

The Real O'Neals Mini-Study



March 2016

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The Parents Television Council's Research Department conducted a scene-by-scene analysis of the first three episodes of ABC's *The Real O'Neals*, a half-hour series that debuted on March 2, 2016. The focus of PTC's examination was on adult-themed content and messaging in this program centering on 16 year old Kenny O'Neal (played by Noah Galvin, himself a minor).

The PTC's research found that the first three episodes of ABC's new show, *The Real O'Neals* were saturated with adult content. Children watching were exposed to either sexual dialogue or bleeped profanities on an average of once every 43 seconds – in spite of the fact that the show is rated TV-PG and airs as early as 7:30 p.m. in half the country.

Of the adult-themed content, 83% was sexual (including sexual references and innuendo); 16% was bleeped profanities (f- and s-words). Most of the sexual dialogue involved the 16-year-old minor, Kenny, his older high-school-aged brother Jimmy, and their parents.

“ABC has essentially inserted explicit and adult-themed humor into a PG-rated, prime-time program that is about a family, created for families, and aired at a time when children are likely to be watching. Even worse, much of the sexual and expletive-laced dialogue is delivered by characters who are children. Simply put, the network is defrauding parents by rating this show as appropriate for young children,” said PTC President Tim Winter.

Is sexual dialogue among minors really appropriate for a TV-PG show? Are the standards for Disney-owned TV-PG content that dramatically different than Disney-released PG films, such as *Cinderella*, *Inside Out*, and *The Good Dinosaur*?

The PTC called on the ABC network to reconsider its content rating for this program, and on all corporate sponsors to consider whether their brands should be associated with a show that spews such explicit content without any real consideration for family viewers.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The Parents Television Council's Research Department reviewed the first three episodes of *The Real O'Neals* for the 2016 spring season and examined them for adult-themed content and messaging. Violence on the program was not included in the analysis. However, bleeped extreme profanity (the f- and s-words) was counted in the data. The episodes included in the study aired on 3/02/16 (2 episodes) and 3/08/16 (1 episode).

MAJOR FINDINGS:

- In just three 20-minute episodes, there were a total of 30 instances of adult-themed content. That is equivalent to 1.4 instances of adult-themed content airing every minute, or one instance every 43 seconds.
- Most of the adult-themed content within the show consisted of sexual references and innuendo.

- Eighty-three percent of all the adult-themed content was sexual (83.3%).
- Sixteen percent of all the adult-themed content consisted of bleeped profanities (f- and s-words). (16.7%).
- Most of the sexual dialogue involved the character of Kenny, a 16 year old child. Other content involved his older brother Jimmy (also still a high-school student), and their parents.
- The number of instances doesn't tell the full story of how much adult-themed content a child watching would consume. Screen time (the amount of time allotted for a scene, actor, or continuous dialogue) is also important to consider. In this report, one scene is counted as one instance; but each scene might contain multiple references to sex.

CONTENT EXAMPLES

Bleeped profanity

- Jimmy: "Mom, where the hell is the [bleeped f***ing] car?" (*March 2, 2016, 8:30 p.m. ET*)
- Jodi: "People were talking about Kenny and Mimi. Guess who was yammering on the most?"
Eileen: "Marcia [bleeped f***ing] Worthman." (*March 2, 2016, 8:30 p.m. ET*)
- Kenny: "That is some crazy Old Testament [bleeped s***], Mom." (*March 2, 2016, 9:30 p.m. ET*)

Sexual content

- Mimi: "We've been dating for six months and you've never once pressured me to have sex. Which is why I want to have sex."
Mimi hands Kenny a large box of condoms.
Kenny: "Wow. 48 condoms!"
Mimi: "Twelve didn't seem like enough." (*March 2, 2016, 8:30 p.m. ET*)
- Jimmy: "What did Mimi do to you?"

Kenny: "Oh. Just -- you know, just...all that sex stuff that drives us wild."

