

THE FIGHT OVER TELEVISION VIOLENCE RATINGS

Two Men Who Monitor Media Mayhem Engaged in Pitched Methodological Combat

Why Gerbner and Wagner disagree about custard pie.

BY PETER M. SANDMAN

Opponents of broadcast violence held a press conference in New York in early February, and George Gerbner wasn't there. His name was in the air, though, in tones from dismissive deference to downright derision. It was like a reunion of Watergate journalists without Woodward and Bernstein. For a decade, Gerbner has been the acknowledged academic guru of the anti-violence movement. This year, for a change, the battle against televised murder and mayhem is making real headway—and it's making it without George Gerbner.

Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania, staked his claim to broadcast violence in 1968, when the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence hired him to measure the quantity of violence on the airwaves. The following year, the Surgeon General asked him to help conduct a full-scale study of television violence that had been requested by a Senate subcommittee. By the time the Surgeon General's report was completed in 1972, Gerbner was well ensconced. The annual publication of his Violence Profile—the most recent one was released in late March—has become an important ritual, a yearly occasion for jousting between outraged pressure groups and the beleaguered networks.

From the very beginning, Gerbner was after bigger game than violence counts. He agreed to his initial contract with the government on one condition: that the funding also cover his and his colleagues' investigations of other "cultural indicators" on TV—how the medium depicts and shapes American attitudes toward aging, race, sexuality. Unlike his government funders (after 1972, the National Institute of Mental Health picked up his funding), Gerbner sees TV violence—and TV in general—as an instrument of social control, a way of teaching viewers who is powerful and who is not. This analysis has led Gerbner to an all-inclusive definition of broadcast violence that defies common sense (he counts everything from killings to kicks in the shin), but makes sound theoretical sense. For ten years, Gerbner's data have kept anti-violence activists supplied with ammunition, while his methodology has given the networks ample help in deflecting the activists' attacks. The result was a standoff, with little change in the quantity of

TV violence.

In 1976, the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting, headed by former FCC Commissioner Nicholas Johnson, decided to try a less academic route to reform. With a grant from the American Medical Association, (which funds some of Gerbner's work as well), the NCCB hired a Washington media monitoring company called bi Associates to keep tabs on broadcast violence. In two years, the NCCB has generated enough pressure to produce a noticeable decline in violent programming. February's press conference announced the victory. Gerbner was to have been there, but bitter methodological differences between him and bi President Roger Wagner led to his decision to stay away—a decision to which the NCCB, bi, and the AMA all assented with varying degrees of enthusiasm.

The contrast between Gerbner and Wagner is a symbol of the emerging political sophistication of the media reform movement, its evolving skill at the elaborate minuet of pressure, coalition, and compromise. Gerbner, 59, has the courtly arrogance and appearance of the stereotypical college administrator. He began his professional life as a folklorist in Budapest, and his interest in the electronic mythology of American television has led him to conclusions that should have branded him a radical long ago. But he values politeness far more than ideology, and he articulates his views with a paternal simle that suggests it's someone else's culture he's talking about. He turns waspish only when his methodology is challenged, as it has been by the networks and Roger Wagner.

Wagner, 42, sold advertising for a Washington, D.C. television station before starting bi Associates in 1970. His company specializes in direct response advertising (when a capital pitchman tells viewers, "Our operators are standing by," more often than not it's Wagner's operators) and commercial monitoring, a sort of electronic tearsheet to make sure TV ads run as scheduled. Wagner calls this "buy insurance," hence the name of his company. He sees violence-monitoring as a natural extension of his other work. He already had the staff, TV sets, and computers, and was beginning to sell advice to advertisers based on his direct-response operation. Research on TV violence, he says, is "just another media selection tool" that advertisers ought to purchase from bi Associates.

Neither Gerbner nor Wagner is a fanatic media reformer. But both work with reformers—Gerbner because he wants his research to be influential; Wagner because there's publicity in

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broadcast reform and, maybe later, money. Reformers have traditionally scorned the crassness of the Wagners and put up with the uncompromising academic stuffiness of the Gerbners. But the NCCB wanted to work with Wagner, and the results—at least in the short run—seem to justify the choice.

