes and responses because of their exposure to these biases.

Another thing that sex stuff...say there's a group and we're watching TV and that stuff comes on, the guys will sit there and watch and go Jo, jo, jo!!! ... and I feel so dirty; I feel so discriminated [against]...it's always the women who are sleeping with five different men, who are made to look like sluts. Then I just get up and walk out, me and my girlfriends (Children 13-17)

Children in this age group were concerned about other children's exposure to films particularly children their age who might be immature and younger children whose behaviour is more easily influenced. They felt that sex, horror and violence are very disturbing for younger children.

3.3 Beliefs about the impact of visual media

3.3.1 Parents' views

All parents expressed a strong sense that visual media impact on children and that some material is not appropriate for children. Parents believe that appropriacy depends on age, developmental level and maturity of the child, and most felt that younger children are the more impressionable. Parents believe that films need to be age appropriate in terms of children's broader emotional development. Although some parents were clear about what is suitable for their children in terms of their emotional development, some parents admitted that they sometimes underestimate the effect of certain content on children. Other parents felt that it does not matter what children as young as 10 or 12 see as long as they realize it is only acting, while others clearly felt that this age group cannot handle representations of certain levels of violence and sex.

Most parents felt that children are affected differently by what they see. Children have different personalities and internalize images differently. Parents in more affluent areas were more likely to feel that impact and negative influences depend on the type of

individual and that the family could counteract these negative influences. They felt that they could, to some extent, minimize bad influences in the media. Parents who live under more difficult social conditions felt that visual media have greater power to influence children in spite of children's own inclinations and good family influences. Where there are high levels of aggression and violence in communities, parents felt that violence and aggression in visual media could have greater impact. They felt children are also more likely to carry out bad ideas from films, such as how to steal cars, in contexts where crime and violence are the norm.

In terms of the kinds of impact films can have on children, most parents focused on children's emulation of characters and imitation of what they see as evidence of visual media's powerful influence on children's behaviour. They assumed that imitation of any kind is an indication that children could imitate more dangerous behaviours. In some cases, parents reported that children imitate dangerous behavior. Parents in more difficult social contexts have a stronger belief about the direct impact of visual media on behaviour than other parents. The latter felt that it is difficult to determine a direct link as different behaviors emerge out of different situations, and aggression is probably more from friends at school than from visual media. Some parents pointed out that imitation can be part of a process by which the child works through what he/she is exposed to and is not simply imitation of behaviour. Their fantasy play makes use of what they see in films, and they act out the characters. Parents felt that this acting out was not necessarily a bad thing within the context of knowing right from wrong.

Parents also focused on the emotional and sometimes traumatic impact of visual images on children, often in the context of reflecting on their responses as young children.

And Shaka Zulu, where he stabbed himself with a spear, it scared me and it stayed in my mind a long time... It seemed like a real thing, whereas it was just a film (Parents)

Parents also distinguished between content and the medium or genre that conveys it. They felt that big screen images have greater impact than a small television screen, and children consequently have different responses. They thought children are more likely to cope with a scary film such as Spiderman on a television screen. They also thought that real actors depicting realistic events are scarier for children than animated fantasy that is more removed from reality. However, some parents felt that violent cartoons might mislead children into thinking that violence is not serious, and children might not fully understand the consequences. Some parents felt violence in cartoons is equally as bad and influential as violence depicted by actors. Others felt it is not as bad and has less influence. Gratuitous nastiness and bullying on cartoons were connected to bullying at school, even among parents who thought children are not as affected by cartoons as more real-like films. Some parents also felt that visual images on television and in films impact more on children's behavior than computer games.

Although most parents focused on the direct imitation of bad behaviour, a small group of parents pointed out that media influence behaviour and values in more subtle ways. Parents felt that images and role models challenge common cultural practices in negative ways by suggesting that children's own experience of the world is inadequate and there are more worthwhile values to which they should aspire. Generations promoted thinness while Popstars undermined childrens' self-images for example. Parents also pointed out how stereotypes and assumptions about values and norms influence children to feel that they ought to behave in certain ways. Parents did not discuss long-term exposure on children's behaviour, and how visual media might shape identities and actions. Despite much focus on the negative impact of visual media, parents felt that film content offers an opportunity for children to learn and use their exposure in positive ways.

I used to tell my daughter what I used to experience under apartheid... Documentaries are good because they show her I didn't exaggerate. ... I'm happy she can see it. So TV is not all bad. Visual aid is a very smart thing.... Now the things that she writes in her essays and assignments are amazing. Also it brings out her emotions – she comes from another generation... now she's fascinated, she's sad... (Parents)

3.3.2 Children's views

Children (6-9 yrs) were very clear about how films affect them. Children (6-7 yrs) said that some films make them scared and children (8-9 yrs) also said they get nightmares for long periods of time after being exposed to scary content.

When I watched Scary Movie 3 I couldn't sleep and I couldn't go to the bathroom (Children 6-9)

Children (10-12 yrs) believe that some visual material in films is inappropriate for children their age to see. In their view, inappropriate material can emotionally traumatize children, damage them and influence the way they behave.

When they grow up, they will think of those things and do them (Children 10-12)

Like their younger counterparts, these children believe from their own experience that films can have a direct emotional impact on them. Children (10-12 yrs) also reported that they get scared and have nightmares, sometimes for long periods after watching films.

And others are scary, you find that you get nightmares and you have sleepless nights for the whole week (Children 10-12)

In their opinion, sex, violence and bad language can damage children especially younger children. They also believe exposure to bad language, sex and violence

influences them to behave in the same way especially in communities where they are exposed to these actions in real life.

Films that promote violence and sex affect young children. They do what they see. (Children 13-17)

Although some children have learned this belief from their parents, others said they have witnessed children, including older and younger siblings, experimenting with sex, imitating violence, hurting others and using bad language as result of exposure to films and other visual media. Children singled out tv's "pornographic" films (soft pornography/erotica) and reality wrestling as major influences on children's behaviour. Several children admitted wanting to act violently after seeing violence in films, and some children recalled that when they were younger, they imitated what they saw, particularly violent behaviour.

After watching movies, I used to say to others, let's play Karate because I saw Jacky Chan's kicks (Children 10-12)

Or sometimes you see a drama on TV and then after that you take a stick and destroy flowers (Children 10-12)

Other children said that while they enjoy seeing violence and action in films, they have no inclination to act this out in real life. Children also said that their peers like to emulate characters they see, particularly antiheroes. Children in this age group also felt that children believe what they see in films and are not always able to distinguish acting or representation from reality, or, as they put it, "what is true or false."

When my little three-year-old brother saw a murder on TV once, he wanted to know from me if the person really died (Children 13-17)

In the case of wrestling, some children in focus groups were confused as to whether the wrestling is real or not.

Generally, older children (13-17 yrs), particularly those 16 and 17 years of age, did not think visual media have much impact on them.

I think reality affects people far more than the stuff on TV (Children 13-17)

However, some children felt that some material could have impact. These children also pointed out the possibility that repeated images could have a subconscious influence on behaviour. Most children did not mention the possible impact of stereotypical images or norms presented in films that might shape their approaches and behaviour in more subtle ways. Some children admitted that pornographic films lead to sexual arousal and experimentation. However, some children, in less difficult social contexts, felt that social context and one's family life have more influence on how people behave than films and other visual media. They also felt that visual media could not alone cause negative

behaviour. They theorized that people would already have to be predisposed to behave in certain ways for them to react to what they see on screen.

If you do have psychopathic tendencies...it's not from TV (Children 13-17)

However, some children, in more difficult social contexts, admitted that they sometimes find it difficult to cope with their responses to films and to distinguish films from reality.

Older children in this age group, particularly those who were 16 or 17 years, felt that they have sufficient maturity to be discerning about what they see and to realize the consequences of their actions.

At this age...we know what the consequences are of sex...smoking. We've been educated, but what about the people who haven't? (Children 13-17)

However, they felt that media often portray certain behaviours as “cool” and do not show the consequences of people’s actions. They felt that these representations influence younger children to behave in certain ways because they might not yet have sufficient maturity to understand and consider the consequences of their actions.

I think that even though it's a movie, it can still have an influence on some people if they're not mature enough (Children 13-17)

Children gave examples of younger children imitating actions heroes such as Jacky Chan and wrestling heroes from reality wrestling shows such as Smackdown, because they could not differentiate between violence in films and real life. They pointed out that young children like to act out what they see and experience, and exposure to violent cartoons and other violence makes violence appear normal to them. Again exposure to sex and bad language has similar impact on younger children in their view. One child referred to the FPB’s information insert on videos to support the view that the effects of films can remain with children, particularly younger ones, for long periods afterwards. She felt that the FPB insert was informative and highly effective.

3.4 Understandings, opinions and use of age ratings and advisories

3.4.1 Understandings of age ratings and advisories

Parents’ understanding

Parents were generally aware of and understood age ratings and advisories. A few township parents were not aware of what L stood for. Second language speakers suggested that abbreviations in English are not always easily interpretable for them. There were a number of parents in each focus group that did not know what P stood for. Parents understood that PG means they must guide the child, and the film is only suitable for children as long as parents are present.

Parent 1: *But according to my understanding I think PG is suitable for children as long as parents are there*

Parent 2: *It means that you have to guide the child*

Parent 3: *A child is not supposed to watch alone (Parents)*

Children's understanding

Most children (6-7 yrs) were aware of the letters PG. They could not necessarily say what they stood for, but they said it means their parents have to watch with them. Children were also aware that they are not allowed to watch films with violence, nudity and swearing, but some did not know what the letters V, N and L stood for. A few children knew that the numbers indicate ages and that children younger than those ages are not allowed to watch, but not all of them knew this. By 8 and 9 years of age children appear fully aware of age ratings and advisories and understand what they mean. This age group knew what PG, S, N, V and L stood for, but not all knew what P stood for.

My mother doesn't want me to watch Yizo Yizo because it has SLNV (Children 6-9)

Similarly children (10-12 yrs) understood all age ratings and advisories, although one or two children did not know what PG stood for, and not all knew what P stood for. PG was either understood as "parents should watch with you" or "it is up to the parent" whether children could watch.

We have to watch those with our parents (Children 10-12)

Yes. That one is suitable for all (Children 10-12)

It depends on them whether they allow you to watch it or not (Children 10-12)

Some children, who were not English speaking, found it difficult to define the terms directly but generally knew what they meant. Children (13-17 yrs) knew and understood all the age ratings, but there were a few children in all focus groups conducted with this age group that did not know what P stood for.

3.4.2 Opinions and use of age ratings and advisories

Parents' views

Every parent agreed that age ratings and advisories are important and useful.

I feel like we need the guidance because we haven't seen the movie ourselves (Parents)

No one suggested that they are not worth having or should be done away with. A few parents questioned the basis on which age ratings and advisories are assigned. They felt that they do not really understand the criteria for assigning particular age ratings and

advisories. They also found age ratings too simplistic in the sense that they do not indicate emotional issues that might be difficult for children to handle. For example, they said *Yesterday*, a film about AIDS, that was an emotionally moving story, had PG, while *Spiderman* had an age rating of 10V. Parents also felt advisories are not always used when there is inappropriate content in films. Parents also felt age ratings are often too low. Low age rated films often contain violence and nudity. They felt that some films with an age rating of 16 are often not suitable even for an 18 year old. Some parents felt that explicit nudity and sex are inappropriate for anyone under 18, and that 18 is the earliest age children could decide for themselves. Others felt children should be trusted to make their own decisions as they get older. Parents also found an age rating of 13 could be problematic when used in conjunction with a violence or sex advisory. They felt it is not possible to determine the level of violence or sex appropriate at this level. They felt that there should be no sex in a film with an age rating of 13 years.

I don't think the age restrictions are always appropriate. Some of the things rated 13 have an incredible amount of violence – and how much sex is okay [for a 13 year old to see] (Parents)

Some parents and older children also felt that age ratings need to go below 10 years to protect very young children. Children (13-17 yrs) pointed out that in some cases, parents incorrectly assume that children are too young to be influenced by visual media and therefore do not apply age ratings to very young children.

Although some parents said they strictly adhere to age ratings while others do not implement them, most parents use age ratings and advisories in some way to judge whether a film is appropriate for their child. Some parents said that they adhere strictly to age ratings particularly with younger children. However, parents often draw on a range of information to make decisions about whether their children can watch a film or not. Parents reported that they evaluate content in conjunction with age ratings and advisories in making a decision. Some take into consideration the emotional and developmental level of the individual child and whether they thought the child could emotionally handle the content. A small group of parents said they weigh up age restrictions against film quality particularly films that are of 'broader interest' focusing on social issues that parents could talk through with their children. As long as they felt that the children could cope with the content, they could make an exception in applying the age rating. Children (13-17 yrs) also felt that the benefits of learning about issues might justify compromising on age ratings. Parents also make exceptions for children who are close in age to the age restriction having weighed up whether the child could handle the film. Younger children are felt to be more impressionable and therefore parents are more restrictive. In difficult social contexts, parents also felt they need to apply age ratings more strictly. Ultimately parents felt it is their right and responsibility to decide for their children what is appropriate for them.

