

Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media

School of Communication, Box 7169, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND 58202

Date: 2-29-96

Dear Prof. Stutman:

I was pleased to receive your manuscript, ~~A New Look at Anger on~~. I will review it within the next 10 days. After completing my evaluation, I will either return it to you so you can submit it elsewhere or mail it to three reviewers for their evaluation. The review process normally takes from 4 to 6 weeks. I will contact you if there is a delay. The following identification number has been assigned to your paper: #D342. Please refer to this number if you contact me. My direct phone number in my office is: 701-777-3951. Messages can be left on voice mail if I am out. I can also be contacted by e-mail at: jobem@badlands.NoDak.edu. Thanks for your interest in the journal. I look forward to working with you on this manuscript.

Dennis K. Davis
Professor and Editor

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P. O. Box 5190, Kent, Ohio 44242-0001

March 15, 1997

Suzanne Stutman
Institute for Mental Health Initiatives
4545 42nd St., N.W., Suite 311
Washington, DC 20016

Dear Ms. Stutman:

We have now received the critiques of your coauthored manuscript, "Portrayals of Anger on Television," which you submitted to the *Journal of Communication*. The reviewers are interested in the expression of anger on television, but cannot recommend publication of the paper. I am sorry to say that we cannot accept manuscript 96-147-01 for publication.

The reviewers do see this as a topic worth investigating. They also express serious concerns about the study. First, there is no compelling conceptual framework to guide the study. Consequently, we are left with a descriptive study without sufficient consideration of where the information fits in relation to other explanations of television or media content. The literature review is difficult to follow. On what basis should we reason that people can imitate anger management techniques shown on television in the same manner that they might imitate violent activity? Every reviewer asks, "What is the theory that motivates these questions?" A clear theoretical focus is needed to justify a coding scheme. Second, the study contains either methodological concerns or omissions of important information needed to gauge the validity and reliability of the analysis. How was the sample of programs selected? How was an anger episode defined? What was meant by anger as opposed to venting? It isn't clear how those five categories constituted the units of analysis? The coding scheme lacked clearly defined categories. Many of the coding activities mentioned on pp. 10-11 lacked precise reliability estimates. How was the one reliability on p. 10 computed? Were any of the mentioned differences actually statistically significant?

We have enclosed the referees' remarks. We trust these comments will help when revising the paper to send elsewhere and for your future work in this area. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to consider the paper. I regret the outcome of the review process and hope we can respond more positively to future submissions. Please note that we can be contacted via e-mail (joc@kentvm.kent.edu), fax (330-672-4547), phone (330-672-4609), or the postal service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan M. Rubin".

Alan M. Rubin
Editor

AMR/jj
Enclosures

Review of "Portrayals of Anger on Television"

Although a descriptive content analysis that does not do much to advance theoretical frontiers, I think the piece has some value and deserves reconsideration after some editing.

Specific comments:

- pp 3-5 This opening material can be summarized and encapsulated. The opening section "New Look.." can be cut altogether.
- p.7 The discussion of anger on page 6 is interesting but does not seem relevant to this study. It would be more appropriate for a study that actually studied modeling of anger.
- p.8 First full para. This study makes the assumption that people can imitate anger management techniques shown on TV in the same way they imitate violent activity. I'm not so sure that's true. Anger management is a rather subtle and easily overlooked behavior. It's not as vivid as hitting or shooting or punching. In order to imitate a "constructive" way of dealing with anger, a viewer would first have to notice someone was angry, pay attention to how the anger was dealt with and remember the technique for future use. I think this calls for more cognitive effort than does imitating hitting a Bobo doll. I may be wrong and I suppose it's ultimately an empirical question but I think the author(s) should tone down the rhetoric that suggests that TV is (can be) a powerful force in this area. More caution would be helpful.
- p.8 It's Nielsen, of course. I'd like to see more discussion of the evidence that suggests constructive anger management doesn't hinder ratings.
- p. 10 Reliability yielded 96% agreement? On what items? What was reliability measure? Percent of agreement? Alpha?
- p. 10 (Appendix B)--How was an anger episode defined? Did one item from each of the Body-Thoughts-Actions list have to be present? Or just one item from one list? If the latter is the case, then this is a very broad definition of anger. The high prevalence of anger in the results is not surprising.
- p. 11 Reliability estimates need to be provided (first full para.)
- p. 12 There are too many numbers reported on this page and the following pages. Many are redundant with the table and figures. Editing would be helpful. Would significance tests be appropriate and helpful as well?
- p. 14 "In the past, the stereotypical..." is there a reference for this assertion?
- p. 16 Discussion of relationship of anger to violence is good. Perhaps should be made focal point of results.

p. 18 I think the "Recommendation" and "Future" sections should be either eliminated or toned down. Both make the assumption that these portrayals can have a significant impact on the audience. I still contend there is no evidence to suggest that watching anger management has an influence on real-life anger episodes. As such the language should be made more tentative and cautious.