If they weren't both in the anti-violence business, Gerbner and Wagner might easily come to blows over a host of methodological arguments. But there are only two significant differences between them: Gerbner defines broadcast violence broadly, Wagner narrowly; and Gerbner talks about the industry as a whole, Wagner about individual shows and sponsors. Gerbner's approach to these two issues is grounded in sound communications theory and methodology. Wagner's is grounded in a solid sense of the tactics of practical political pressure.

Defining Violence

Gerbner defines violence as "the overt expression of physical force against self or other, compelling action against one's will on pain of being hurt or killed, or actually hurting or killing." This sounds sensible and straightforward enough, but think about what it includes: an earthquake, a Three Stooges free-for-all, someone choking on an apple core, Captain Hook chasing Peter Pan, Booth assassinating Lincoln. Gerbner makes no exceptions for natural disaster, humor, accident, fantasy, or history. Violence is violence.

From the time Gerbner began his research, this all-inclusive definition has incited the broadcast industry to something approaching violence. Gerbner's most stalwart antagonist in recent years has been CBS, whose economics and research department keeps its own violence count using a narrower definition. (The other two networks op-

pose all quantitative measurement of TV violence as inevitably simplistic.) Early last year, when the House Subcommittee on Communications was investigating broadcast violence, CBS submitted a scathing analysis of Gerbner's methodology. "The Gerbner definition of violence is highly questionable," the network wrote, "including, as it does, comedic violence and acts of nature." The network challenged Gerbner to explain whether he would include a hypothetical custard pie in the face. Gerbner primly replied that his coders had never come across one, but that they'd count it as violent only if it was used to hurt someone.

CBS was clearly on to something. People do have trouble getting exercised over earthquakes and custard pies. Roger Wagner puts the point succinctly: "You can't get a network, or an ad agency, or even a local police chief, to take a definition seriously when it makes *I Dream of Jeannie* or *Shields* and *Yarnell* the most violent show on TV. They laugh at you."

Wagner, for his part, excludes humor, accidents, and nonhuman perpetrators from his definition of violence. He also excludes modest scuffles, confining his count to shootings, stranglings, stabbings, beatings, drownings, kidnappings, and other major violence. Wagner calls this his "murder and mayhem" index.

For purposes of comparison, Wagner had his coders follow the Gerbner definition as well as his own. The results were announced at February's press conference, and the differences were huge. Wagner's study revealed that the two most violent shows in 1977, according to his interpretation of Gerbner's definition, were *The Wonderful World of Disney* and *Wonder Woman*, each with 21 violent incidents per episode. By Wagner's own definition, however, the two shows had

only five and eight incidents respectively, losing out to *The Godfather*, *Logan's Run*, and a number of other action programs.

The 13-week totals were even further apart. By Wagner's definition, incidents of prime-time violence fell from 2,088 in the fall of 1976 to 1,909 in the fall of 1977—a nine percent decline that is the centerpiece of NCCB's boast of political impact. Wagner's total, using Gerbner's definition, however, rose from 3,683 violent incidents in the fall of 1976 to 5,541 incidents in the fall of 1977—an increase of more than fifty percent.

It was in the interests of everyone at the press conference to ignore this latter figure. NCCB wanted to ignore it so it could claim it had successfully forced the networks to their knees. Roger Wagner wanted to ignore it so he could solicit network and ad agency business for bi Associates. ("There are 50 or 75 ways to look at the data," he told the press conference, "and some of them are not very pro-television. It's easy to poke holes, to criticize. It's not easy to come up with a positive picture. This is a pro-television report.") The networks wanted to ignore it so they could look good for a change.

And George Gerbner, who wasn't there, wanted to ignore the figure because he knew it diverged widely from his own findings. Indeed, when Gerbner's 1977 report was released in late March, it showed a ten percent decline in the number of violent incidents, from 6.1 per hour in 1976 to 5.5 in 1977. Using their own definitions, in short, both Gerbner and Wagner found a modest drop in TV violence. But Wagner, using Gerbner's definition, found a startling increase.