It's where you exert your parental authority and make the decision yourself (Parents)

Age ratings and advisories are clearly an important part of their decision, and many felt they are of considerable assistance.

Among parents who use age ratings but do not adhere strictly to them, many parents benchmark a certain age rating as their age limit for children within a particular age range with anything higher being completely off limits. For example, children between the ages of 10 and 12 are generally allowed to watch films with an age rating of 13, but an age rating of 16 would be off-limits.

Age ratings of 13 years and downwards tell you that this is suitable for children (Parents)

In other communities, children (10-12 years) reported that the age rating limit for them is 18 years, in other words, parents do not allow children (10-12 yrs) to watch films with 18 age ratings. These limits sometimes depend on the accompanying advisory and other aspects, such as a child's maturity. Some parents let children watch 13P, but not 13V, while others let children watch violence, but not nudity or sex.

S and N are the ones we use – we don't let our child watch films with S and N. The other (ratings) we don't worry about (Parents)

Where exceptions are made, or parents are unsure about the film's appropriacy, some parents accompany their children to these films or watch with them at home. Parents also use age ratings and advisories to prepare children for what they are going to see.

Children's views

Children also reported that parents tend to apply age ratings and advisories differentially according to age group. Children (6-7 yrs) reported that they are not allowed to watch age rated films or films with swearing, nudity and violence. However, some reported that exceptions are made for age ratings of 10. Children (8-9 yrs) said that parents make exceptions up to 13 years.

But I'm not even allowed to think about watching over 13 (Children 10-12)

Some children reported parents apply S and N more rigorously than L and V. Among children (13-17 yrs), children reported that parents apply age ratings to those under 16, but generally do not do so for older children. Again children in this age group said that some parents enforce an S but not a V advisory.

Children (10-12 yrs) and (13-17 yrs) generally agreed that there should be age ratings on films. They felt that it is important to know there will be SLVN for sensitive viewers and to help parents and children determine whether a film is suitable.

There should be age ratings for films with horror and all sex movies should have age-restrictions (Children 13-17)

However, a few children (13-17 yrs) did not feel that age ratings and advisories were necessary or useful.

From Grade 5 we are taught about STD's at school. So by the age of 11 we already know about sex. So if there is sex in the movie, by 16 we already know, and when there's an 18 rating, I watch it anyway (Children 13-17)

I don't see the point of age-restrictions. By 9 years old, everyone knows everything already (Children 13-17)

Some children said they make decisions about what they watch based on age ratings and advisories. In some cases, it is part of self-regulatory behaviour, either because children know they will be affected and/or because their parents will disapprove.

My parents don't want me to watch sex movies. When I see an S, I take my game and play (Children 10-12)

In other cases, children use advisories to decide that this is a film they want to watch. Children suggested that age ratings and advisories stimulate interest and make them want to watch such films.

Seeing the age restriction makes you want to watch the movie (Children 13-17)

However, children also felt age ratings and advisories are important so that children do not inadvertently see something that would disturb them.

I know from babysitting that younger children should be limited to what they watch because it can have an effect on them (Children 13-17)

In the case of older children, they said age ratings help them to prevent younger siblings from watching. Some children (10-12 yrs) reported that older siblings stop them from watching films that have age ratings, although siblings do not necessarily apply the lowest possible age ratings, but like parents have an outer limit such as 16 years for children between 13 and 15 years of age. Overall, it is not possible to say that parents in particularly communities apply age ratings and advisories differently or more than others. However, parents and children of parents who work full time suggested that parents who are unable to be with their children apply age ratings and advisories inconsistently, and a proportion of these children said their parents do not enforce age ratings at all.

Views of parents who let underage children watch age rated films

Although not all parents apply age ratings, parents and children generally disapprove of parents who allow their children to watch age rated films.

I think they're bad and wrong. Parents have to set an example for the children because when the children are big and they also have children, then they'll know what to do (Children 10-12)

I think if a child can watch anything anytime, it's like spoiling the child. When they grow up they can't tell the difference between what's good for them and what's not (Children 13-17)

Participants felt parents who do, are uncaring and not interested in their children, nor are they responsible.

I think they are very irresponsible! (Children 10-12)

They felt that this practice could damage children, and younger children might imitate violent behaviour or develop bad behaviour as they grow up. However, a few parents felt that it is acceptable not to apply any age ratings if they feel the child could cope with the material. Some children (13-17 yrs) also suggested that age ratings do not have to be applied if parents know that their children can cope.

It depends on the child's maturity (Children 13-17)

Some felt parents should establish their own age ratings according to their childrens' maturity. Some children (10-12 yrs) felt it is acceptable not to apply age ratings if a parent is present. However, some children still felt it would be irresponsible even if a parent were present because some films are completely unsuitable.

3.5 Viewing practices and parental intervention

3.5.1 Cinema films

Children (6-7 yrs) and children (8-9 yrs) generally insisted that they choose the films they want to watch at the cinema. However, when describing how cinema films are chosen, it emerged that they usually choose films in relation to siblings' preferences and parents' judgement of what is suitable for them. Children (8-9 yrs) reported that parents have said no to their requests to see films such as Kill Bill and Bad Boys. Children (10-12 yrs) said although they choose, their parents decide whether they will be allowed to go. Parents usually insist on knowing the age rating and content especially when children attend with friends. Children (10-12 yrs) said parents have denied them permission to attend some films that are violent or have age ratings over 15. Some children said that they sometimes pressurize parents into letting them watch age rated films. Parents of children (13-17 yrs) generally exercise less control over children's choices. However, some parents of children (13-17 yrs) check age ratings and content. Parents also feel under pressure from children who express interest in watching films not specifically geared to children and admitted that they are not always as strict as they would like to be. However, parents are more willing to make an exception if the film is of good quality. They feel exposing children to good quality films even if there is some difficult

material, is better than letting children watch bad children's films. Some parents described protecting their children, while trying to find good quality films for children to see, as "a losing battle."

Parents, grandparents and siblings accompany children (6-9 yrs) and children (10-12 yrs) to the cinema. Some children in the latter age group are allowed to go with friends while others are not. Generally, parents want to know what they are going to see and with whom they are going. Some parents allow children to go with friends or parents known to them. Some parents do not allow children younger than 12 to go unaccompanied to the cinema. Across all age groups, some parents and children go to the cinema together, but watch different films. Older children (13-17 yrs) said they go to the cinema with friends (including girlfriends and boyfriends), siblings and other family members. At this age, children are less likely to go with parents. Some children in this age group said their parents are not concerned about the films they watch, while other parents question what children are going to see. Children (13-17 yrs) said that parents are not really able to control their choice of film. Children felt that they have both rights and responsibilities and can make choices on the basis of what they know they can handle.

3.5.2 Films at home

Age and intervention

Overall, the younger the child, the more parents and other household members monitor and control exposure to films on video/DVD and television.

When my mother sees an age rating that doesn't suit me, she switches off the television (Children 10-12)

Similarly to cinema films, parents of younger children control what videos/DVDs their children may hire or buy. They check the type of film, content and age rating. Children (13-17 yrs) said that they choose videos, although some obtain parental approval. Some parents check what they hire or buy, while others do not. Again, 16 and 17 year olds said parents are less likely to check or intervene in what they bought or hired. Children (16-17 yrs) felt that parents do not really try and control viewing at their age. Children in this age group said parents express disapproval, but do not necessarily stop them from watching what they want to watch.

She (mother) does say that it's too violent but she'll just get up and leave. She won't stop us watching it (Children 13-17)

Most children in this group said they can watch what they want and are past the age of needing to be monitored or protected. Some children in this group said they follow age ratings of their own volition when choosing videos, while others do not. A similar

pattern of parental monitoring and intervention occurs with age and exposure to films on television. However, there are a small number of parents and children who said parents do not monitor or exercise much control over what their children see on video or television.

If there was an age restriction like 18SNV, my mom wouldn't actually mind if I watched it, the reason being that it was just a movie, and I wouldn't mind because it's just a movie (Children 13-17)

For some parents, particularly those who work fulltime, it is impossible to monitor what children watch.

After school the children gather at a home where all the adults are absent, working. They then watch whatever they want to – I once came across of a group of children watching blue movies (Parents)

Some parents felt they simply cannot monitor children, and they will be exposed in other people's home, so it is better if they see it at home with their parents.

Because sometimes if you don't allow your child to watch a certain programme, he will go to [friend's name]'s place and watch (Parents)

Family practices and exposure

Televisions and video/DVD machines are usually centrally located in general living room spaces. A central location can allow for easy monitoring and control, but also inadvertent exposure. Parental viewing may mean children see inappropriate material because they are in the same room. Parents felt this was a particular problem in small homes.

The problem with our situation is that the parents in our community have personal problems themselves, they are tired when they come home from the farm. They need to prepare supper and to relax, and the only source of relaxation is a programme like Smackdown which they know to be violent and inappropriate for their children, but the house consists of one room, and it's unavoidable that their children will also watch what the adults watch (Parents)

Children (10-12 yrs) reported that parents may not be in favour of them seeing certain material, but if parents want to watch and children are present, parents do not always prevent children seeing this material. Parents felt that having more than one television and/or video machine makes monitoring and control more difficult particularly if they are in children's rooms. Some parents make it a policy not to allow televisions in bedrooms for this reason. Parents felt that exposure to inappropriate material on television and paid channels such as DSTV are more difficult to control than videos/DVDs. The latter are pre-selected and parents know what choices are available, while television cannot be controlled in the same way.

Patterns of family viewing vary depending on how parents use television and videos/DVDs in their homes. In some homes, television and video/DVDs are available to children at any time. Other parents designate specific times during the day when children may watch. A few parents specifically plan viewing sessions where films or programmes are pre-selected and children watch those only. These different approaches influence the extent to which parents watch with children and can monitor exposure.

For many children, viewing occurs without parents. Some parents said they regularly check what children are watching. Parents of younger children said they try to watch television and films with their children, but do not do so all the time. Younger children confirm that parents sometimes watch with them, but watching together is governed by parents' spare time and what parents prefer to watch.

My dad chooses and we watch with him (Children 10-12)

Among older children, parents seldom watch with their children, and children in this age group say they prefer to watch without parents particularly as some content makes them feel uncomfortable when they are with parents. Children pointed out that most monitoring only occurs when parents watch with their children. When parents are busy, children said they do not monitor what they watch.

Child 1: Maybe if she comes that's where she will be concerned and ask why are you watching things like these, like when she comes to watch TV.

Child 2: But when she is busy, she will only be concerned with what she is busy with (Children 10-12)

Single parents also stressed that it is difficult to monitor children's exposure because of demands on their time. Parents also pointed out that if children have easy access to television and videos/DVDs, it is also difficult for parents to monitor children's viewing late at night.

The roles of other family and household members in exposure and intervention

Other family members also play a role in children's exposure and monitoring. Some caregivers such as grandmothers and nannies are not concerned, while others intervene.

Child 1: No, no, the [grannies] are not concerned about what we watch

Child 2: Others pretend as if they are asleep

Child 3: Others send you to do many things

Child 4: Or change the SABC and say it's not the right SABC and switch it to the news and say that programme is finished now we watch the news (Children 10-12)

There are grandparents who just let them watch anything. Children grow up with grandparents who go to bed, and the children watch whatever they want to (Parents)

Some caregivers do not always implement parents' practices or instructions and expose children to adult programmes they wish to watch. Caregivers use television as a babysitter and parents cannot control what children see when they are not at home. Some parents felt that they should be able to use television as a babysitter when they are not at home, and that television broadcasters should not show inappropriate material during the day or early in the evening. Children also reported that grandparents go to sleep and leave children watching late night films.

Parents also have to consider exposure for siblings of different ages. Some parents allow older children to watch certain films, while younger ones are not allowed to do so. Older siblings may only watch certain films after younger children have gone to bed.

We take out a movie that will suit the younger ones, and another that will suit us the older ones, and then when we watch it my younger brother goes to bed. My parents are happy as long as my brother doesn't get to watch scenes that are not appropriate (Children13-17)

Other parents insist that older siblings do not hire or have videos/DVDs with age ratings that do not include younger siblings. Children (10-12 yrs) also said older siblings and parents hide or lock away their videos, but they know where they are hidden and some say they gain access.

Child1: *Others hide them under the bed.*

Child2: *On top of the wardrobe.*

Child 3: *Others in the flowerpots (Children 10-12)*

Some siblings give younger children access to inappropriate material, but others intervene and prevent children's exposure.

