

DEDICATED TO PROMOTING
MENTAL HEALTH

RHODA BARUCH, ED.D.
President

SUZANNE STUTMAN, MA, M.S.W., B.C.D.
Executive Director

CAROL AUERBACH, M.S.
Vice President

November 1, 1994

George Gerbner
Professor and Dean Emeritus
The Annenberg School For Communication
University of Pennsylvania
3620 Walnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104-6220

Dear Dr. Gerbner:

We received your draft of the report regarding anger portrayal and management on television. At the outset of this project you expressed some skepticism regarding the capacity to measure anger portrayal and management. However, it appears that your data support the prevalence and prominence of anger portrayal in television programs, and gives us encouragement that there are ample opportunities to promote mental health by incorporating such concepts as anger management into television characters.

With regards to the next steps, we have formulated several questions the answers to which would help us as we work with the media in improving their depiction of helpful models of anger management.

1. What was the **composition** of the sample studied? How many hours of viewing are represented by this study? From how many different programs were scenes taken? How many programs were from each network in the 1993-94 season, and how many of the total N were supplemented by the script archives from 1990, '92 and '93? For example, on page 7 in the appendix, you give a total of 159 programs that were analyzed. How many hours does this total represent? Did the data include several episodes from the same program? What was the breakdown of program sample size for each year data were collected?
2. We are impressed that your raters were able to come to an agreement on the manifestations of anger. We would like information now on the inter-rater agreement regarding this new subject for your raters.
3. It is essential to have a listing of the programs, and discrete episodes, that were selected for analysis. As we suggested when we arranged for this analysis, we plan to acquire the corresponding Nielsen ratings so that we can compare the relationship between a program's popularity and the constructive expressions of anger portrayed by the characters. This analysis will be the most significant focus of our future report.

INSTITUTE for MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES

4545 42nd Street, N.W. Suite 311 Washington, D.C. 20016 (202) 364-7111 FAX 363-3891

4. What are the **specific examples** of scenes where constructive anger management skills are utilized? On page 3 under the heading "Managing Anger" you mentioned that 6 out of 10 prime time and 4 out of 10 Saturday morning children's programs characters attempt resolution of anger. What were the specific skills used in each scene? Please identify any particular programs that contain a greater frequency of characters utilizing anger management skills. In this sample, how did the networks compare in the frequency of programs that portrayed characters managing their anger?

5. It appears that your analysis did not report any incidence of angry characters utilizing the anger management skills that include: **calming oneself, empathizing, showing respect for the target of anger, focusing on the present situation, changing thoughts about the anger situation.** Were the frequency of these skills too low to report, or were these skills excluded from your content analysis for some other reason?

6. What were the **outcomes** of the anger scenes when specific anger management skills were used? We would like to know the relationship between characters' use of each anger management skill and the outcome of the situation. What outcomes are associated with the use of humor to diffuse an angry scene? When the AC (angry character) recognized his/her anger? Did the situation improve, deteriorate, or end in violence? How were the outcomes different from situations where one of the skills, or a combination, were not utilized?

In your report you stated that 14.6% of all anger scenes in prime time involve violence. What other elements are associated with the remaining 85.4% of prime time anger scenes. Are these data available?

7. In the "Demography of Anger" section you report that characters who are most likely to express anger are "major...male...upper class...and white..." We need the correlations between the characters and their expressions of anger. How do these characters **express** their anger? Are their means of expression different from those of characters who are not in the traditional "power position?" From looking at the information given on page 10, Table 6 "Venting and Managing Anger," you conclude that male characters have a significantly greater incidence of anger expression. The data are unclear, but the important question is what are the effective anger *management* depictions and who are the characters who use them.

How do these major, white, upper-class males *manage* their anger? What skills do they utilize, and how do they compare to other demographic groups in their management of anger? Is there a particular group that is portrayed as expressing anger most often but least competent in the skills to manage anger?

8. On page 2 you report that one-third of anger scenes alter a relationship. How is the relationship in this one-third altered? Does the relationship improve? Is the problem resolved? What happens to the characters? Anecdotal reports will suffice if you are unable to give the statistics. Could we view these scenes or have the written transcripts?

9. For our purposes, it is important to understand the role that substance use (including alcohol) plays in the advent of anger scenes. What is the association

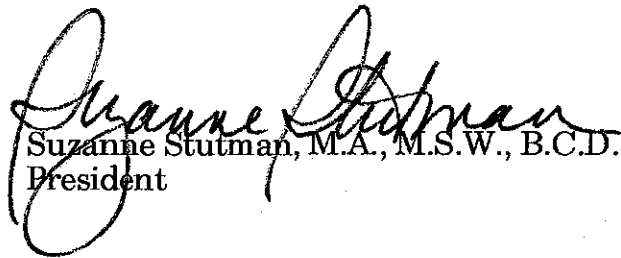
between alcohol or substance use and uncontrolled or violent expressions of anger?

In our final report we plan to focus on the positive portrayals and outcomes of anger management scenes in TV programs. Television can be an extremely *powerful* and *positive* tool for influencing behaviors. Anger management skills can be manifested and portrayed by characters, and also learned by both the characters and the viewers. By analyzing both the negative portrayals and the positive episodes to present comparisons, as well as identifying the relationship of effective anger management and show popularity, we can more effectively work with the media to improve the quality of their shows. Based on these results, our role will be to guide the entertainment industry and educate the general public (please see the enclosures to refresh your memory of how we reach out to the media).

We hope that you will call on us as you continue the further analyses that we are requesting. As you know, we have conducted four analyses of anger depictions in television programs. We look forward to comparing your findings in this most recent analysis to previous findings of prime-time and day-time drama shows to further this important work. Thank you for your efforts on this preliminary report and future efforts.

Sincerely,


Rhoda Baruch, Ed.D. (E)
Founder and Chair


Suzanne Stutman, M.A., M.S.W., B.C.D.
President

enclosures



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used - we shared -*

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*1,014 scenes
1926*

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Answered
2/27/94
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Suzanne Stutman
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President

enclosures

*Send few
minutes of tape
Q's now, been
out pilot about
what to send
if more - next
projects*



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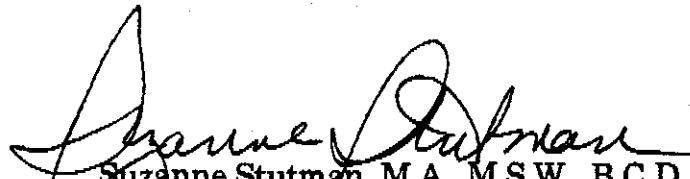
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