

programs, they do not hinder the programs' Nielson ratings. Moreover, viewers may even be attracted to such skillful treatment of difficult situations.

Two divergent perspectives

When two divergent perspectives join forces in a study of television, its content and impact, the real life drama begins and sparks fly. The differences between George Gerbner's Cultural Indicators Team and that of IMHI can be simplified by stating that CI is focused on the pollution of the air waves and IMHI recognizes the opportunity of the mass media to enhance the public's well-being.

CI focuses on an aggregate view of the problem and on understanding the general cultural territory. It is their view that without such understanding, even the most skillful intervention is likely to fail or to have short-lived success. Furthermore, when working with television professionals, only such an aggregate view can address problems that dramatic formulas pose for writers and directors. From this broad view, we can discuss how to overcome such problems as violence in the media.

IMHI, on the other hand, recognizes the importance of the particulars. Each character, each interaction, and each scene within each program has the power to affect a reaction in the viewer. It is important, then, to break the programs into small units of analysis in order to understand how characters relate to each other and what kinds of social behavior they are demonstrating.

CURRENT STUDY

The current study involves the analysis of 121 prime time and 38