My sister rents films with sex and I also get to watch them when my parents are not there (Children 10-12)

My brother likes to say "let me fix it" and then he disconnects the plug or switches the channel, and then we watch something else (Children 10-12)

Some children in focus groups criticized others who said they allow younger children to watch inappropriate material. Children (10-12 yrs), particularly boys, reported that they get access to inappropriate material through older male siblings. Older children (13-17 yrs) reported that older siblings who are over 18 years will let them watch films and videos that have age restrictions but warn them not to behave in the same way, for example, use bad language they might see in the film. However, with younger siblings, they check the suitability of the film, and if it is not suitable for all ages, they, in their words, "dismiss" them.

Children (10-12 yrs) have a keen sense that there is material younger children should not watch and reported that they sometimes stop younger children in the household from watching certain visual media.

When they watch naughty things, that's when we stop them, but when they watch appropriate things for them, we can't stop them (Children 10-12)

They felt they know what is appropriate for younger children. Some children reported that siblings stop them from watching films that show sex, but will let them watch horror films. Some children (13-17 yrs) were clear about what younger children should not watch, for example, wrestling and sex.

Preventing exposure

Controlling children's exposure takes various forms. Some parents regulate children's exposure by only turning on the television for specific programmes or films and vetting videos/DVDs. Some parents try to ensure that other activities are more interesting than watching television, setting up alternatives to inappropriate material. Some make sure video/DVD collections contain as many positive films as possible. Some parents find selecting videos/DVDs for children to watch rather than allowing them to watch television helps them to control what their children watch. If children watch television, parents try to check what they are watching and switch off the television if necessary.

When my mother sees an age rating that doesn't suit me, she switches off the television (Children 10-12)

Parents also use various means of disabling the technology required to watch, but hiding the plug and other such efforts are not always successful. Some parents are aware of technologies such as programming subscriber channels that help prevent children's exposure, although not all parents can afford these, and most parents have not utilized these options.

While parents prevent children from watching certain programmes and films, it appears that children are often allowed to watch until offensive material occurs and then they have to close their eyes or leave the room, go to sleep, run an errand or parents switch the channel or turn off the television.

My mother tells me to close my eyes when there's a sex scene. She says an insect will crawl out of my eyes if I watch (Children 10-12)

My father chases me out of the room (Children 10-12)

When we were younger and there was a sex scene, he [father] would try to change the channel... by the time he found the remote, the scene was finished (Children 13-17)

Often this kind of sudden censoring hurts and angers children, and they say they feel rejected.

Once when the whole family was watching a film, my father suddenly told me to leave the room. I felt very bad (Children 10-12)

To children, both 10 to 12 and 13 to 17 years, it appears that many tactics are used to prevent them watching rather than giving reasons. Without reasons, children felt prevention encourages children to pursue material they are not allowed to access. Some children (13-17 yrs) felt that parents should rather be open and not switch off. They felt parents should discuss with children, and children should decide. Children in this age group expressed frustration that their parents do not give reasons why they should not watch certain films.

Some parents use age ratings as a justification to children for not allowing them to watch certain films. Some feel they should explain to children why they are not allowed to watch certain films.

Age ratings are a good way to help parents to tell your child what to watch and what not to watch, but you have to give them a reason as well (Parents)

Explanations to children of why children are not allowed to watch are sometimes limited to warnings about how films influence children's behaviour. Other parents felt it is important to explain to a child why he/she is not allowed to watch as the child will try and watch repeats when the parent is not around, or they will feel hurt. Others found it difficult to explain their reasons to children.

Parent 1: I want to talk about the issue of films, when you change the channel, you have to explain to the child that this is not right because of this and that, not just changing the channel. You have to explain to him that this and that will happen.

Parent 2: Even if you are not really specific to the reason because some of us are not comfortable with being specific, we just say, "There is a nice film on another channel." (Parents)

Parent 1: I have a problem with this thing of telling the child to go to sleep. This thing is not right... because she will want to see what you were watching, by the time you are at work... she will want to know the reason why she was sent to bed... yes, they become hurt. It's better to tell them that we can't watch this film, we will watch it next time and then change the channel (Parents)

Some parents carefully discuss with their children whether they should or shouldn't see a film and why. Mediation is a key tool for these parents. Mediation often gives parents an opening to discuss controversial and sensitive subjects, for example, HIV/AIDS. In this way, parents feel that even difficult and inappropriate material can have some positive benefit for children.

Self-regulation

Although parents try to prevent their children from watching films, children (10-12 yrs), whose parents do not discuss reasons why they prevent children from watching certain material, said they sneak in and watch without parents knowing or stay up late and watch films for adults when their parents are asleep. Some parents are aware of this practice, and children are aware that sometimes their parents know they are doing this. Some children (10-17 yrs) go ahead and watch films their parents have told them not to watch. Older children said they watch films their parents might disapprove of, for example, explicit sex, late at night. Since some of them have their own DVD players in their bedrooms, they think parents are unlikely to know about these practices. They lie to their parents saying they are watching music videos while actually watching soft pornographic films on etv. If parents stop children (13-17 yrs), children said they go to a friend's house and watch there. Some children said they hide videos/DVDs from their parents.

However, some children, particularly in households where there is open discussion, reported that they regulate their own exposure. Some children (10-12 yrs) choose not to watch age rated films as they know their parents will disapprove or because they know the material might impact on them. Some children in this age group said they do not watch violence because it will make them scared. Others said they turn off films that have explicit sex. Some children in this age group said they could judge what was appropriate for them, while others have found that sometimes what they thought they could cope with, turned out to be traumatic and had an impact on them over a period of time. Where parents discuss issues of inappropriate material, they believe that this helps children to determine how much exposure they can cope with.

Communication as intervention

Communication in the family about what children see in films and on television emerged as a key part of protecting children and helping them to deal with the impact of visual media. Focus groups revealed a range of communication styles within families that link to how parents deal with children's exposure to inappropriate material, and ultimately how children approach and cope with their own exposure. Communication styles range from authoritarian censoring with no discussion of visual material to parents giving reasons why children should not watch in a way that engages children's cooperation. Often this means parents spending time discussing children's feelings, the messages films transmit in relation to their own values and the implications of watching certain kinds of material.

I don't censor things...I'd rather talk about them...we talk about what's wrong (Parents)

So I think we have to prepare children who are at a stage to watch certain movies before they can watch. Prepare him and say, okay you see in this film is, something like this and that will happen... You are aware that you will be watching this film with him, so explain to him beforehand... and then when he sees that movie, that's when you will start to counsel him ... so if you don't want him to be involved in such things, you will explain to him. (Parents)

Participants suggested that parents who simply ban or stop children from watching inappropriate material with no explanation precipitate or increase disconnection and mistrust between parents and children, whereby children cannot work through their own responses to inappropriate material. Children and parents in families with little discussion and an authoritarian approach reported that children continue to watch inappropriate material, and there is little parents can do to stop them. In homes, where parents use communication to instill awareness and a critical approach to visual media, children have a sense of what they can deal with and develop some level of self-regulation in terms of their viewing practices.

Encouraging critical thinking, like asking if they find what they're watching silly or stupid or cool, instead of taking it as fact or truth, also helps (Parents)

These parents and children reported that there is a level of trust whereby parents exercise less and less control as children get older. Parents know they have equipped children to deal with exposure to problematic material realizing that it is impossible to control, and children will gain access if they want to.

From a young age your parents teach you...if you don't like something you get up and say you'd rather not watch (Children 13-17)

If your parents trust you, then you can use the age ratings yourself. You don't need them to tell you what to watch (Children 13-17)

My daughter has an awareness of what's permissible and what not – but now that she's a teenager, I have to trust her, let go. I'm concerned though about the effect some content has on her as a young female. So I can try to reinforce her existing value system (Parents)

Parents and children, in families where there appears to be little mediation about visual media, nevertheless feel it is important to talk and guide children about what they see or might see. However, their communicative approach is regulatory rather than cooperative with reasoned discussion. Children, in particular, feel it is important for parents to guide their children about what not to do in relation to what they see in films and on television. Most parents feel communication facilitates better control of children's exposure as it develops children's self-regulation.

3.5.3 Outside the home

Most parents worry about their children's exposure to inappropriate material and feel it is very difficult to monitor and control what their children see at other people's homes. In some communities, children (10-12 yrs) said friends' families have similar approaches to their parents and they are exposed to the same kinds of material that they see at home.

My friends watch what I watch (Children 10-12)

However, among this group, children reported that there are occasions when they have seen films they would not be allowed to see at home. Other children indicated that friends' parents are not always as strict as their own.

I'm the only one of my friends who watches horror movies (Children 10-12)

Parents also felt other parents have very different views and practices from their own making it difficult for them to maintain their own practices at home.

Some children (10-12 years) said that parents sometimes check what they are going to watch at their friends' houses. They ask the name of the film or the type of film they are going to watch. Sometimes parents prevent children in this age group from going to friends' houses or associating with certain families if they think their child might be exposed to unsuitable material. Parents have had experiences where children are exposed to soft pornographic and violent films on etv at other friends' houses. In one case, a parent stopped her child from spending the night at a friend's house because of his exposure to these types of films. Some parents reported that they are also careful about what their children's friends might be exposed to when visiting their homes. They realize that some children might be more sensitive than their own children and do not allow children to watch videos/DVDs that might upset more sensitive children. However, in some parents' experience, they find parents in their communities do not see why they need to worry that visiting children might see inappropriate material, nor do they take into account that some children might be more sensitive.

Some parents suggested that communication and trust are important in protecting children outside the home. Parents said they encourage children to communicate about what they see. An open relationship helps parents and children to avoid and deal with exposure to inappropriate material. Some parents felt that there should be more cooperation among parents suggesting that before television, parents co-operated more when addressing social problems in their communities.

Computer Games and Internet Use

4.1 Computer games

4.1.1 Exposure to computer games

Children (6-9 yrs) have some exposure to computer games. Half of the children in this age group said they played computer games. One boy had a Play Station and said he played Fighting Force. Other games mentioned were Pinball (A), Sea Finders (NR (not rated)), Peter Rabbit (NR), Dungeon Keepers 2 (A), Mario (A) and Jurassic Park (13).

Children (10-12 yrs) said they play computer games such as Free Cell and Solitaire that come with computer software packages as well as other games including Scrabble (A), Mario (A), Pacman (A), Dave Mirra BMX (A), Dave Mirra Freestyle (A), Street Fighter (A), Superman (A) and Chess (A). Other games they play include Tomb Raider (A), Age of Empires - 2-Gold (13), Age of the Empires – Age of the Kings (A), Age of the Empires – The Conquerors (A), Age of the Empires - Rise of Rome (A), The Sims (13), Crashbandicoot 1, 2 and 3 (A), Syphon Filter 3 (16V), Doom 1, 2 and 3 (16), and Grand Theft Auto (16V) as well as racing games, fighting games and animation games. They said they can access what they identify as violent games such as Streetfighter (A) and Spiderman 2 (A). Some children (10-12 yrs), mostly from middle-income groups, have access to play stations and Nintendo boards.

Older children (13-17 yrs) named Lion King (A), Grand Theft Auto (16V), Grand Theft Auto - San Andrea (18), Vice City (18), Vice City - 3 (18), Tomb Raider (A), Dave Mirra BMX (A), Dave Mirra Freestyle (A), Doom 1, 2 and 3 (16), Man Hunt (18V), Half Life (16V), Resident Evil (18), Resident Evil 2 (A), Resident Evil 3 (16), Resident Evil – Code Veronica (16V), Resident Evil - Dead Aim (16V) Resident Evil - Outbreak (16V), Silent Hill 1 (A), 2 (16), 3 (16) and 4 (16), Soul Reaper (16) and Blood Omen (16V) as some of the computer games they play. In general, 'shoot-and-play first person games' were regarded as favourites amongst this group. Fighting and killing games, strategy and war games, soccer games, car, wrestling, sports and war-craft are also common computer games in this age group.

Overall, economic level emerged as a limiting factor in children's exposure to computer games. Lower income groups, and those in townships and rural areas, have less access. Children from middle-income groups are exposed to a wider choice and also have

greater access to play stations and Nintendo boards either at home or at friends' houses. Middle-income children also said they are able to buy computer games while lower income children appear not to have the economic capacity to do so. Instead they said that they get computer games from teachers, neighbours and friends, and play them at home, at school, at relatives' houses and at friends' houses. Internet cafes emerged as an important source of computer games for children across all groups, particularly older children.

4.1.2 Parental awareness, concern, attitudes and beliefs and intervention

Awareness

Overall, parents are not as familiar with computer games as their children. They cannot name as wide a variety of computer games and are not always aware of their contents. Parents, who are less familiar with computer technology, appear less likely to know about the kinds of computer games that are available. Some township parents, for example, were unfamiliar with the computer games their children play and did not know the names of the computer games except common ones that come with computer software packages. Parents and children, less familiar with computer games, were also not aware of age ratings and advisories on computer games, while parents and children in middle-income groups were most aware of age ratings and advisories. Some parents, for example in rural areas, believe their children's access to computer games is limited, although focus groups with their children showed that access is increasing. Children across all groups felt that some parents are not aware of the content of computer games, while other parents know, but decide to let older children make their own choices, particularly among children in the 13 to 17 year age group.

