The Motion Picture Association of America, better known as MPAA, was created in 1922 by many presidents of motion picture studios of the time, and its purpose was to avoid the government censorship on the movie’s industry. Therefore, MPAA was designed to be a system of the movie industry’s self-regulation. Nowadays, the MPAA system is used as a guide to provide parents movie information regarding language, behavior, and sexual content. According to current and official MPAA ratings guideline system, extracted from the website mpaa.org, there are five types of movie ratings.

The first rating is G, General Audience, which according to the rating board is proper for all age viewers in that movie there are no inappropriate theme, language, violence, and sex. An example of a G rated movie is the 2001 *Monsters Inc.* of the directors Pete Docter, David Silverman, and Lee Unkrich.

The second rating guide is Parental Guide Suggested, better known as PG, relating that some of the movie material may not be appropriate for children. This rating suggests that it may contain brief nudity, light violence, or some profanity. It is up to the parents to decide whether allow the movie view for their younger children or not. An illustration of this rating is the 2012 comedy title *Parental Guidance*, from the director Andy Fickman.

The third rating is Parents Strongly Cautioned, or the letter PG-13, which states that some material may not be suitable for children under the age of thirteen years. In the PG-13 rating is obvious the presence of parental guidance in theme, nudity, language, violence, and adult activities. An example of a PG-13 rated movie is the 2012 *Les Miserables* from the director Tom Hooper.
The fourth rating is Restricted or R-rating refers to movies with a parent or guardian accompanying children under the age of seventeen. This type of movie is intended for adult view only, children under seventeen are allowed; however, is advised that it may not be proper. An R-rated movie may have persistent violence, hard language, nudity, and drug use. One of an R-rated movie is the 2012 *Promise Land*, from the director Gus Van Sant.

And lastly, the fifth rating is NC-17, which means that no one under the age of seventeen is admitted. According to the official page of the MPAA the NC-17 rating states that the rating “can be based on violence, sex, aberrational behavior, drug abuse or any other element that most parents would consider too strong and therefore off-limits for viewing by their children.” Another example of a movie of this particular rate is 2003 *The Dreamers*, directed by Bernando Bertolucci.

Ultimately, the members composing the board of the MPAA raters are ordinary parents of society with no prior knowledge of the movie industry, with the objective to rate a specific movie. The idea of ordinary people as a rater board is to represent the average American family. The current film rating system should not be continued used because there are no standards for the ratings, the raters are not psychology experts on movies or behavior, and the raters’ board does not represent the variety of the American society.

To begin, the first reason that the current film rating system should be banned from its use is because there are no standards for the ratings. For every rate there is a path to be followed; however, the raters do not follow all the guidelines when rating a specific movie. The guideline suggests that a movie shall be rated according to its presence of mature language, sexual content,
explicit violence, use of drugs, and adult behavior. The truth is that most of the time the movies are not rated according to the sexual, violent, nor adult content of it. Many movies are rated according to the power of the movie studio that made it. According to the *Los Angeles Times* article, “AA’s Dozen Judge Movies for Millions”, the author Amy Wallace state:

> Nearly everyone in Hollywood has a favorite story about the inconsistency of the MPAA ratings board. Some believe big stars can coax preferable ratings out of the MPAA, pointing to "My Best Friend's Wedding," rated PG-13 despite the fact that Julia Roberts uses a particular four-letter expletive in precisely the sexual manner that the MPAA guidelines say ought to merit an R-rating (Wallace).

Therefore, it is noticeable that the guideline is clear on the matter of rating; however, the guideline is not always followed. Additionally, in the *Los Angeles Times* article “THE BIG PICTURE; MPAA is good at bullying,” the author Patrick Goldstein states:

> "Gunner Palace," a riveting 2005 documentary about an artillery squad's wartime experiences in Iraq. The Palm Pictures film featured 42 examples of the F-word, 36 more than in "Bully," but the MPAA, after hearing an appeal, agreed to give the film a PG-13 rating. Weinstein immediately pounced on the inconsistency (Goldstein D1).

