

**A proposal to the Ford Foundation for a study
of television news and entertainment programs**

By George Gerbner

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We are proposing to study the content of television news and prime-time dramatic (fictional) entertainment programs and to interpret findings within the context of our ongoing research on general programming. The research will be part of the Cultural Indicators project.

Cultural Indicators research consists of two interrelated parts: (1) message system analysis, monitoring the content of the world of television programs and (2) cultivation analysis, determining the contributions of television to viewer conceptions of reality. The current phase of the study employs message system analysis, dealing only with media content.

Message system analysis is the systematic, reliable, and cumulative investigation of the unambiguous and commonly understood facts of media portrayal. The analysis has been performed on annual samples of network programs by coders who observe and code various aspects of content. The training period requires from two to four weeks of instruction, practice, and testing.

A representative week of programs will be selected each season for analysis from the four broadcast networks.

The units of analysis are (1) the news item; (2) the person who delivers the news (anchor, newscaster); (3) the person in the news (newsmakers, i.e. parties involved in the event); (4) sources, (i.e. parties who comment on the event in a witness or expert capacity); (5) the dramatic program as a whole; (6) scenes within the program (i.e. action among the same characters); (7) characters (every speaking part, coded as "major" or "other.")

The recording instrument consists of definitions and category schemes relating to the units and the purposes of the analysis. It is the main Cultural Indicators recording instrument that has been used in the analysis of over 3,000 programs and 40,000 characters on annual samples of dramatic programs since 1968, and on news in 1992.

The findings will generate separate reports on news and on entertainment programs. These reports will be disseminated by news release to media, articles in scholarly and popular journals, and chapters in several books, including one edited by the principal investigator.

Other current grants include:

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation:
Alcohol, Tobacco and Illicit Drugs
in the Media Mainstream

The aim of this project is to formulate relevant policy information on substance use among youth. Content analysis of the depictions of alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs in broadcast television networks, selected cable channels, and movies.

Sloan Foundation
Scientists in the Media

The aim of this project is to understand how the portrayal of scientists and engineers contribute to the shared cultural understandings about science and technology in society.

Proposals pending:

Hunt Foundation
Community Prevention of
Youth Violence

This is an outreach program that aims to prevent youth violence by educating youth about television's and movies' distortion of the amount and effects of violence in reality.

Rockefeller Foundation
Diversity Index

To develop a "report card" of media industry performance in representing minorities.

National Institute of Mental Health
Effects of Media on Teenage Smoking

To understand the role of the media in teenage smoking with a view to implement preventive measures. (CI is sub-contracting in a larger epidemiological study.)

CULTURAL INDICATORS
STUDY BUDGET

Personnel costs	
Cultural Indicators Director	10,000
Research Director	42,000
Coders	34,000
Research Associates	31,500

Subtotal	117,500
Benefits	
Health Insurance	1,800
Parking	2,700

Subtotal	4,500
Travel	
2 trips to NYC	400

Subtotal	400
Equipment and Supplies	
Telephone	1,000
General office supplies	1,000
Research-related office suppl.	4,000
Taping and prep. of progs	6,000

Subtotal	12,000
Office Expenses	
Duplication	2,000

Subtotal	2,000
Indirect costs (10%)	13,640

GRAND TOTAL	150,040