Concern

Because of different levels of exposure and awareness, levels of concern among parent groups also vary accordingly. Children described some parents as completely unaware and unconcerned, while others described parents as overprotective.

Parents were mainly concerned about two aspects of computer games: content and their addictive nature. Parents who are more familiar with the type and content of computer games worry more than other parents about exposure to inappropriate content, particularly violence. Parents are also clearly more concerned about younger children's exposure than older children's. Parents are concerned about exposure to violent games played on play stations and Nintendo boards, but also expressed concern about the addictive nature of computer games generally. Parents felt that such activities could

totally consume their children's time, and one mother described her child as "totally caught up in it."

More parents have more concerns about the addictive aspect of computer games and time spent playing than exposure to inappropriate content. Parents worry about time spent on computer games rather than schoolwork or other activities. Parents are concerned that computer games distract children from schoolwork and affect their concentration. Children confirmed that this is their parents' main concern and admitted that computer games occupy large amounts of time and undermine their focus on more important requirements. Parents did not raise concerns about possible impact of lengthy exposure to violent computer games on children.

Attitudes and beliefs

Parents and children felt that computer games have both positive and negative effects on children. Parents and children pointed out the potential educational value of computer games. Children felt computer games teach skills such as strategizing and planning and provide opportunities for children to learn and experience interesting and useful activities such as how to drive a car.

In a strategy game you put things into different perspectives. Things lead on from one another. It helps you to sort out your life, to plan and to use certain skills (Children 13-17)

However, parents felt that many computer games have little or no educational value. Middle-income parents expressed most concern about the educational value of computer games.

For me, a computer game has to have educational value otherwise I won't waste my time buying it (Parents)

Underlying this emphasis on educational value is the need among this group for entertainment to have some constructive and instructive value. Other parents felt computer games and any computer related activities to be mainly advantageous. They felt they keep children busy and off the streets, their minds alert and improve children's co-ordination. Parents in lower income areas felt they have to weigh up the negative influences of computer games with greater negative influences on the street.

Most parents did not feel as strongly about the influence of computer games on children's behaviour when compared to film. However, some children reported that parents have expressed dislike of certain computer games on the grounds they can influence behaviour. For example, children said some parents don't like card games, as they say these games might make the child become a gambler. Although some parents cited examples of media articles about children who went out and killed people because of exposure to computer games, they did not really believe that computer games impact

on behavior. Nevertheless they felt that younger children should not play character interactive computer games. Some parents who had experience playing violent interactive computer games felt that virtual reality has a powerful and negative influence on the player who enacts violence.

Some children (10-12 yrs) felt that computer games can influence behaviour in the sense that they can make a person violent or cause a person not to concentrate on schoolwork. They said younger children are particularly impressionable. In their opinion, younger children imitate violence and do not understand that such actions cause people pain. Some children (10-12 yrs) did not feel computer games affect their behaviour, although three boys in this age group admitted feelings of wanting to act in the same way after playing games.

It makes me rude. My behaviour is very bad (Children 10-12)

One child said after playing Cops and Robbers, he wanted to go out and “kick some robbers too.” Another boy, who played computer games “with lots of guns and blood,” said he dreamed about these violent computer games all the time. Girls suggested that computer games affect boys more as they imitate what happens.

It's never affected my behaviour, but violence and horror affects the boys' behaviour. They try to do stunts (Children 10-12)

Children (13-17 yrs) were less inclined than their younger counterparts to think that computer games have an impact on behaviour. However, they hinted at the addictive nature of computer games and that such games make children highly competitive when playing them. Children in this age group felt that computer games are unlikely to influence children their age unless the person is already vulnerable in the sense of being easily manipulated, very impressionable or unstable. They felt that both personality and upbringing play a role in how a person handles computer games. They also felt that behaviour could not be attributed to a single cause and that someone would be already predisposed to certain behaviours for computer games to have an impact. Nevertheless, some children mentioned others who engage in imitating characters from computer games, although this is perceived as harmless. Other children hypothesized that the interactive nature of computer games, where you impersonate characters, might make people behave in certain ways. Children also felt that there might be some danger in not being able to fully experience the consequences of actions in computer games, and that computer games could influence people to kick and hurt each other because of this. A number of groups raised the concern that playing computer games results in antisocial behaviour in the sense of children who could not relate well to others. Despite confidence in their own ability to handle computer games, younger children in this age group admitted to being scared when playing certain games such as Resident Evil. Children in this age group admitted that there are “some games that were too much”

and too violent. An example was Postal 2 where the player shoots everybody. Although they did not feel that computer games have much impact on them, children in this age group felt that younger children, such as 10-year-olds, should not play games meant for 16 and 17 year olds. In their opinion, a certain level of maturity is needed to handle games particularly satanist ones, and children need to be able to distinguish between fantasy and reality.

It depends on the person...but there are so many people in our society that are uneducated that they take everything at face value (Children 13-17)

Children (13-17 yrs) also pointed out that influence could be gradual and occur over a long period of time, and people could be unaware of this.

If you can't separate reality from real life, then you can get affected. Even to play a game you need to have a certain level of maturity. You may not realize how you're being influenced in the long term (Children 13-17)

Maybe it starts off where you are not affected, but then it gets into you as you play the game more often (Children 13-17)

Intervention

Parental intervention ranges from almost nothing to careful control over children's exposure to computer games. Parents are least likely to intervene particularly when they have little knowledge. Some parents did not think it necessary to monitor or stop children, even very young children, from playing these games. Other parents expressed concern and wanted to minimize access, but appeared to be at a loss as to how to intervene. Parents, who are familiar with the content of such games and have concerns about the value of computer gaming, were most likely to report that they intervene. However, levels of intervention are also determined by the child's age. Among all groups, parents seldom appear to intervene with children above 15 years of age.

Parents reported intervention in children's use of computer games based on two main factors: exposure to inappropriate material and length of exposure. Parents allow children to choose what computer games to buy or hire, but vet these choices by looking at the age rating, weighing up content and the nature/type of game. Some parents insist that the computer games children choose should have some educational value. These parents tend to restrict children's access to computer games that involve children taking on characters where violence is the main interaction. They try to restrict access to play stations and Nintendo by not buying them or leaving them with grandparents so that children will have less access. They try to restrict use of these because children, in their view, will spend all their time playing them. However, they find it difficult to control children's exposure at other people's houses.

Parents generally felt it was difficult to monitor and control children's use of computer games, although some parents of younger children felt computer games are easier to control than video and television. Some parents felt computer games are more interactive and less draining than television and therefore preferable. Parents pointed out that playing computer games is primarily an individual and private activity that takes place in private spaces such as bedrooms, studies and other spaces that are not easy to monitor. The electronic medium is also easy to hide, easily transferred, easily transported and therefore difficult to control. Children can obtain games from multiple sources, can play them almost anywhere and hide them from parents if they think they will disapprove. In particular, the emergence of Internet cafes has increased children's access particularly for children who have had little access at home.

Children (6-7 yrs) appeared not to know much about age ratings on computer games. Children (8-9 yrs) had some awareness of age ratings and one child reported not being allowed to buy a computer game because of its age rating. Most children (10-12 yrs) felt their parents are concerned about what they are exposed to and the time they spend playing computer games. However, some children reported that some parents are not aware and do not intervene. Children (10-12 yrs) across all groups confirmed that some parents stop them from buying computer games that have age ratings, as well as gambling and violent games. However, children say they can still make pirate copies from friends if they want to. Some children said parents test the game before buying it, but sometimes parents do not know exactly what the game is about. Although some homes have play stations and Nintendo, children get exposure to this technology at friends' houses, at relatives' homes and in gaming arcades. Children also report getting access to adult games involving pornography such as Gypsies on relatives' computers.

Older children (13-17 yrs), particularly 16 and 17 year olds, reported that their parents are not aware of the games they play and are not really able to monitor games as they could be played in private.

Parents don't really know what we use the computer for (Children 13-17)

Parents are not really interested in the computers games we play (Children 13-17)

I think parents do care what we do on the computer, but they have no control (Children 13-17)

They reported that their parents dismiss these games as "stupid" and are inclined by the age of 16 to leave their children to make their own choices. Children in this age group believe that parents trust their children's judgement and pointed out that parents may show disapproval but not necessarily prevent them from playing certain games although some parents do delete computer games they do not like. Even if parents were to try and control their exposure, children pointed out that all games are easily accessible on the Internet and from other sources. Main sources are the Internet, Internet cafes, friends, CNA and computer shops. Generally parents do not have a say

in what games they buy. Parents, according to this age group, are more relaxed about computer games that have no educational value and are more willing to allow children to play computers as a way of “zoning out” and relieving stress.

Intervening in computer games and Internet poses new and difficult challenges for parents. Some parents felt that the best way of intervening is to know ones child and communicate with him/her about why they should not be exposed to certain things. Communication is seen as a keen intervention mechanism. Other parents place less emphasis on communication and are more intent on finding means to control children’s access even though they are aware that the nature of these media makes them very difficult to control. However, children across the board, particular in the 13 to 17 year age group, felt that key to intervention is the relationship between parents and children. Children stressed that parents need to know their children better, to be aware and involved, and engage their children through communication. They felt their parents need to have a balance between no protection and too much protection. Children emphasized that parent-child relationships, where parents equip their children to make critical judgements and foster some level of trust, are more effective in dealing with children’s exposure.

4.2 Internet use

4.2.1 Exposure to the Internet

About half of children (6-7 yrs) who participated in this study have Internet at home and have had some exposure. However, some children in this age group were not sure what the Internet was. Most of the children who have Internet use it to play games or use it with a parent or sibling rather than for their own purposes. Children (8-9 yrs) reported being allowed to use the Internet on their own to play games and for school projects. Children (10-12 yrs), who have access, use the Internet mainly for educational purposes to assist them with school projects and to download songs and pictures.

I use it for some projects like the Tour de France and the history of bicycles (Children 10-12)

One parent reported that her children who are younger than 12 have managed to access a pornographic site having got the address from peers at school. Children (13-17 yrs) reported using the Internet to source general information and news, download music and ring tones, play and download computer games, email friends and family, visit chat sites, do schoolwork (for projects and sourcing essays and tests) and pornography. Children said they download animated pornographic cartoons and other visual images at home and at school.

My cousins in Pretoria have their own laptop and phone line, and they've got millions of porn pictures. It shows how easily available this is. You can just click away and boom, you get all that stuff (Children 13-17)

Thirty-six per cent of focus group participants reported having Internet at home. However, children also have Internet access through parents' work, school, Internet cafes and at friends' homes. Overall, children in middle-income households have greater access to the Internet than children in lower income households. Rural and township children have little access to the Internet. Township children who reported having access to the Internet, had access through school, a family member's place of work or at an Internet cafe. In the latter case, cost precluded children from maximizing Internet use and consequently much exposure. However, it is clear that access to the Internet through Internet cafes is increasing and children's exposure at these places is difficult to monitor and control.

4.2.2 Parental awareness, concern and intervention

Awareness and concern

Parental awareness about the Internet and what is available to children varies considerably. Parents, who use the Internet either for professional or private purposes, are more knowledgeable about what the Internet entails. However, even parents who may not have that much exposure are aware that as technologies get more sophisticated, access becomes easier. For example, parents mentioned the use of cellular telephones to access the Internet and download pornography. Parents are aware of 'blocking' devices to prevent access to inappropriate websites. Parents felt they need to be more familiar with the Internet in order to be aware of children's use of the Internet.

I think if parents knew more about how the Internet worked, if we were taught how these things work, it would help (Parents)

Parents were primarily concerned about children's exposure to pornographic material and aware that their children, particularly boys, might seek access to it. Other concerns mentioned were illegal downloading, hacking and computer viruses.

Many children (10-12 yrs) reported that their parents are concerned about what they do on the Internet and aware of how they use it. Some children reported that parents warn them not to visit pornographic sites. However, children also reported that some parents are unaware of their children's Internet use.

Children (13-17 yrs) reported that parents do not know much about the Internet and need more education. They also said parents are not aware of how children can access pornography through cellular telephones. They reported that some parents are concerned about their children's exposure and some are not. To some extent, concern is

related to parents' awareness of what is available, but concern also decreases with children's age, as children said, their parents trust them to be sensible about how they use the Internet at their age. Children reported that their parents expressed confidence in their children's ability to protect themselves.

My father has always said to me, "You know what's right and what's wrong" (Children 13-17)

In their view, the Internet does not really pose any dangers unless one is foolish enough to get involved with people you don't know through the Internet, and it is up to parents to judge whether they think their child is capable of using the Internet. Children, in this age group, believe that they have sufficient maturity and skill to handle exposure to the Internet. However, some children reported that their parents have warned them about chat rooms, meeting strangers over the Internet and giving out their personal details. Children in this age group said parents are more concerned about protecting girls than boys from these risks.

Intervention

Parents control over Internet access varies from preventing children from having any access to completely unlimited use. Parents are more likely to monitor and control access for younger children. For example, parents monitor their 10 to 12 year old children's use of the Internet very closely.