Jimmy: "No matter what she [Mom] tells you, you're not going to Hell. Trust me. If everything she said was true, I would be so blind by now." (*March 2, 2016, 8:30 p.m. ET*)
- Kenny: "My dad's way of handling parenting stuff was bring us to work. He doesn't want me to have premarital sex, he takes me to Crystal. She was in the middle of telling me her sex worker origin story..." (*March 2, 2016, 8:30 p.m. ET*)
- Kenny grabs Mimi's chest and immediately pulls his hand away.

Kenny: "Your boobs feel squishy."

Mimi: "Do you really want to go your whole life without knowing what it's like? Shouldn't you have something to compare everything else to?...Just try Mimi's papaya. I know you'll like it." (*March 2, 2016, 9:30 p.m. ET*)

Nor did the program's content improve after the first three episodes. Examples of typical content from later episodes included:

- Vice Principal Murray: "Well my ex-wife performed several love crimes on me during our marriage, which is why we always had a safe word." (*March 15, 8:30 p.m. ET*)
- Vice Principal Murray: "Well, you did use one of the banned words, which include but are not limited to ass, bitch, butt head, douche, slut, slut shamer, slut bag, slut basket..." (*March 15, 8:30 p.m. ET*)
- Kenny: "V. P. Murray, this policy is the [bleeped unknown] [bleeped unknown] lamest, [bleeped unknown] ass tickling, [bleeped unknown] sucking thing I've ever heard." (*March 15, 8:30 p.m. ET*)
- Jimmy: "I'm gonna help you out the same way I would if my little brother was curious about girls. I'm gonna take it to a higher power. Internet porn."

Jimmy types on the keyboard while saying out loud what he is typing.

Jimmy: "Gay porn for dudes."

Kenny and Jimmy play a video called "Office Party."

Jimmy: "There are so many people at this party"

Kenny: "Come on, I just wanted to see nice men doing normal gay stuff."

Jimmy: "Yeah, me too. To be supportive. I'm trying to be supportive."

Kenny clicks on a new video and it is implied that the computer begins opening an endless amount of windows containing pornography.

Jimmy: "Dude, it's a pornado."

Kenny: "So many close-ups, and that one's straight porn."

Jimmy: "Don't leave me with all the butts in my face." (*March 22, 8:30 p.m. ET*)

- A Catholic school vice-principal talks about molesting his male students. on a While on a camping trip, Vice-Principal Murray makes light of child molestation, addressing the gay Kenny: "Speaking of which, if you're not comfortable sleeping with all those boys because of your ... blossoming sexuality, you can sleep in here. Not with me, of course. I will be sleeping with all the other boys." (*May 3, 2016, 8:30 p.m. ET*)

- Kenny: "They're gonna saran-wrap your balls to your face." (*May 3, 2016, 8:30 p.m. ET*)
- Jimmy: "We can steal people's phones and take pictures of our junk." (*May 3, 2016, 8:30 p.m. ET*)
- Kenny's mother Eileen and a friend trash-talk about religion:

Sandra: "You know, something that was helpful for me when my family was having problems was my church. First Unitarian. It's very open-minded. There's a joy mass tonight, with lots of people singing and dancing."

Eileen: "Well, I sat through 'Godspell' once. I don't think I'm gonna do it again. I think we'll just stick with our religion that wasn't founded last Thursday."

Sandra: "Well...think about it. It's open 24 hours so that homeless people and sex workers have a place to sleep." (*May 10, 2016, 8:30 p.m. ET*)

Nielsen data (live + same day ratings) indicates that 6.3 million viewers watched the March 2nd premiere episode of *The Real O'Neals*. By the end of the show's thirteen-week season, viewership had dropped by nearly half. By contrast, ABC's *The Muppets* garnered a higher average viewership, both overall and in the key 18-34 demographic. Yet this May, ABC chose to renew *The Real O'Neals*, while cancelling *The Muppets*.