In summary, the MPAA rating system has completely different set of rules when it comes to rate a movie. Its discrepancy shows that the existing rate system adopted does not work, and it should not be continued to be used.

Another reason that the current film rating system should be discontinued is because the
raters are not psychology experts on movies or behavior. All the MPAA raters board members are common people of society, they do not have prior knowledge of movies, nor behavior. Yet the members decide all the ratings for the movies. In the newspaper *USA Today* article “RATING UNDER REVIEW; HOLLYWOOD TRIES TO SET ITS STANDARDS STRAIGHT,” the author Scott Bowles declare, "We don't ask judges to be average Joes. They have training. And why can't you be childless? They go to movies. It hardly seems like an effort to be objective" (Bowles D1). To explain, in order for an individual to have such an important task, which is to decide a movies rating, it is important to have a background on movies and human behavior.

Continuing with the thought of the lack of experience and know-how of the raters, it makes really difficult for film makers and parents to rely on a system of rating that does not take in consideration behavioral effect on the viewer. In the *Los Angeles Times*, the author Janet Hook, in her article “Senate Orders Study of Violence in Entertainment; Media: Inquiry would focus on effect of movies, games, music on youths. Weakened gun-check bill also passes”, Hook states, “[w]e live in a society that glorifies violence," said Sen. Sam Brownback (R-Kan.). "It is time for us to renew culture in America." So, even the government knows that violence affects the children’s behavior, and it is imperative to start a study on how much the media contributes for the violent behavior of young individuals. In the same article, Hook once more declares, “[t]he Motion Picture Assn. of America declined comment. However, at a recent hearing, Jack Valenti, the group's president, cautioned against attempts to legislate quick solutions to youth violence” (Hook). The motive that MPAA declines comment is because its rating is based mostly
in sexual content, instead context as whole that takes into consideration not only sex, but
violence and mature behavioral content. In light of this, the current rating system should be
discontinued because the raters are not qualified to give an accurate rating.

Moreover, beside the fact that the MPAA system is unreliable and the board members
have no qualified expertise, another reason that the current film rating system should be stopped
is because the board members themselves do not represent the variety of the American society.
The board members names are kept secret; however, in the movie *This Film Is Not Yet Rated*,
from the director Kirby Dick, the role of rating is reverse, and the movie shows many flaws of
the MPAA, such as the secrecy itself, inconsistency, and bias against homosexual conduct.
According to the website of the Internet Movie Database, IMDb.com, by an anonymous storyline,
the writer states, “the filmmaker seeks out the true identities of the anonymous elite who control
what films make it to the multiplex. He even goes so far as to hire a private investigator to stake
out MPAA headquarters and expose Hollywood's best-kept secret” (anonymous). The movie tells
the story of the MPAA, and shows many flaws of the rating system, with emphasis on the secrecy
of the board raters.

Additionally, after the names of the raters are disclosed, it is clear that the members are
not a reflection of the American variety. Many of the raters are in the same position for many
years, and their children are not children anymore. The American society is such a diverse
ethnic society, everything including Caucasians, African Americans, Hispanics, Asians,
Europeans, and Middle Eastern peoples. The average American parent could be of any race,
color, or have diverse sexual orientation. The board members of the MPAA are formed by mostly
Caucasians with grown up kids. There are no African Americans parents, no homosexuals or single parents, nor age difference—it is all pretty homogenized all cross the board. In the movie *This Film Is Not Yet Rated*, the Newsweek film critic David Ansen states, “[t]his mythical American parent is a fiction … a convenient fiction that somebody has to make up to come up with these ways, got to be an arbitrary system” (Ansen). The board does not accurate represent the average family; it is a group of people that make the decisions with the self-excuse thinking that they are a reflection of the American parenting society. Ultimately, the current rating system must be banned; their members do not represent the average American family, making its ratings not valid because they do not reflect the real viewpoint of society.

Counter argument

Conclusion – restate thesis, summarize points, propose alternative solutions – what has to be done to solve the problems – tell the significance of the rating system to the audience – project the future of the issue, in the years from now the problem….

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