I've got a network around my house and my parents can monitor what I go on (Children 10-12)

Children reported that they usually use the Internet under supervision of parents and for educational purposes. Some parents restrict use of the Internet to educational purposes while other children are allowed to download songs and pictures. Parents monitor access to websites by looking at the access history on the software and changing the password so children cannot access the Internet without parents knowing and being present.

Some children's (10-12 yrs) understanding of adults restricting Internet access is because they are likely to break the computer or interfere with the software and stored information, they cannot do it on their own, they are worried they might buy something in error without knowing it, or they might download a virus. Parents do not appear to have told them about inappropriate material or the dangers of pedophiles, but children are aware that parents are very concerned about how they use the Internet. Time is limited and children are supervised. Children reported that parents have passwords preventing them from accessing the Internet without a parent. Other children reported that parents monitor website access via the Internet. One child reported that the sites he

visits show up on his father's computer at work. Children in this age group said their friend's parents have similar attitudes to theirs and they have never seen material at other children's houses that their parents might not want them to see. However, some children reported that parents have stopped them from using the Internet at other people's houses. Some children (13-17 yrs) said parents check what they are looking at on the Internet and some have bought parent guides and obtained blocking devices to certain websites.

My mom checks what sites I've been visiting from time to time (Children 13-17)

Parents are aware that as technology gets more sophisticated, access becomes easier and more difficult to control. Some parents, particularly those unfamiliar with this technology, felt children's access to the Internet should be minimized because it is so difficult to monitor children's use of the Internet. Parents generally felt that monitoring is difficult because the Internet could be used for both good and bad purposes. Parents, particularly those that do not have Internet at home, are concerned about easy and unsupervised access through Internet cafes. They are concerned that children make use of Internet cafes without adult supervision. They suggested that Internet cafes need to have some way of monitoring and controlling children's use.

Parental Awareness and Education

5.1 What parents should know about the impact of visual media

Responses to what parents should know about the impact of visual media can be grouped into three main themes: 5.1.1 Raising levels of general knowledge and awareness about the impact of visual media, 5.1.2 Increasing specific knowledge about how visual media impacts on children's development, psychological wellbeing and behaviour, and 5.1.3 Furnishing parents with the tools to monitor and intervene to protect children.

5.1.1 Raising levels of general knowledge and awareness about the impact of visual media

Parents emphasized the need to raise general levels of awareness about the need to monitor and the impact of visual media on children. Generally they felt that parents are not aware of what children watch and what they could access. Children (10-12 yrs), particularly in lower income groups, confirmed this general lack of awareness about what they watch, and the need for parents to be more vigilant about what their children see. Middle-income children (10-12 yrs) felt that their parents are sufficiently informed about age ratings and age appropriate material. In fact some children felt their parents' knowledge sometimes resulted in overzealousness when protecting children.

Parents felt that they ought to be aware of the extent to which visual media are part of children's lives and development, and that the role of visual media can be both positive and negative. Parents were also concerned that visual media may play a bigger role in children's development than their parents, particularly among parents who work fulltime. Parents also stressed that parents need to be better informed about how age rated and potentially emotionally traumatizing films, especially those that contain violence and horror, can negatively impact children, particularly younger children. Children (10-12 yrs) also felt their parents are not sufficiently aware of the powerful influence of visual media on them, and how children want to emulate what they see.

Parents felt that parents need to know the advantages and disadvantages of the Internet and computer games. They also felt that parents need to know more about computer

games and the Internet in order to know what children are exposed to and what they can download. Children (10-12 yrs) also felt similarly confirming that parents are not sufficiently informed about these media. Older children (13-17 yrs) also felt their parents need to have regular updates on what is available.

5.1.2 Increasing specific knowledge about how visual media impacts on children's development, psychological well-being and behaviour

The specific effects of visual media on development, psychological wellbeing and behaviour were a major concern.

We need information about how films affect children in positive or negative ways, also emotionally. So we can better understand how different children will react in different situations (Parents)

Parents felt they would like to know the results of scientific research and experiments where children are exposed to films and then monitored to ascertain impact. They wanted to know whether animation has a different effect on children from real life actors in films. In particular, what is the effect of violence in animated films and series?

I'd like to know the results of research and the difference between animation and real life, we may have a false sense of security about animation, but it may have a greater impact on them than we think (Parents)

Parents and older children (13-17 yrs) also wanted to know at what age children distinguish between reality and representation. They were particularly concerned that parents should know more about the influence of visual media on the psychological and behavioural development of children under seven and as young as two.

I'd like to know about [how visual media impacts on] really young children, because a lot of their viewing is passive. Often parents will allow 2 year olds to watch a film for 18 year olds because they think they can't understand (Parents)

Children (10-12 yrs) felt that parents need to know more about the influence of visual media on very young children. Parents also wanted to know how attitudes and practices expressed in visual media affect behaviour so that they know when to intervene and how to do so appropriately. Particular concerns among lower income groups were the impact of reality shows that showed violence such as wrestling, the impact of sex scenes on children and the impact of visual media on adolescents and their sexual relationships. Participants also felt people need to know what the short and long term effects are of different visual media and how these might differ across age groups.

Children (13-17 yrs) felt that although it is important to understand the impact of visual media on children, parents need to understand that it is not a simple one-to-one relationship between visual media and children's behaviour. They felt parents need to understand that what parents do will determine how children respond to and handle visual media.

When parents see something going wrong with their child they don't say "What am I doing wrong?" They blame the programmes...the shows... the things out there. It's not what's there... it's you (parents) letting them see them (Children 13-17)

5.1.3 Furnishing parents with the tools to monitor and intervene to protect children

Participants focused on several aspects of helping parents to intervene effectively with regards to children's exposure. Key among them was helping parents to create open relationships with their children in terms of exchanging information and discussing visual material in order to build a critical viewership. Children (13-17 yrs) emphasized open relationships of respect and trust built through dialogue, while parents from similar communities also described dialogue as a critical component of how they manage children's exposure.

Parents also expressed the need to know how to deal with peer pressure, as a significant aspect of children's experiences that creates pressure on parents at home to let children watch certain programmes because other parents allow their children to do so. Another key area was assisting parents with teaching values that can assist children in combating exposure to negative values.

Parents across the board, but particularly in lower income groups, stressed the need for assistance in the form of ideas and mechanisms by which they can monitor and control children's exposure to harmful and inappropriate visual material. Rural parents felt parents could benefit from ideas and mechanisms for asserting rules to control children's exposure to visual media under challenging social conditions for example, small houses, single parents and few recreational facilities. Children (13-17 yrs) also felt parents need to acknowledge the changing nature of childhood exposure to media and to take more interest in what is now available.

Parents need to find out about the type of media we have these days (Children 13-17)

Children felt that parents assume incorrectly that their children are not exposed to certain content and that it does not affect them.

Parents and older children (13-17 yrs) also felt there was a need to provide parents with information on ways, particularly new technologies (children suggested child-locks), to monitor and control exposure to television, DVD access and the Internet. Across all

income groups, many parents seemed not to be aware of, or did not mention, technologies that can help parents protect children such as software that filters websites.

5.2 Ways of raising awareness and educating parents

Across the board, parents agreed that not enough was being done to educate South African parents. In addition, existing guidelines and the reasons why certain visual material is inappropriate for children are not being put across forcefully enough. Although they felt that some parents would respond to more information, parents also felt that a significant number of parents simply use television and other visual media to baby-sit children and would not be concerned. Nevertheless, they felt that parents may not have thought about why some kinds of exposure might be problematic and therefore raising awareness is important. Parents also pointed out that sometimes parents are concerned, but don't have the knowledge or arguments to follow through on their concerns particularly where parents within one family may have different views, levels of awareness and concern.

In addressing this question of how to raise awareness and educate parents, parents and children focused on four key areas: 5.2.1 Ways of enhancing the impact of age ratings and advisories, 5.2.2 Mechanisms for enhancing awareness and specific knowledge about films and other visual media, 5.2.3 Raising awareness by increasing public discourse about the impact of visual media, and 5.2.4 Utilizing community networks and institutions to provide pathways through which the FPB could reach and educate parents.

5.2.1 Enhancing the impact of age ratings and advisories

All focus group participants felt that age ratings and advisories are unobtrusive and need to be more prominent and reinforced. Children suggested that age ratings and advisories need to be explained on a regular basis, and the criteria for applying particular age ratings need to be explicit. A frequent suggestion was that age ratings and advisories must be verbally announced in all languages. In addition, age rating and advisory abbreviations should also be physically much larger, kept on throughout all films and be written in full in all languages. Participants felt this could be applied to television, cinema and videos/DVDs.

To attract people's attention to age ratings and advisories, children suggested that instead of an ordinary announcer or voice providing age ratings and advisories, a variety of personalities could be used, such as cartoon characters, especially right before the film. Children, particularly older children, from lower income groups, felt that they could play a role by telling their parents what age ratings mean, and that the school

could include understanding these ratings as part of the curriculum and also communicate them to parents.

Parents also felt that other values should feature in age ratings and advisories. For teenage viewers, they felt that a better articulation between values and sex or values and sexual practice and sexuality should feature. Positive ratings could assist in this regard. For example, ratings such as 'Good Family Values (GFM),' 'Good Social Values (GSV)' or 'Healthy Relationships (HR)' would be of assistance to parents and their teenage children. It was agreed that such ratings would posit a clear alternative to the existing ones – which are all negative.

5.2.2 Enhancing awareness and specific knowledge about films and other visual media

Children and parents felt that parents need to be aware of what time films and other television programmes are on and on what day, in order to monitor and protect children. They felt that this information has to be given in different languages because parents do not always understand English. Immediately before films are screened, some footage needs to be shown that makes parents aware of content. Children suggested that the film should be introduced in such a way that it helps parents to decide whether children should watch or not. They felt parents also need to be made aware of how children get access to inappropriate material. For example, parents should be made aware that children watch after their parents have gone to sleep.

Most parent groups suggested that there should be parental reviews of films for parents to determine suitability for children. Media such as television (television guides), radio and print media could offer previews, comprehensive descriptions and reviews of the content of films and other visual media programmes on screen or to be screened. These reviews should be geared towards parental concerns and appropriacy for children. Parents would then be aware of what would be suitable for children and what to monitor.

I think we need a programme in which parents are told what films are good for their children to watch and why. So for example we can see what's coming on and we can tell the child what to watch and what not to watch (Parents)

Parents felt television reviews about films at the cinema, new video/DVD releases and films on television would be the most effective way to reach parents. However, not a single parent mentioned that the FPB provides this service on their website.

Children suggested putting more information for parents on the video box and giving parents more information in the previews to films. A brief synopsis of a film geared towards children's exposure could be provided so parents could know more about its

content both on the video box and visually before a film. However, because home viewers often fast forward to the main feature when watching videos, they felt perhaps a cartoon character (to attract people's attention), who verbally informs parents about film content and age ratings, immediately before the main feature, might help. This information should be transmitted in all languages in order to reach more viewers and especially people who cannot read.

5.2.3 Increasing public discourse about the impact of visual media

Participants felt the most effective way of reaching parents was through more debate in the media on why parents should be concerned about what their children see.

There is a need for a more active debate. Why should we be more concerned? Which movies? Often parents aren't clear about it (Parents)

Television was likely to have the most penetration⁷ and be the most effective, although lower income groups also suggested radio. Participants also felt newspapers had a role to play although they have significantly less penetration than radio and television. Children felt that the SABC as a public broadcaster has a moral responsibility to assist in raising public awareness. Television could be used to raise awareness during popular time slots before popular programmes. Advertisements, perhaps the genre of the infomercial, discussion programmes, e.g. Oprah, and documentary type programmes e.g. Special Assignment, could be used to raise issues. Children (13-17 yrs) suggested advertisements similar to the alcohol ones that show different scenes and use the phrases "Good idea" and "Bad idea," and advertisements that have shock value.

Shocking adverts should be used to show parents what children can be exposed to, especially about what happens on the Internet (Children 13-17)

These advertisements could feature at age rated films at the cinema and during age rated films and programmes on television. Another suggestion from children in this age group was true stories showing the impact of visual media on children. Township parents suggested that a group of parents like themselves discussing these issues on television would have considerable impact. Middle-income parents felt children should also have opportunities to be part of debates in the media. They also expressed the need to have professionals such as child psychologists to give input on the impact of visual media.

Although participants suggested pamphlets (distributed through schools), books, letters and tapes sent to parents on these issues as well as billboards, they felt television would have most impact. Children (13-17 yrs) suggested that information be put on the back of

⁷ Radio in fact has the greatest audience penetration in South Africa.

telephone, cellular telephone and water/electricity household bills. A further suggestion was to target adult film audiences about the dangers of inappropriate material for children just before the main feature at the cinema, during a similar slot to that used for asking people to switch off their cellular telephones or on video/DVD. Again children felt presentation and medium, such as animation, are important to capture people's attention.