When asked about the discrepancy, Gerbner hints that Wagner is trying to make the Gerbner definition look bad. When told of Gerbner's hints, Wagner bellows for his secre-

tary to call his attorney. Each blames a flaw in the other's methodology. Gerbner: "It is possible that Roger has begun to overcode, treating as violent under our definition incidents that don't really hurt or threaten anyone." Wagner: "Gerbner's results are based on a one or two week sample, while we sample for 13 weeks. No one but Gerbner believes you can get an adequate estimate in just one week."

Either explanation could be right. For obvious reasons, Gerbner's coders are taught to avoid silly interpretations of his definition. But Wagner thinks the definition itself is silly, and it's easy to imagine his coders scoring every nudge and jostle. On the other hand, Gerbner and his colleagues are nearly alone in their insistence that one week is enough for a season sample. Gerbner's 1977 data are based on two weeks, but it's possible that those two weeks averaged less comic and accidental violence than the rest of the season. And it makes sense that the networks would use more not-too-serious violence in compensation for a cut in murder and mayhem. TV's dramatic tension has to come from somewhere.

Ted Carpenter, former NCCB executive director, takes a dim view of the dispute over whether Wagner is using Gerbner's definition correctly. "Both sides are so defensive," he says, "it's like stepping through a mine field to talk about it. It's an unfortunate dogfight that throws both studies into disrepute, and what they're fighting about really matters very little."

The New State Religion

What does matter is the difference between the two definitions themselves and the underlying disagreement over the role of television in society.