The topic of this research is interesting and has important implications in terms of possible portrayals to include in prosocial programming. However, I have several questions and concerns with this manuscript, mostly dealing with issues of clarity, that prevent me from recommending its publication at this time.

First, I found the literature review somewhat difficult to follow at points, and I believe that it could be strengthened by providing a stronger theoretical rationale for the coding scheme that was employed. Sometimes the organization of the literature review was difficult to follow -- jumping from one topic to another without much transition. For me, it would have helped if the author(s) would explain the relationship between anger and aggression, HOW people can learn (or be affected by) appropriate and inappropriate responses to anger, and then how television may serve as model.

I also found the section on "Constructive Use of Anger" (pp. 6-8) very confusing and difficult to follow. The researcher mentions the acronym (RETHINK) on page 7, but doesn't tell the reader the actual name until page 8. After the initial mention of the acronym on page 7, I wasn't sure where the discussion was headed or that the descriptions of research pertained to RETHINK.

But, most importantly, I think that the literature review could be strengthened considerably if the author would provide a justification for the coding scheme employed. In particular, exactly what is the rationale for examining the race, gender, age, and class of individuals who express anger? What is the theory that motivates these questions?

In terms of the method and results sections, most of my concern arises from what I see is a lack of clarity. I'll list my concerns here:

1. There is no information concerning how the sample of programs was selected.
2. There is very, very little information provided about how reliabilities were computed. Was this just in terms of % agreement?
3. Can the author explain EXACTLY what is meant by anger versus "venting"? If anger is defined in terms of the characteristics listed in Appendix B, then what is meant by venting? Are they the same thing? I can't believe that would be the case, though I'm not sure because venting is never explicitly defined. Similarly, the author mentions coding of powerful versus weak characters, heroes versus villains, and characters who were victimized, but these are also not defined.
4. Is the reader to understand that EVERY characteristic listed in Appendix B was coded independently. If so, precisely how is yelling different from shouting, hurting different from fighting or hitting, etc.? Some clarification would be helpful.
5. I didn't see one statistical test reported, though the author notes many differences in expression of anger between males and females, Blacks and Whites, young and old, etc. Are these statistically

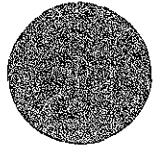
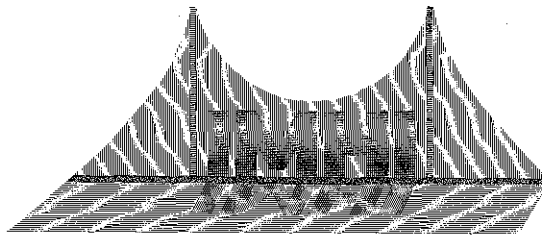
significant differences?

6. I don't understand the numbers in the discussion between anger and violence (p. 15). Specifically, the author writes that 28% of the anger scenes contain violence. Two sentences later, though, the author writes that "only 1 in 5 times (20.8%) do we have violence linked with anger" (p. 15). I may be confused here, but are these numbers correct?

7. Although the figures are visually appealing, I do think that a table of numerous would be sufficient and perhaps a bit more exact. On this note, if a given expression of anger is not included in the figure, can the reader assume that none of the characters (0.0%) used that expression?

Finally, at the end of the results and in the discussion, I noticed a few additional points where greater clarity would be helpful. For example, the author writes that "much of the violence depicted was gratuitous violence or violence as part of a code or belief system." (p. 16). I don't understand this. Can the author explain it? Similarly, in the discussion section, the author writes, "Saturday morning children's programs involve more stress, violence, and stereotyping..." (p. 17). Where was stress or stereotyping used in the coding scheme?

When I read back over my review of this manuscript I see a very lengthy list of concerns and requests for additional information or clarity. I hope my review isn't interpreted as suggesting that I think the topic is unimportant. Rather, I believe that many scholars would find this content analysis of interest. However, I also think that this paper could be strengthened considerably by some reorganization and additional information, and I hope the author finds my comments useful.



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October 5, 1995

George Gerbner, Ph.D.
234 Golfview Rd.
Ardmore, PA 19003

Dear Dr. Gerbner:

This is a follow-up letter to the conversation you had with Suzanne today. Enclosed please find a copy of the article "A New Look at Anger on Television".

Please contact us if you have any questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,

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Assistant to the Executive Director

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