5.2.4 Utilizing community networks and institutions

Participants emphasized that public discourse needs further articulation within communities to encourage behavioural change. Township parents felt that parental discussions would be an effective way of raising awareness about visual media impact and age ratings, but that such discussions may not be practical for reaching large numbers of people. Participants felt that debates could be taken further by educational institutions such as schools, where teachers and parents' meetings could play an important role.

Parents can get more information about age ratings from the school (Children 10-12)

The Film and Public Board can come to schools to explain to parents at parent-teacher meetings. Also, parents could attend courses like PC-training courses (Children 13-17)

Community organizations using discussion forums as well as local religious institutions could also play a role. Traditional structures and events such as cultural meetings could be used to inform parents and address concerns about exposure to visual media. Local community institutions could be critical in providing information as well as encouraging a more critical approach among ordinary people towards visual media. Parents from lower income communities emphasized the need for local workshops.

5.2.5 The role of the Film and Publication Board

Parents also addressed the role the FPB could play in educating parents. The FPB should include parents in rating films and have direct discussions with parents on their concerns. A helpline from the FPB would allow parents to contact them directly and get advice as well as give feedback. Participants also suggested a chat line focusing on these issues. The FPB could also connect with schools, community forums and other community institutions to find ways of educating parents. The FPB or another body could provide learnerships or courses for community leaders, parents and children on the impact of visual media. Communities would like to see the FPB's approach working on the ground and not a top-down approach as they feel is the case when it comes to

school education. Parents were particularly appreciative of the effort the FPB had made in doing this study.

APPENDIX A - FOCUS GROUPS

Focus Group with Parents

General Information

Please introduce yourselves using your first name only and tell us how many children are in your care, whether they are boys or girls, and how old they are. Also could you briefly say whether your child watches television, videos/DVDs, goes to films at the cinema, plays computer games or uses the Internet.

Film, Video/DVD, Television

(What are children being exposed to? How much do parents know about their children's viewing practices?)

(To what extent are they concerned about what children watch and why?)

(Do they intervene and how?)

Do your children go to the cinema? How often? Can you give tell us some of the films your child has seen at the cinema?

Do your children watch videos or DVDs at home? Can you tell us what videos/DVDs your child watches? What videos or DVDs does your child have at home? What kinds of videos/DVDs does you child or you buy or rent for you child the time?

What would you say are your child's favourite type(s) of film or video? (Get examples.)

What channels are accessible in your home? (SABC, MNet, DSTV etc) Can you tell us what channels and what programmes your child likes to watch on television? (probe: children's programmes, soaps, films, cartoons, news, documentaries; get examples)

Are you concerned about what your child watches? Why? Why not? What things on film, video or television are you concerned about your child being exposed to? Can you give examples. (Probe: prejudice (gender and race stereotypes), violence, sex, language and other norms and values.) Are other parents concerned about the same things as you?

Do you monitor what your child watches (videos, cinema and television)? If so, how do you keep a check and why do you do so? How are videos chosen either bought or hired? How are decisions made about cinema film choice? How are choices made about what their child watches on television? Where are the television and video/DVD player in your home? How do you monitor what your child watches when you are not at home? What is the approach of other parents that you know to monitoring what

children are exposed to? Are you concerned about what your child is exposed to in other people's homes, what do you do about it?

Do you stop your child from watching certain films, videos or television? Can you give examples of what you stop them from watching and why? Do you preview films and other programmes before you let your child watch them? (probe: Do other children's parents feel and do the same as you?)

Do you think films and videos impact on your child? What aspects impact on your child? Give examples and how they affected your child. Do you think films and videos encourage certain behaviours in children and to what extent? Can you remember what aspects of films and other visual media had an effect on you (the parent) as a child?

Do you watch videos, films, and television with your child? (Probe: most of the time, some of the time, hardly ever). When do you watch with your children? To what extent do you and your child talk about what he/she watches and what do you talk about? Give examples. Are there some kinds of things you need to mediate (that means explain and reassure your child about)? Give examples (Probe: To what extent do other children's parents that you know watch with their children?)

Understandings of ratings and responses

(Do parents know what the ratings mean?)

(What are parents' responses to ratings: attitudes and behaviours?)

(What are the sensitivities of parents in relation to language, sex, violence and nudity?)

Do you think there should be age classification on films for children? Why? Why not?

When you see PG on a film, what does it mean to you? What is your usual response to this rating in terms of the children in your care?

What does 13L, 10V and 16SN mean to you? What is your usual response to these ratings in terms of the children in your care?

What does P stand for? What is your usual response to this rating in terms of the children in your care? (examples) Do you feel it is important to be informed that there is prejudice in a film? Why? Why not?

Do you feel as a parent that it is important to be informed that there is bad language, sex, violence and nudity in films, videos and television? Why? Why not? (Probe: How do you feel about your child's exposure to these things?)

Do you think there are some things that are not appropriate at certain ages? When do you think it is appropriate for children to be exposed to sex, nudity, violence, bad language or prejudice?

Do you think parents heed age classifications? Do you pay attention to it? Does it influence your behaviour? Do you strictly adhere to age rating guidelines? Why? Why not? (If there is a film or video that your child wants to watch and it says 13V and your child is 12 years old, what do you do? If it says 16S and your child is 14 or 15, what do you do?) To what extent do you think other parents take note of and follow age ratings? If you took your six year old and some friends of hers to the movies, would you take them to a movie that had an age rating of PG or say 10? What would you do if another parent did that?

What is your opinion of parents who let underage children watch age rated movies? (For example, if you see a child of 10 watching?) What is your opinion of parents who accompany their underage children to age rated movies?

Computer games and Internet use

(What are children being exposed to? How much do parents know about their children's use of computer games and Internet?)

(To what extent are they concerned about children's exposure and why?)

(Do they intervene and how?)

Do you have a computer in your home? Does your child use it and if so, what for? Does your child have access to computers at school and what does he/she use them for?

Does your child play computer games? What computer games does your child have or play? What are your child's favourite computer games?

Are there some kinds of computer games that you do not like? What are they and what aspects don't you like? Are there some kinds of computer games that you would or do not allow your child to play? What are they? Why? Why not? (get examples) Are you aware of age ratings on computer games? Do you follow age ratings on computer games? What happens if your child wants to play or get a computer game that you think is inappropriate? Are you concerned about what they might play at friends' houses?

How do you think computer games impact on children (both short and long term)? (Examples) Have any aspects of computer games negatively impacted on your child? (Examples) Do you think computer games influence children's behaviour and development? In what ways? What do you feel are other possible advantages and disadvantages of your child playing computer games?

Does your child use the Internet? (Probe: home and school)? What does your child mostly use the Internet for?

Do you know what your child sees on the Internet? Are you concerned about what your child might be exposed to on the Internet? What are you concerned about? Are you able to monitor what they see on the Internet? If so, how?

How would you describe the approaches of other parents with regard to children's use of computer games and the Internet?

Parental awareness and education

What would you like to know about the impact of visual media (films, videos, computer games and Internet) on children? (Prompt: impact on behaviour)

What do you think other parents ought to know about the impact of visual media on children? What can be done to raise awareness of age ratings and motivate parents to take them seriously?

What do you think is the best way for the Film and Publication Board to reach parents and educate them about the impact of film and other visual media on children?

Closure

Thank you very much for your time and input. Is there anything else you would like to say or tell the Film and Publication Board about the issues we have discussed today?
(Ask each person in turn)

Focus Group with Children 13-17 years

General Information

Let's go round the group. Could you introduce yourselves and say how old you are, how many brothers and sisters you have and how old they are.

Okay, let's have a brief show of hands. How many of you watch television at home? (probe channels: SABC, Mnet, Dstv, etc). How many of you watch videos or DVDs at home or at friends' houses? How many of you go to the cinema? Who plays computer games? (Probe: at home or where else). Who uses the Internet? (probe: at home, at school, where else).

Film, Video/DVD, Television

(What are children being exposed to? How much do parents know about their children's viewing practices?)

(To what extent are they concerned about what children watch and why?)

(Do they intervene and how?)

What kinds of movies do you go to at the cinema? Can you tell us some of the films you have seen at the cinema this year? (Probe: names of movies and what they are about)

What kinds of videos/DVD's do you watch at home or at friends? (Probe: names of movies and what they are about)

What are your favourite films/videos/DVDs?

What programmes do you usually watch on television? (probe: children's programmes, soaps, films, news, documentaries; get examples) What are your favourite programmes?

Who do you go to the movies with? Do your parents choose what movies you can watch or do you choose and ask your parents if you can see that movie, or do you choose what you want to watch and not consult your parents? Do your Mom or Dad ever say you can't go to watch a certain film? Do you know/ask why they don't allow you? (Probe: too young to watch it, too much sex, violence or other reasons, age ratings.)

What happens if your parents say you can't watch a certain film? How do you feel and what do you do? If you go with friends or with older brothers or sisters, do your parents want to know what you are going to see? Do they check what you are going to see and if so how do they check? Do other parents want to know what their children see at the movies? Do they stop their children from watching certain movies? What do other friends do if their parents say they can't watch a film at the movies?

Those of you who watch videos or DVD's at home, where do you get them from? (friends, parents, siblings, buy, hire from video shop). Does your mom or dad or the person who looks after you want to know what videos/DVDs you buy or hire or

borrow from friends to watch at home? Are you allowed to watch any video you want or do your parents say what you can and can't watch? (Probe: If you go to a video shop, how do they choose videos, with parents, siblings, on their own). What are the reasons your Dad or Mom say you can't watch a certain DVD/video? (Probe: age ratings, violence, sex, nudity, language, other reasons) Do your older brothers/sisters and parents borrow or have their own videos? Do you watch the videos your older brothers or sisters or parents have? What kind of videos are these, tell us about them? (Probe response: embarrassed, scared, like them, don't like them etc) Do you watch these videos with your brothers and sisters or parents or do you find these videos and watch them when they are not around? (Probe: where are they kept, accessibility). Do friends' parents want to know what videos/DVDs you and your friends watch? Do they stop your friends from watching certain films? Do you know why? Do your parents worry about what videos/DVDs you might watch at friends' houses? Do they do anything about what you watch at other people's houses? If you have an older brother or sister have they ever stopped you from watching certain videos/DVDs? If so why? If you have a younger brother or sister, do you ever stop them from watching certain films? If so, why?

Are your parents concerned about what you watch on television? Do they check to see what you are watching? Are there any television programmes or channels you are not allowed to watch? If so what and what are the reasons why you are not allowed to watch these programmes or channels? How do your parents stop you from watching certain things? Can you give examples of how they stop you. How do you feel about this? What do you do? (probe: do you get upset because your friends are allowed to watch, do you watch anyway?) Are friends' parents also concerned about what your friends watch on television? Do friends' parents stop your friends from watching certain programmes? What programmes? Why? What do your friends think and do about this?

Do you think there are some things on videos/films/television that might not be good for you or other people your age to see? (Probe: things that scare you, things you don't understand, violence, sex, language – what happens if there are swear words?) Do you think swearing, sex, violence and nudity might affect children younger than yourself? Think about your younger brothers and sisters? Is there anything you think they should not watch? What and why? When you were young, what affected you on films/videos? (Probe: disturbed you, confused you, scared you, worried you?) Do you think films make people behave in certain ways? For example do you think a film that uses lots of swear words like 'Boys in the Hood' or Bradley in Generations influences children to go out use bad language? Do you think films influence your behaviour or influenced your behaviour when you were younger? (Probe: make children violence etc) Give examples of things from films.

Does your mum/dad or the person who looks after you, watch videos and television with you? (Probe: hardly ever, sometimes, quite often) When do they do so? Do you talk about what you see with your parents or the person who looks after you? Do your parents encourage you to talk about what you see in films and on television? What do you talk about? Are there any things on film and television where it helps (or has helped in the past when you were younger) to have a grown-up explain or talk to you about them?

Understandings of ratings and responses

(Do children know what the ratings mean?)

(What are children's and parents' responses to ratings: attitudes and behaviours?)

(What are the sensitivities of children and parents in relation to language, sex, violence and nudity?)

(Put these age ratings on a piece of paper so participants can see them.) When you see PG, 10L, 13V or 16SNP on a film or on television in the corner of the screen, what does it mean to you? (Probe what each letter stands for and what it means). What do you do when you see this? (Probe: not watch, watch anyway) What do your parents do? For example, if you are your age and you want to see a film or video rated 18SNV, what happens? What do your parents or older siblings do? (Probe: do they stop you watching it? Do they allow you to watch it? Do they watch it with you?)

Do you feel it is important to know at the beginning of a film that there will be bad language, sex, violence, prejudice and nudity in films or television programmes that people your age are going to watch? Why? Why not? (Probe: what about younger children, say a child of 12 years or 6 years being exposed to these things like violence etc?)

Do you think there should be age ratings on films for children? Why? Why not?