Last year, in response to the CBS critique, Gerbner

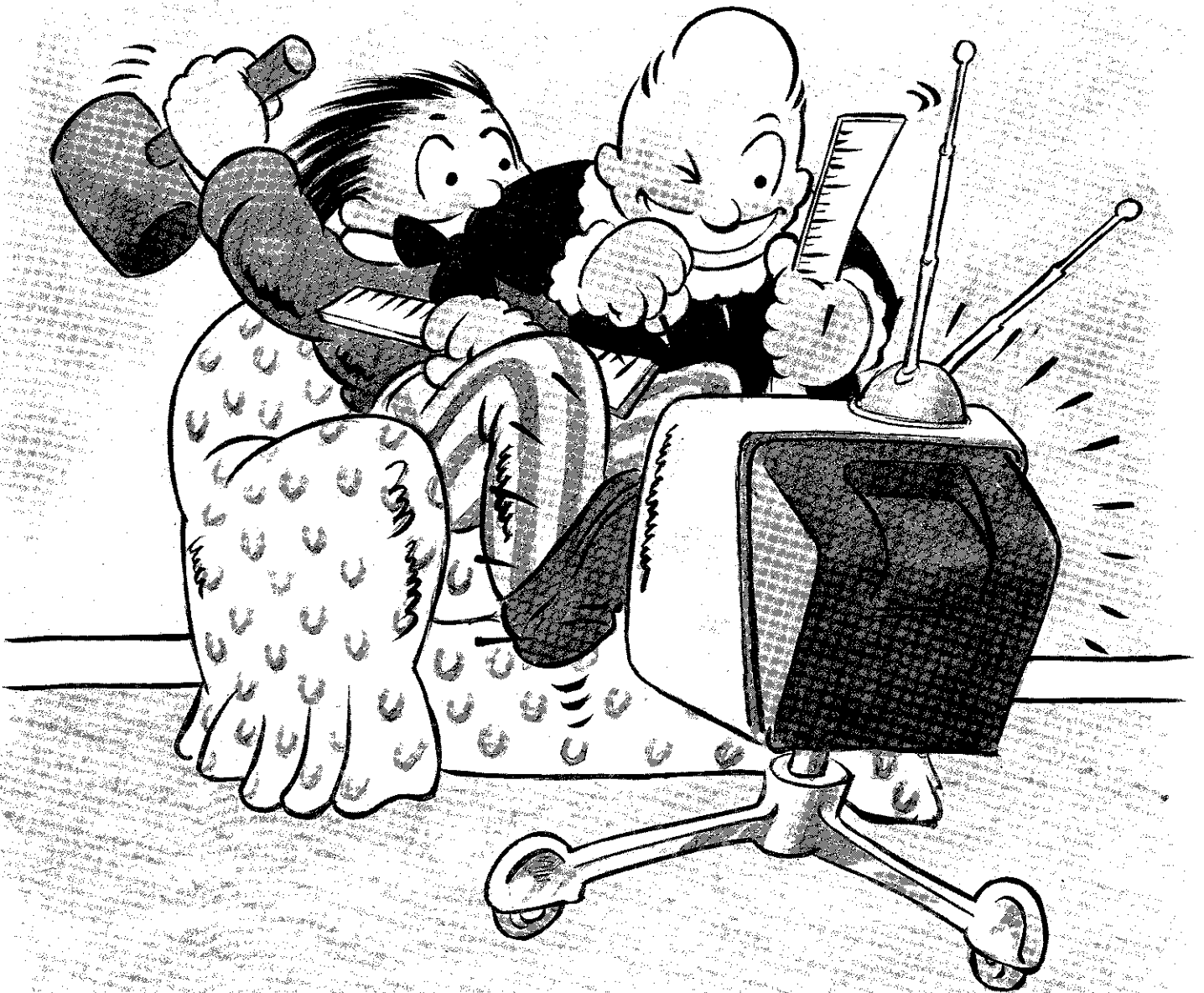


Illustration by Malcolm McNeill

told the House Subcommittee on Communications: "There are no real 'accidents' or 'acts of nature' in fiction. They are simply ways of presenting violence and victimization. . . . Comic content is a highly effective form of conveying serious lessons. . . . We believe that a scientific effort to discover all socially important effects of television violence, rather than to take the terms of the popular debate at face value, would serve both the public and CBS better than its

rigid defense of corporate policy."

The popular debate makes two assumptions shared by CBS, Wagner, and virtually everyone else: first, that "trivial" violence on TV can't make people behave violently; second, that the only important objection to TV violence is that it makes people act violently. The first assumption is arguable; the second is devastatingly wrong.

The most serious effect of broadcast violence, Gerbner

asserts, is not that it stimulates a few psychotics each year to go out and maim or murder, but rather that it makes millions of Americans afraid to go out at all. Gerbner maintains that television—including its comedies and cartoons, its accidents and acts of nature—teaches us that the world is a dangerous place. And through fear, he suggests, TV makes us docile and apathetic, persuades us of our powerlessness and our dependence on the powerful for

protection, ripens us for fascism.

With terrifying insouciance, Gerbner likens the claim that media violence triggers real violence to "worrying that the main effect of the Bible will be to make people say 'thou' a lot." Yet Gerbner may be wrong about this. His evidence that TV teaches its audience to be afraid, though suggestive, is hardly airtight. He has found that people who watch TV heavily approach their lives with more suspi-

cion and fear than those who watch less frequently; they are more likely to overestimate the extent of crime in the real world. This difference holds true even when age, sex, and education are statistically controlled. But the difference, though real, is fairly small. Other factors contribute more to fear than television does. And deducing causality from correlations is a notoriously slippery business. An equally plausible explanation for the same data is that fearful people tend to stay home more and thus have more time to watch TV.

Nevertheless, though far from proved, Gerbner's "mean world" theory of the lessons of TV violence is intelligent and intelligible, and he articulates it with messianic enthusiasm. In an article in *Et cetera*, a journal of general semantics, Gerbner argued that television has become "the new state religion" used to pacify the population. Noting that the identical TV diet dominates the leisure time of virtually every American, he concluded: "The fear that viewing American television seems to generate, the consequent quest for security and protection by the authorities, the effective dissolution of autonomous publics, and the ease with which credible threats and scares can be used (or provoked) to justify almost any policy create a fundamentally new cultural situation."

