MINNEAPOLIS (AdAge.com) -- Whatever happened to juvenile delinquency? In the morning came the news from The New York Times' front page about the horrors of high-school-hallway hugging (no, not mugging, that was so last generation). Then, in prime time, clean-cut kids posing as human spellcheckers made ABC's "National Spelling Bee" as compelling a competition as anything on cable cousin ESPN. Concurrently, their slightly scruffier older brothers were in a dance-off on Fox's "So You Think You Can Dance."

Some parents or grandparents may be a bit baffled by millennials embracing socially in addition to embracing social networking. Or by this generation's distinct diversity (the dance-off was won by Ukrainian Leo Kynshow and the spelling bee by Kansan Kavya Shivashankar), which will change the country forever and for the better. But the ratings race between the "So You Think You Can Dance" and the "National Spelling Bee" shows that despite the differences, the old coda of high-school cool still rules with kids -- and even their parents.
"Dance" won with an overall 3.6/11 rating and share in the ad-centric 18-to-49 demographic, and was rated about 140% higher than the "National Spelling Bee" (1.5/4, although this will rise once final live-plus-same-day data take the overrun into account). "Dance" jumped 6% from its premier last week, and early indications are that about 25% more tried to spell along at home than during last year's "Bee," which fell on a Friday.

Not surprisingly, the spellers, surrounded by their proud parents, played better with people of parental age, as the "Bee" delivered only a .8/3 with teens, according to preliminary Fast National data, compared with a 2.6/10 rating and share among teens for "Dancing." Some of that could be explained by boomer, and even Gen X, nostalgia for their school days, or parents projecting their own aspirations toward the timeless values of intelligence, diligence and guts needed to compete on national TV.

As for the teens, some of the old high-school social situations played out on the small screen as well. Those boys who were wallflowers at the dance? Many sat out the video version as well, at least compared with teen girls, as "Dance" delivered a 2.1/8 teen-boy rating and share, which was only two-thirds as high as teen-girls' 3.2/12.

And remember those boys slacking in back of the class, baseball caps pulled low? Maybe they were actually trying to hide their academic interest. Or at least they like good competition. Because slightly more teen boys than girls watched "National Spelling Bee." Fast-national data indicate it averaged a .9/3 with teen boys for the two hours it was measured, compared with a .8/3 for teen girls.

Of course, the bad news for broadcasters is that most teens didn't tune into either show, and probably opted for smaller screens such as computers or iPhones. But those who watched, of any generation, saw that despite the differences, the kids are, indeed, all right. Enough so it may have even made some of the older folks want to hug.

(For the night, Fox finished first, with a Nielsen fast-affiliate rating and share of 3.6/11 among adults 18-to-49, followed by CBS, 2.0/6; ABC, 1.5/4; NBC 1.4/4; and the CW, .5/2. Individual show ratings are reflected in the chart above.)

WHAT TO WATCH:
Friday: OK, so maybe a show called "Un-Broke: What You Need to Know About Money" should have Nouriel Roubini instead of Rosario Dawson and Joseph Stiglitz instead of the Jonas Brothers. But despite featuring stars with champagne tastes, the ABC special could help viewers keep within their beer budgets.

Saturday: Perhaps no sport has more exciting playoffs, relative to the regular season, than the NHL. This year has been no different -- even in its finals matchup, as the Pittsburgh Penguins and the Detroit Red Wings will play for the Stanley Cup. Game 1 is on NBC at 8 p.m. Sunday: With most of the network schedule replete with repeats, so is Sunday's "What to Watch," as Game 2 of the Stanley Cup Finals runs on NBC. Just as exciting may be Game 7 of the NBA Western Conference Finals on ABC between the Los Angeles Lakers and the Denver Nuggets, assuming the series goes that far.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR:
The NBA to prove it's still the more popular league, as its conference finals should out-rate the NHL's finals.
NOTE: All ratings based on adults 18-49. A share is a percentage of adults 18-49 who have their TV sets on at a given time. A rating is a percentage of all adults 18-49, whether or not their sets are turned on. For example, a 1.0 rating is 1% of the total U.S. adults 18-49 population with TVs. Ratings quoted in this column are based on live-plus-same-day unless otherwise noted. (Many ad deals have been negotiated on the basis of commercial-minute, live-plus-three-days viewing.)

John Rash is senior VP-director of media analysis for Campbell Mithun, Minneapolis. For more, see rashreport.com.