Does your mom or dad or the person who cares for you insist that you do not watch films or videos that say you are too young to watch? Do they always follow the age ratings or only sometimes? When? (Probe: follow it when it comes to violence or only when it comes to sex or they have seen it before) Do other moms and dads not allow children to watch films that have age ratings? What do other parents generally do? They strictly age ratings or do they not?

What do you think of parents who let underage children watch age rated movies? (Is it okay?) What do you think of parents who accompany or watch age rated movies with their underage children? (good, bad?)

Computer games and Internet use

(What are children being exposed to? How much do parents know about their children's use of computer games and Internet?)

(To what extent are they concerned about children's exposure and why?)

(Do they intervene and how?)

Do you play computer games at home and/or elsewhere? (Probe where else) What computer games do you play and what are your favourite ones? (Probe: online play with anonymous participants)

Where do you get computer games from? Do your parents have a say in what computer games you get? Are there some kinds of computer games your parents disapprove of, or do not allow you to play? What are they? Why? (Probe: awareness of, and adherence to age ratings.) What attitudes do your friends' parents have regarding computer games? Do they stop your friends from playing certain computer games?

How do you think playing computer games affects you? How do you think computer games affect your friends and their behaviour? (probe: after effects, violent or aggressive behaviour) Do you think computer games affect the behaviour of children younger than you? In what ways? Do you think there are some computer games young children shouldn't play? Give examples of computer games and what ages shouldn't be allowed to play them and why?

Do you use the Internet? Where? (home or school). What do you use the Internet for? (websites they visit, school projects, home pages of movie stars etc)

Are your parents concerned about what you see on the Internet and how you use the Internet? Do they talk to you about possible dangers with using the Internet. Do they check what you do on the Internet? Do they limit what you can see on the Internet?

What do friends' parents do about what your friends are allowed to see on the Internet or how your friends use the Internet? (Probe: limits, rules about use, informing them of the dangers etc)

Parental awareness and education

Do you think most parents are concerned about what films and television, computer games and Internet people your age see? What concerns them most? Do you think grownups should be worrying that much about what children see?

What do you think parents ought to know about how films, television and the Internet might affect people your age and younger children?

What do you think is the best way to reach parents and children to tell them about how film and other visual media might affect children? How do we make children and

parents aware of what age ratings mean and why they are important and why they should follow them?

Closure

Thank you very much for your time and input. Is there anything else you would like to say or tell the Film and Publication Board about the issues we have discussed today?
(Ask each person in turn)

Focus Group with Children 10-12 years

General Information

Let's go round the group. Can everyone tell me their name and say how old you are, how many brothers and sisters you have and how old they are?

Okay, let's have a brief show of hands. How many of you watch television at home? (probe channels: SABC, Mnet, Dstv, etc). How many of you watch videos or DVDs at home or at friends' houses? How many of you go to the cinema? Who plays computer games? (Probe: at home or where else). Who uses the Internet? (probe: at home, at school, where else).

Film, Video/DVD, Television

(What are children being exposed to? How much do parents know about their children's viewing practices?)

(To what extent are they concerned about what children watch and why?)

(Do they intervene and how?)

What kinds of movies do you go to at the cinema? Can you tell us some of the films you have seen at the cinema this year? (Probe: Names of movies and what they are about)

What kinds of videos/DVD's do you watch at home or at friends? (Probe: Names of videos and DVDs and what they are about)

What are your favourite films/videos/DVDs?

What programmes do you usually watch on television? (probe: children's programmes, soaps, films, news, documentaries; get examples) What are your favourite programmes?

Who do you go to the movies with? Do your parents choose what movies you can watch or do you choose and ask your parents if you can see that movie? Do your Mom or Dad ever say you can't go to watch a certain film? Do you know/ask why they don't allow you? (Probe: too young to watch it, too much sex, violence or other reasons, age ratings.) What happens if your parents say you can't watch a certain film? How do you feel and what do you do? (If there is anyone in the group who doesn't go with their parents ask the following) If you go with friends or with older brothers or sisters, do your parents want to know what you are going to see? Do they check what you are going to see and if so how do they check? Do other parents want to know what their children see at the movies? Do they stop their children from watching certain movies? What do other friends do if their parents say they can't watch a film at the movies?

Those of you who watch videos or DVD's at home, where do you get them from? (friends, parents, siblings, buy, hire from video shop). Does your mom or dad or the person who looks after you want to know what videos/DVDs you buy or hire or

borrow from friends to watch at home? Are you allowed to watch any video you want or do your parents say what you can and can't watch? (Probe: If you go to a video shop, how do they choose videos, with parents, siblings, on their own). What are the reasons your Dad or Mom say you can't watch a certain DVD/video? (Probe: age ratings, violence, sex, nudity, language, other reasons) Do your older brothers/sisters and parents borrow or have their own videos? Do you watch the videos your older brothers or sisters or parents have? What kind of videos are these, tell us about them? (Probe response: embarrassed, scared, like them, don't like them etc) Do you watch these videos with your brothers and sisters or parents or do you find these videos and watch them when they are not around? (Probe: where are they kept, accessibility). Do friends' parents want to know what videos/DVDs you and your friends watch? Do they stop your friends from watching certain films? Do you know why? Do your parents worry about what videos/DVDs you might watch at friends' houses? Do they do anything about what you watch at other people's houses? If you have an older brother or sister have they ever stopped you from watching certain videos/DVDs? If so why? If you have a younger brother or sister, do you ever stop them from watching certain films? If so, why?

Are your parents concerned about what you watch on television? Do they check to see what you are watching? Are there any television programmes or channels you are not allowed to watch? If so what and what are the reasons why you are not allowed to watch these programmes or channels? How do your parents stop you from watching certain things? Can you give examples of how they stop you. How do you feel about this? What do you do? (probe: do you get upset because your friends are allowed to watch, do you watch anyway?) Are friends' parents also concerned about what your friends watch on television? Do friends' parents stop your friends from watching certain programmes? What programmes? Why? What do your friends think and do about this?

Do you think there are some things on videos/films/television that might not be good for you or other people your age to see? (Probe: things that scare you, things you don't understand, violence, sex, language – what happens if there are swear words?) Do you think swearing, sex, violence and nudity might affect children younger than yourself? Think about your younger brothers and sisters? Is there anything you think they should not watch? What and why? When you were young, what affected you on films/videos? (Probe: disturbed you, confused you, scared you, worried you?) Do you think films make people behave in certain ways? For example do you think a film that uses lots of swear words like 'Boys in the Hood' or Bradley in Generations influences children to go out use bad language? Do you think films influence your behaviour or influenced your behaviour when you were younger? (Probe: make children violence etc) Give examples of things from films.

Does your mum/dad or the person who looks after you, watch videos and television with you? (Probe: hardly ever, sometimes, quite often) When do they do so? Do you talk about what you see with your parents or the person who looks after you? Do your parents encourage you to talk about what you see in films and on television? What do you talk about? Are there any things on film and television where it helps to have a grown-up explain or talk to you about them?

Understandings of ratings and responses

(Do children know what the ratings mean?)

(What are children's and parents' responses to ratings: attitudes and behaviours?)

(What are the sensitivities of children and parents in relation to language, sex, violence and nudity?)

(put these age ratings on a piece of paper so participants can see them) When you see PG, 10L, 13V or 16SNP on a film or on television in the corner of the screen, what does it mean to you? (Probe what each letter stands for and what it means). What do you do when you see this? (Probe: not watch, watch anyway) What do your parents do? For example, if you are 10, 11 or 12 and you want to see a film or video rated 13V or 16SN, what happens? What do your parents or older siblings do? (Probe: do they stop you watching it? Do they allow you to watch it? Do they watch it with you?)

Do you feel it is important to know at the beginning of a film that there will be bad language, sex, violence, prejudice and nudity in films or television programmes that people your age are going to watch? Why? Why not? (Probe: what about younger children, say a child of 6 years being exposed to these things like violence etc?)

Do you think there should be age ratings on films for children? Why? Why not?

Does your mom or dad or the person who cares for you insist that you do not watch films or videos that say you are too young to watch? Do they always follow the age ratings or only sometimes? When? (Probe: follow it when it comes to violence or only when it comes to sex or they have seen it before) Do other moms and dads not allow children to watch films that have age ratings? What do other parents generally do? They strictly age ratings or do they not?

What do you think of parents who let underage children watch age rated movies? (Is it okay?) What do you think of parents who accompany or watch age rated movies with their underage children? (good, bad?)

Computer games and Internet use

(What are children being exposed to? How much do parents know about their children's use of computer games and Internet?)

(To what extent are they concerned about children's exposure and why?)

(Do they intervene and how?)

Do you play computer games at home and/or elsewhere? (Probe where else) What computer games do you play and what are your favourite ones? (Probe: online play with anonymous participants)

Where do you get computer games from? Do your parents have a say in what computer games you get? Are there some kinds of computer games your parents disapprove of, or do not allow you to play? What are they? Why? (Probe: awareness of, and adherence to age ratings.) What attitudes do your friends' parents have regarding computer games? Do they stop your friends from playing certain computer games?

How do you think playing computer games affects you? How do you think computer games affect your friends and their behaviour? (probe: after effects, violent or aggressive behaviour) Do you think computer games affect the behaviour of children younger than you? In what ways? Do you think there are some computer games young children shouldn't play? Give examples of computer games and what ages shouldn't be allowed to play them and why?

Do you use the Internet? Where? (home or school). What do you use the Internet for? (websites they visit, school projects, home pages of movie stars etc)

Are your parents concerned about what you see on the Internet and how you use the Internet? Do they talk to you about possible dangers with using the Internet. Do they check what you do on the Internet? Do they limit what you can see on the Internet?

What do friends' parents do about what your friends are allowed to see on the Internet or how your friends use the Internet? (Probe: limits, rules about use, informing them of the dangers etc)

Parental awareness and education

Do you think most parents are concerned about what films and television, computer games and Internet people your age see? What concerns them most? Do you think grownups should be worrying that much about what children see?

What do you think parents ought to know about how films, television and the Internet might affect people your age and younger children?

What do you think is the best way to reach parents and children to tell them about how film and other visual media might affect children? How do we make children and

parents aware of what age ratings mean and why they are important and why they should follow them?

Closure

Thank you very much for your time and input. Is there anything else you would like to say or tell the Film and Publication Board about the issues we have discussed today?
(Ask each person in turn)

Focus Group with Children 6-7 and 8-9 years

General Information

Let's go round the group. Can everyone tell me their name and say how old you are, how many brothers and sisters you have and how old they are?

Okay, let's have a brief show of hands. How many of you watch television at home? (probe channels: SABC, Mnet, Dstv, etc). How many of you watch videos or DVDs at home or at friends' houses? How many of you go to the cinema? Who plays computer games? (Probe: at home or where else). Who uses the Internet? (probe: at home, at school, where else).

Film, Video/DVD, Television

(What are children being exposed to? How much do parents know about their children's viewing practices?)

(To what extent are they concerned about what children watch and why?)

(Do they intervene and how?)

What kinds of movies do you go to at the cinema? Can you tell us some of the films you have seen at the cinema this year? (Probe: Names of movies and what they are about)

What kinds of videos/DVD's do you watch at home or at friends? (Probe: Names of videos and DVDs and what they are about)

What are your favourite films/videos/DVDs?

What programmes do you usually watch on television? (probe: children's programmes, soaps, films, news, documentaries; get examples) What are your favourite programmes?

Who goes with you to the movies? Do your parents choose what movies you can watch or do you choose and ask your parents if you can see that movie? Are you allowed to watch any movie you want to or do your Mom or Dad ever say you can't go to watch a certain film? Do you know why they don't allow you to watch? (Probe: too young to watch it, too much sex, violence or other reasons, age ratings.)

Those of you who watch videos or DVD's at home, where do you get them from? (borrow from friends, parents buy them, siblings get them, buy, hire from video shop). When you go to the video shop do you choose what you want to watch? Does your mom or dad go with you to choose? (Probe if the nanny or elder siblings might accompany them instead) Does your mom or dad or your older brother/sister or nanny help you to choose a video? Does your mom or dad or the person who looks after you sometimes say you can't watch a video you want to choose? Do you know why they say you can't watch it? Do you watch the videos your older brothers or sisters choose or are you not allowed to? What kind of videos are these, tell us about them? Do you like these

videos? Why? Why not? (Probe response: embarrassed, scared, like them, don't like them etc) If you are not allowed to watch a video, do you watch it anyway? How? When? (Probe: where are they kept, accessibility). If you have an older brother or sister have they ever stopped you from watching certain videos/DVDs? If so why? If you have a younger brother or sister, do you ever stop them from watching certain films? If so, why? If you go and play at a friend's house, does your mom or dad want to know what videos you watch at your friend's house? Do your parents worry about what videos/DVDs you might watch at friends' houses? Do they do anything about what you watch at other people's houses?