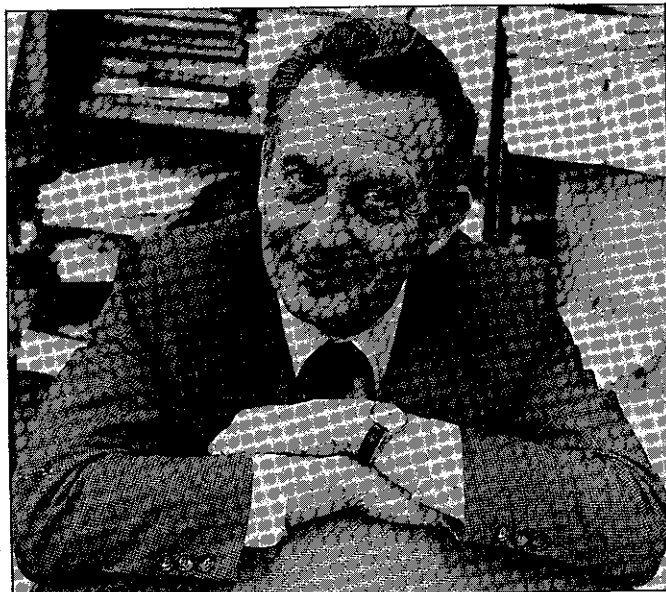
For Gerbner, what TV violence does best is to demonstrate how power works in American society, who can and who cannot get away with what. To show this, Gerbner spends a lot of time calculating what he calls "risk ratios," proportions of violence-making to violence-receiving on television. Between 1969 and 1976, for every violent white male on TV, there were 1.19 white male victims—an almost even split. Black women, on the other hand, were seldom involved in TV violence at all, but

when they were, they were victims 2.5 times as often as they were aggressors. Similarly, old women were victims 3 times as often as aggressors. In short, says Gerbner, "Old, poor, black women are cast for violent parts only to be killed." Or, more generally, "The structure of dramatic action on television is rooted in—and thus perpetuates—the pecking order of society."

Gerbner follows his conclusions where they lead him, though they lead him to say things that university deans aren't supposed to say. He protects himself by sounding like a dean when he says them. "Would the business establishment incite costly social disruption just for the sake of profits derived from TV violence?" he asks. "I believe that it is both more parsimonious and more plausible to suggest that the social control functions of symbolic violence may—from the point of view of 'law and order,' if not mental health—outweigh the disruptive consequences." In other words, business and government willingly tolerate an occasional homicidal maniac as the acceptable cost of keeping the rest of us in line.

If you buy Gerbner's theory, you pretty much have to buy his methodology. Violent acts in comedy and fantasy may not have the violence-provoking power of realistic drama, but decades of research demonstrate beyond doubt that people do learn from comedy and fantasy. Presumably, we can learn from them to be afraid.

In short, Gerbner makes sense. His theory and his research hold together, and, if he is right, they are terribly important. As J. Ronald Milavsky, NBC's vice president for social research, puts it: "It's a brilliant idea, that television teaches people to be afraid. The proof so far is less than convincing, but I will be extremely interested to see if good evidence turns up. Gerbner's methodology in his violence counts is valid for his



George Gerbner: The dean of TV violence ratings.

purposes. My only complaint is that he has allowed people to interpret his results as a measure of the instigation of violence."

Milavsky's assessment is not shared by most television executives. CBS offered the House Subcommittee 33 pages of rebuttal, calling Gerbner's work "arbitrary," "faulty," and generally worthless. David M. Blank, CBS vice president for economics and research, made no bones about it: "I think the man's a fraud. He wanted to be the scientific czar of television in the worst way." As for ABC, Richard Gitter, vice president for broadcast standards, notes stuffily that, "Dr. Gerbner is a respected member of the academic community and has laudable scientific objectives." Then he adds, "We don't place much credence in his method."

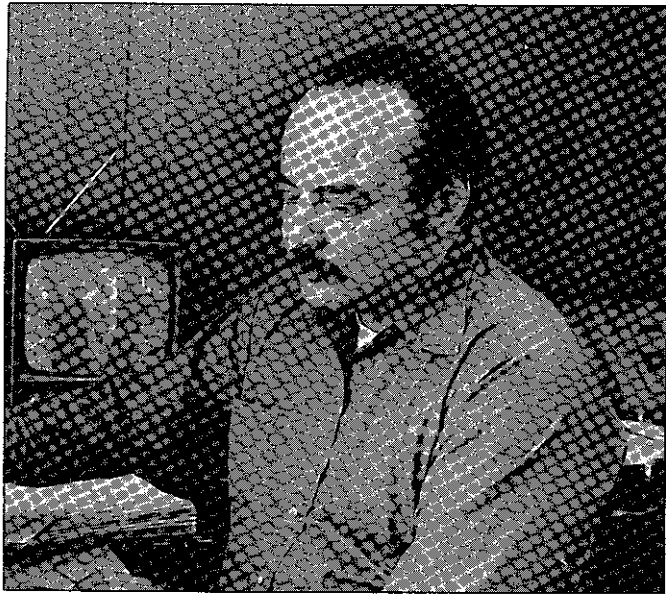
Where is Wagner in all this? "I haven't got a pet theory," he sniffs, as if theorizing were a social disease. When Wagner was breaking into the anti-violence game in 1976, one of Gerbner's colleagues went to Washington to train Wagner's people. Wagner subsequently met with advertising executives, network officials, and other interested parties. He listened to their complaints

about Gerbner's methodology and then compliantly changed what they wanted changed. "There's no point in measuring what people don't want to know," Wagner explains. "I want to sell this service to advertisers, and to the networks, too."

Despite his tail-wagging approach, Wagner has few friends at the networks. Executives who speak of Gerbner with respectful disagreement turn angry and contemptuous when Wagner's name is mentioned. What they cannot abide is that Wagner did what Gerbner will not do: he published the names of the most violent programs and the companies that advertised on the shows. With NCCB's guidance and the AMA's money, Wagner thus produced the country's first authoritative list of the sponsors of murder and mayhem.

Pointing The Finger

Among his other accomplishments, George Gerbner is editor of the *Journal of Communication*. In 1975, he published a short article by fellow academician Ronald Slaby, reporting a student project that ranked local advertisers in Seattle according to how much violent televi-



Roger Wagner: Selling anti-violence to advertisers.

sion they sponsored. The NCCB's Nicholas Johnson came across the article and started quoting it in his periodic indictments of TV violence. In February 1976, Roger Wagner read a *Washington Post* story that said Johnson was accusing McDonald's of being the number one sponsor of broadcast violence.

McDonald's in Washington, D.C., was a client of bi Associates. Wagner was paid to watch burger commercials and make sure they were aired as scheduled—and he hadn't noticed all that much violence. "I went to see Johnson and asked where he got his data," he says. "It turned out to be two-year-old information collected by undergraduates on three stations in Seattle, and shoot-from-the-hip, sloppy monitoring at that. I told Johnson that if he could get the money, I could do a better job."

Johnson got the money and, by late summer, the NCCB and bi were ready to announce the results of a preliminary study. The publicity that followed their announcement focused largely on their list of the biggest sponsors of TV violence; for the companies on the list, it was very bad publicity indeed.

The American Medical As-

sociation, meanwhile, was looking for a way to carry out its June 1976 resolution naming TV violence as an environmental health hazard to American youth and pledging AMA support for research and public education on the issue. Gerbner and the NCCB both asked the AMA for money. Gerbner received \$98,000 to keep his Violence Profile going for three more years. The NCCB received \$63,000 to keep bi on the job through the end of 1977.

The AMA grant paid for the NCCB studies of both the fall 1976 and the fall 1977 seasons. By the February press conference, the first comparisons were possible. NCCB's proudest conclusion was that nine of the top 12 advertisers in 1976, including Schlitz, Campbell's, and Kodak, had moved off the list in 1977. And it all happened because the NCCB and Wagner named names. "Once they were identified as sponsoring a great deal of violence," explained the NCCB's Ted Carpenter, "advertisers started receiving letters of complaint—too many letters to ignore. The result in many cases was careful buying to avoid violent programs. The networks soon got the message, and the word went out to the

creative community in Hollywood to cut down on the violence."

Bruce Wilson, Kodak's coordinator of broadcast advertising, confirms this explanation. "We were always sensitive to the violence issue," he says, "and we were quite shocked to be on the NCCB list. We got a few hundred letters. The company felt strongly that it did not want to be visible on that list or any such list." So Kodak's ad agency, J. Walter Thompson, purchased Wagner's program-by-program breakdown and used it to help guide its time buying to get the company off the list.