Do your parents check what you watch on television? Are there any television programmes or channels you are not allowed to watch? Tell me what are you not allowed to watch? Do you know why? If your parents want to stop you from watching a programme what do they do? (switch off the television, etc) Do your friends' parents also check what you and your friend watch on television? If you are playing at a friend's house, does their mom or dad stop you from watching certain programmes? What programmes? Why? (probe; if mom and dad are not there, does the nanny/caregiver check and stop them)

Do you think there are some things on videos/films/television that might not be good for you and children your age to see? (Probe: things that scare you, things you don't understand, violence, sex, language – what happens if there are swear words?) Have you ever seen things on television, film or video that have upset you? Tell me what these were? Why did they upset you? Do you think children copy what they see in films in real life? (probe: give examples if they don't understand)

Does your mum/dad or the person who looks after you, watch videos and television with you? (Probe: hardly ever, sometimes, quite often) When do they do so? Do you talk about what you see with your parents or the person who looks after you? What do you talk about? Are there any things on film and television where it helps to have a grown-up explain or talk to you about them? (get examples)

Understandings of ratings and responses

(Do children know what the ratings mean?)

(What are children's and parents' responses to ratings: attitudes and behaviours?)

(What are the sensitivities of children and parents in relation to language, sex, violence and nudity?)

(put these age ratings on a piece of paper so participants can see them) When you see PG, 10L, 13V or 16SNP on a film or on television in the corner of the screen, what does it mean to you? (Probe what each letter stands for and what it means). (if they don't know

this, you can explain PG and 10L and what they mean, then ask) What do you do when you see 10L on a video or on a film on television? Do you watch? What does your mum or dad do? Are you allowed to watch? Do your parents watch with you? Do they stop you watching a video that says you are too young to watch?

Does your mom or dad or the person who cares for you insist that you do not watch films or videos that say you are too young to watch? Do other moms and dads not allow children to watch films that say you are too young to watch?

Do you think it is good for parents to know that there might be something scary or bad in a film so that parents can stop you from watching that film?

Do you think it is okay for parents to let children younger than 10 watch a film that says no one younger than 10 should watch this film/video? Why? Why not?

Computer games and Internet use

(What are children being exposed to? How much do parents know about their children's use of computer games and Internet?)

(To what extent are they concerned about children's exposure and why?)

(Do they intervene and how?)

Do you play computer games at home and/or elsewhere? (Probe where else) What computer games do you play and what are your favourite ones?

Do your parents choose or way what computer games you may play? Are there some kinds of computer games your parents do not like you to play or do not allow you to play? What are they? Do you know why? Do your friends' parents sometimes stop your friends from playing certain computer games?

Do you think there are some computer games young children shouldn't play? Give examples of computer games that young children shouldn't be allowed to play and why?

Do you use the Internet? (Explain what it is?) Where? (home or school). What do you use the Internet for? (websites they visit, school projects, home pages of movie stars, games, stories etc)

Do your parents find things (what they have said they see on the Internet) for you on the Internet or do you find them yourselves? Do they check what you see on the Internet? Do they stop you from looking at some things on the Internet? If yes, what?

What do friends' parents do about what your friends are allowed to see on the Internet? (Probe: limits, rules about use, informing them of the dangers etc)

Parental awareness and education

Do you think your parents worry about what films and television, computer games and Internet children your age see? Do you think grownups should be worrying that much about what children see? Why?

What do you think parents ought to know about how films, television and the Internet might affect people your age and younger children?

Closure

Thank you for helping me.

APPENDIX B - INFORMATION SHEETS

Parent/Guardian/Caregiver's Information

1.1 Name:
(optional) _____

1.2 Age (please tick appropriate box).

15-19	20-24	25-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	51-55	56-60	+61
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-----

1.3 Sex (tick).

Male	Female
------	--------

1.4 Race group (tick).

African	White	Coloured	Indian	Other
---------	-------	----------	--------	-------

1.5 Please tick the language you mostly speak at home.

Afrikaans		Setswana	
English		Tshivenda/Lemba	
Isindebele		Xitsonga	
Isiwati		Other African language	
Isixhosa		Other European language	
Isizulu		Indian language	
Sesotho		Other (specify)	
Sepedi			

1.6 Please tick your religion.

Christian (please specify denomination)	
Muslim	
Hindu	
Jewish	
No religion	
Other, please specify	

1.7 Please tick how important your religion is to you.

Not important at all	
Slightly important	
Somewhat important	
Important	
Very important	
Not applicable (no religion)	

1.8 Tick your highest educational qualification.

No schooling	
Up to Std 1/Gr 3/ABET 1	
Std 2 - Std 3/Gr 4 - Gr 5/ABET 2	
Std 4 - Std 5/Gr 6 - Gr 7/ABET 3	
Std 6 - Std 7/Gr 8 - Gr 9/ABET 4	
Std 8/Gr 10/N1	
Std 9/Gr 11/N2	
Std 10/Matric/N3	
Diploma(s)/occupational certificate(s)	
First degree(s)/higher diploma(s)/honours	
Master's degree	
Doctorate	

1.9 Please list children that live with you. Tick boy or girl and write their age.

Child	Boy	Girl	Age in years
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			

1.10 Tick the statement that best describes your household situation.

We do not have enough money for basic things like food and clothes	
We have money for food and clothes, but are short of many other things	
We have most of the important things, but few luxury goods	
We have money for extra things and luxury goods	
Don't know	

1.11 Tick which of the following you have in your home.

Radio	
Television	
Video player	
DVD player	
Computer	
Computer games	
Internet	

Child's Information

1.1 Name.
(optional) _____

1.2 Age in years (tick the appropriate box).

6-7	8-9	10-11	12-13	14-15	16-17
-----	-----	-------	-------	-------	-------

1.3 Sex (tick).

Male	Female
------	--------

1.4 Race group (tick).

African	White	Coloured	Indian	Other
---------	-------	----------	--------	-------

1.5 Please tick the language you mostly speak at home.

Afrikaans		Setswana	
English		Tshivenda/Lemba	
Isindebele		Xitsonga	
Isiwati		Other African language	
Isixhosa		Other European language	
Isizulu		Indian language	
Sesotho		Other (specify)	
Sepedi			

1.6 Please tick your religion.

Christian	
Muslim	
Hindu	
Jewish	
No religion	
Other, please specify	

1.7 Please tick how important your religion is to you.

Not important at all	
Slightly important	
Somewhat important	
Important	
Very important	
Not applicable (no religion)	

1.8 Please tick what grade you are in.

Not at school		Grade 7	
Grade 1		Grade 8	
Grade 2		Grade 9	
Grade 3		Grade 10	
Grade 4		Grade 11	
Grade 5		Grade 12	
Grade 6			

1.9 For each child that lives with you please tick whether they are a boy or a girl and write how old they are.

Child	Boy	Girl	Age in years
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			

1.10 Please tick the statement that best describes your household situation.

We do not have enough money for basic things like food and clothes	
We have money for food and clothes, but are short of many other things	
We have most of the important things, but few luxury goods	
We have money for extra things and luxury goods	
Don't know	

1.11 Tick which of the following you have in your home.

Radio	
Television	
Video player	
DVD player	
Computer	
Computer games	
Internet	

APPENDIX C - ETHICS CONSENT FORMS

Research into parental approaches to children's viewing practices

Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form (To be read to children 11 years and under)

Dear Learner

Description: The Human Sciences Research Council, a group of people who do research, and the Film and Publication Board, an organization that gives advice on what films are suitable for young children to watch, would like to know what kinds of films, videos, television programmes you watch, what video games you play and how you use the Internet. We would like to invite you to come and talk to us with other learners your age about what you see and how you feel about the things you see in films, television, computer games and the Internet. We will ask you a number of questions and also encourage you to talk with other learners about these issues. We would like to tape the discussion.

Risks: You will not be harmed by participating in this study.

Privacy: Your name will not be used when we write up our report on what children watch and think. Although other learners will hear what you say in the discussions, they will be asked not to repeat what you say to anyone and no one else will be allowed to know what you say and transcriptions will use numbers instead of names. Tapes will be stored securely in a sealed container at the HSRC.

Time involvement: The discussion with other learners will take no more than 2 hours.

Payments: You will receive no money for being part of the discussion. If you have incurred any transport costs in coming to the discussion, we will pay for that.

Participant rights: If you understand what we have written/told you and you want to take part, please understand that your participation is of your own free will and you have the right to decide not to take part at any time without anyone being upset with you. You do not have to answer any questions you don't want to and we will ensure that your rights are protected. If you have any questions about your rights, or are unhappy at any time with any aspect of the project, you may contact, anonymously, if you wish – the Ethics Committee at the HSRC, Private Bag X41 Pretoria, 001, Tel: 012 302 2800.

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact – Dr Heather Brookes at the HSRC on Tel: 012 302 2223 or by Fax 012 302 2316 or by email: Hbrookes@hsrc.ac.za.

I agree to participate in this study.

Name: _____ Signature: _____
Date: _____

I give permission to be tape-recorded.

Name: _____ Signature: _____
Date: _____

FOR SUBJECTS NOT CAPABLE OF GIVING WRITTEN CONSENT:

Person obtaining consent has read the consent form and asks the following:

Do you agree to take part in the study?

Do you agree to be tape-recorded?

Signature of Surrogate/Guardian for Subject Date

Relationship to Subject: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date

Witness to Consent Procedures (if required by IRB) Date

The extra copy of this consent form is for you to keep.

Research into parental approaches to children's viewing practices

Participant Information Sheet and Consent/Assent Form for child's participation

Dear Parent/Guardian

Description: The HSRC's national research programme on Child, Youth and Family Development (CYFD) and the Film and Publication board is examining the viewing practices of children 6-17 years of age and their exposure to visual media (film, video/DVD, television and Internet). We would like to know about the kinds of media programmes your child uses and how it impacts on them. The purpose of undertaking this research is to try to determine areas the Film and Publication Board should focus on in educating South African parents about appropriate exposure to visual media for children. Therefore, in relation to this, we would like to invite your child to participate in this study by:

Participating in a focus group with other children at their school where they will be asked questions about what visual media they see. The discussions will be tape-recorded.

Risks: There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study.

Privacy: Your child's privacy and that of the school will be maintained in all published and written data from this study. To further ensure privacy, we will use numbers instead of school names. Although your child's peers will be party to what your child says in focus group discussions, they will be asked to keep what is said in the focus group confidential. Transcriptions will use numbers instead of names. Tapes will be stored securely in a sealed container at the HSRC.

Time involvement: The length of your child's participation in this study will take no more than 2 hours for the focus groups.

Payments: Your child will receive no payment for participating in this study. However, if transport costs are incurred coming to the focus group, these will be reimbursed.

Participant rights: If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this study, please understand that your child's participation is voluntary and your child has the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time with out penalty. Your child has the right to refuse to answer particular questions and your child's rights will be upheld at all times. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of the project, you may contact, anonymously, if you wish – the Ethics Committee at the HSRC, Private Bag X41 Pretoria, 001, Tel: 012 302 2800.

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact – Dr Heather Brookes at the HSRC on Tel: 012 302 2223 or by Fax 012 302 2316 or by email: Hbrookes@hsrc.ac.za.

I agree to my child's participation in this study.

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

I give permission for my child to be tape-recorded.

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

The extra copy of this consent/assent form is for you to keep.

Research into parental approaches to children's viewing practices

Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form

Dear Parent/ Guardian

Description: The HSRC's national research programme on Child, Youth and Family Development (CYFD) and the Film and Publication Board is examining the viewing practices of children 6-17 years of age and the views and practices of their parents in relation to children's exposure to visual media (film, video/DVD, television and Internet). We would like to know about the kinds of media programmes your child uses and why. We are also interested in your views and practices in relation to your child's exposure to visual media. The purpose of undertaking this research is to try to determine areas the Film and Publication Board should focus on in educating South African parents about appropriate exposure to visual media for children. Therefore, in relation to this, we would like to invite you to participate in this study by:

Participating in a focus group with other parents where you will be asked questions about your child's exposure to visual media. The discussions will be tape-recorded.

Risks: There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study.

Privacy: Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data from this study. Although other parents will be party to what you say in focus group discussions, but will be asked to keep what is said in the focus group confidential. Transcriptions will use numbers instead of names. Tapes will be stored securely in a sealed container at the HSRC.

Time involvement: The length of your participation and your child's participation in this study will take no more than 2 hours for the focus groups.

Payments: You and your child will receive no payment for participating in this study. If you incur transport costs coming to the focus group venue, these costs will be reimbursed.

Participant rights: If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this study, please understand that your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time with out penalty. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions and your rights will be upheld at all times. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of the project, you may contact, anonymously, if you wish – the Ethics Committee at the HSRC, Private Bag X41 Pretoria, 001, Tel: 012 302 2800.

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact – Dr Heather Brookes at the HSRC on Tel: 012 302 2223 or by Fax 012 302 2316 or by email: Hbrookes@hsrc.ac.za.

I agree to participate in this study.

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

I give permission to be tape-recorded.

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

The extra copy of this consent form is for you to keep.