Pressure Or Censorship?

Carpenter walked an ideological tightrope at the press conference, disclaiming any involvement in censorship, yet bragging of pressure successfully applied. "We simply monitored and reported selected acts of murder and mayhem," he said, "relating it to the real TV marketplace—the sale of audiences to advertisers that supports commercial television. Network programmers and advertisers have simply been responding to that informed marketplace." Wagner was less diffident: "After the first NCCB survey was published, more advertisers started demanding to look at programs before they were aired. And they started yanking spots all over the place if the shows were too violent. The advertising industry simply adopted our violence measures as a media selection tool, and the networks had to follow along."

The networks feel obliged to walk a different sort of tightrope, on the one hand denying that the NCCB list had any effect whatever, and on the other warning that it represents an imminent threat to broadcast freedom. The warnings carry more conviction than the denials. ABC's Richard Gitter puts it this

way: "Pressure on advertisers from special-interest organizations constitutes an inhibition of freedom of thought. It's censorship, and it has a chilling effect. ABC responds to social responsibility, not to pressure groups, and we were already changing before advertisers expressed that kind of viewpoint. We have not had undue pressure from advertisers."

Ronald Milavsky of NBC is more disturbed, or at least more willing to admit he is disturbed. "Before bi," he argues, "most advertisers bought scatter and demographics. They didn't much care what the program content was. Now, all of a sudden, they're concerned because they're going to be on some list. Roger Wagner brought a lot of leverage to bear by hooking up violence with sponsors."

Milavsky foresees other effects. "Advertisers are starting to use their ad-screening services to prescreen the programs for them, too, and now they notice all kinds of things they consider shocking. When advertisers pull out of a program, that time has to be resold at a cheaper rate. If it keeps going, networks may naturally tend to avoid controversial programming of all kinds."

Milavsky points out that Wagner is already counting references to drugs and alcohol. "And some other outfit has a sex count now," he adds. "If someone comes along and says, 'I'd like to know what political themes are handled,' Wagner can do it for them. Then we'll have another list to deal with."

From Wagner, yes; but not from Gerbner. Gerbner also measures TV references to drugs, alcohol, sexuality, and, most recently, aging and minorities. But, as with his violence measurements, he doesn't tabulate the results by individual advertisers. It is partly for this reason that network officials sound almost affectionate when they talk

about Gerbner, notwithstanding his running methodological feud with CBS. "I'm not sure Gerbner intends to influence broadcasting," says Milavsky. "He's a researcher, and he is trying to learn about communication. He may have had some influence on Congress, but he never mobilized much pressure on us."

The NCCB's Ted Carpenter acknowledged a bigger role for Gerbner: "He was *the* thorn in the networks' side long before we got on the scene. And he is still useful."

"Still useful" is painfully thin praise for the once undisputed king of media violence measurement. Why then does George Gerbner steadfastly refuse to compile lists of advertisers?

As always, Gerbner's first answer is methodological, and, ironically, it focuses on sampling. Although Gerbner feels that one or two weeks is enough for an industry-wide sample, even 13 weeks, he says, isn't a fair sample for individual shows and sponsors; program content and advertiser sponsorship practices vary too much. (In 1968, the government published Gerbner's program-ranking based on a one-week sample. *I Dream of Jeannie* came out most violent, and Gerbner had to endure a lot of ridicule. "It happened to be a very violent show that week," he mutters.)

Gerbner's theory of media effects also tells him that Wagner's lists are ultimately beside the point. "What is important," he says, "is the total world that television presents, what it teaches us about power in our society. Instead of dealing with chickens and eggs, we should deal with the hatchery, with network policy."

Reluctantly, Gerbner acknowledges that "the NCCB approach was effective." But only in the short run. "I do not believe that advertisers as a group are any wiser or more responsible than the networks as a group. They are the hired

hands of the business world, and they should not assume responsibility as our cultural guides. Increased power in the hands of advertisers cannot be a satisfactory long-run solution. In time, the advertisers themselves will bitterly regret assuming that role." Does Gerbner disapprove of the NCCB tactic, then? "I'm not a purist. People must do the best they can." And then, less charitably, "It's a good means to a bad goal."

Gerbner's own goal is "equitable diversity." Right now, he says, the networks and the advertisers are dominant. They should become less powerful, and everyone else—interest groups, the general public, the "creative community," possibly the government—should get more powerful.

This is cultural pluralism at its most simple-mindedly optimistic, TV as the melting pot of democracy. When pressed, Gerbner allows that "institutional restructuring is the only way to resolve the issue ultimately." But he doesn't say how that is going to happen. "The chief virtue of academia," he responds instead, "is that it can evaluate goals, while 'practical' people are concentrating on tactics. We have no vested interest in the existing system of broadcasting. That is academic in the best sense."

Gerbner wins the debate over theory and methodology, but the NCCB and Wagner have the best of the political argument. In a statement distributed at the press conference, Nicholas Johnson paid dutiful obeisance to the fiction that producers and viewers have no taste for violence: "If there were only some way that television programming decisions could be left up to the producers and writers in Hollywood, and the American viewers in their living rooms, we'd all be a lot better off." Then came the practical part. "Unfortunately, both the creative community and the audience have to put up with

programming control by committees of financiers and marketing experts from the networks, ad agencies, and big corporations. . . . So the viewers have had to play the only card they hold: the postcard—letting advertisers and networks know how they feel about programming."

The Flowering of Reform Capitalism

This is a history replete with ironies. Gerbner, the scholarly iconoclast, despises the television industry—but it tolerates and even admires him. Wagner, the go-getting businessman, assiduously woos the industry—but its leaders fear and avoid him. Johnson and Carpenter, the dedicated reformers, listen raptly to every word Gerbner says and share his distaste for corporate control of television—but they choose to work with Wagner instead, strengthening the hand of advertisers. The final irony, of course, is that George Gerbner made Roger Wagner possible.

The NCCB is out of the anti-violence business now, because it's broke and nearly defunct. The AMA is moving on to new ways of demonstrating the social conscience of the medical profession. That leaves Wagner without a sponsor, but he's not worried. "Somebody will have to step into the gap," he said, "and I think you're talking to him." Roger Wagner plans to start a nonprofit corporation and become an anti-violence activist. He envisions the perfect one-two punch, the final flowering of reform capitalism: the nonprofit Wagner, funded by foundations, will expose violent advertisers; then the profitmaking Wagner will sell them the detailed data they'll need to get off his list.

It just might work. Wagner hopes his anti-violence operation will eventually earn a profit (the NCCB phase was a loss leader). Meanwhile, he runs seminars on his findings

at \$165 per participant.

Gerbner doubts that Wagner is the wave of the future and says he has no intention of abandoning his Violence Profile. But he says it as though he'd like to. For years, he has tried to generate interest in the rest of his cultural indicators project, which investigates everything from TV's influence on IQ to political socialization through broadcasting. "Say that we're at the forefront of an environmental diagnostic movement," he pleads. "What could be more important than the symbolic environment created by television? It is not just violence." If a suitably seductive new controversy came along, Gerbner just might make the switch, leaving Wagner a clear field.

One suitably seductive controversy could be sex. Last October a group of top advertisers met with the networks to warn that they didn't want to face an anti-sex protest on top of the current anti-violence protest.

But smirky sex on the tube is continuing to rise, and the protest is coming. Gerbner doubts the anti-sex movement will amount to much, if only because it cannot gather the sort of liberal-conservative coalition that has characterized the battle against TV violence. But in case he's wrong, he has a theory ready, one that explains television sex as a way of teaching and enforcing power relations between the sexes. And he's already collecting data. Gerbner doesn't want to focus on sex—but then he didn't want to focus on violence either.

Wherever he turns his analytic eye, Gerbner is bound to produce something useful. And he's bound to need someone like Wagner to use it. "I wish those two could work together," Ted Carpenter says wistfully. But, as they say in those westerns that Gerbner and Wagner must occasionally watch, this issue isn't big enough for both of them. ■