

May 31, 1994

To: George Gerbner

Fr: Sheila Collins

Re: Analysis of Anger in Prime Time Television Scripts

Attached is the final report of the analysis of anger in scripts. This report includes examples of dialogue, and details about the effects of anger on relationships between angry characters and the targets of their anger.

*ANALYSIS OF ANGER AS DEPICTED ON
PRIME-TIME NETWORK TELEVISION*

What follows are the results of analysis of anger and angry dialogue in a small sample of prime-time network television programming:

Sample

The 13 scripts—chosen for the diversity of topics they portrayed—all aired within the first 34 days of the years 1990, 1992, and 1993. More than half (62%) of the scripts aired during the first week of January; the remaining programs (38%) aired during the following three weeks.

The scripts are from shows of various genres, including situation comedies, serial dramas, and non-serial dramas. Some of the scripts are from half-hour shows; others from shows of one hour in length.

While the sample for this pilot content analysis is small, its findings suggest that anger is often a dramatic element in television programming.

METHODOLOGY

The units of analysis are each expression of anger (for purposes of assessing the consequences of the anger portrayed in the sample) and each angry character. The angry character is defined as the initiator of the angry expression. Targets of the anger who respond with anger of their own are not counted as angry characters. An expression was deemed to be an "angry expression" through a combination of assessing the circumstances in which the expression took place, noting instances where the script directions describes the

"tone" with which dialogue is spoken, or describes a character's demeanor. For example, instances where a character is described as yelling at or insulting another character, or using or threatening violence, are considered expressions of anger.

THE RESULTS

PREVALENCE OF ANGER

As Table 1 illustrates, in the 13 scripts used for this analysis, the total population of characters listed as "cast" members totaled 306. Of that number, 48 characters (16%) expressed anger. A significant finding is in the gender breakdown of angry characters.

Women characters are angry in a higher proportion to their population representation in this sample. White male settled adults, television's most oft-appearing characters, are not surprisingly the characters who most often express anger.

Villians in this sample were never the angry character. Most often the angry character's role was neither the hero nor the villain, rather characters whose roles were "mixed, unclear" were most frequently angry.

Alcohol played an almost non-existent role in the angry expressions analyzed in this pilot, appearing only 2% of the time. There was only one incidence of a racial slur uttered by an angry character.

Table 1

Portrayals of Angry Characters in
12 Aired Scripts of Various
Prime Time Television Shows - January 1990—1993

	13 Prime Time Shows:		M		F	
	<u>All Characters</u>		N	%	N	%
Total Population (Angry and Non-Angry)	306	100				
Females	107	35	107	100	107	100
Males	199	65				
Angry Characters	48	16	33	17	15	14
Females	15	14				
Males	33	17				
Black	1	2				
White	47	98				
Adol./Pre-Adol.	1	2				
Young Adults	2	4				
Settled Adults	44	92				
Elderly	1	2				
Hero, Good, Positive	15	31				
Mixed, Unclear	33	69				
Alcohol <i>use w. or clear</i>	1	2				
Verbal Abuse	23	48				
Racist <i>no who one</i>	1	2				
Violent <i>no or clear</i>	25	52				

Expressions of Anger

As Table 2 indicates, the target of the anger was most often a stranger (48%), followed by a relative or close friend as the target (34%). Least often the target of anger was a colleague (17%).

Table 2

Portrayals of Anger and its Consequences
 in 11* Aired Scripts of
 Prime Time Television Shows - Januarys 1990—1993

	<u>All Angry Expressions</u>	
	N	%
Total Angry Expressions <i>mut d</i> <i>and</i>	29	100
EFFECT		
Stay Same	4	14
Improve	2	7
Deteriorate <i>degrade</i>	23	79
OUTCOME		
Constructive	2*	7
Other Character Angry	8	28
Violence	16	55
Cannot Code	3	10
TARGET OF ANGER		
Close Relative or Friend	10	34
Colleague	5	17
Stranger	14	48
OLD OR NEW ISSUE		
Old	5	17
New	24	83
RELATIONSHIP ALTERED?		
Yes	10	34
No	19	66
NATURE OF ALTERATION		
Positive	2	20
Negative	8	80

WHO GETS ANGRY WITH WHOM

By gender, the pattern of anger and the targets of anger are as follows, in Table 3:

TABLE 3. WHO GET ANGRY WITH WHOM

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Total Angry Expressions	34	100
Male to Male	20	59
Male to Female	6	18
Female to Female	2	6
Female to Male	6	18

EFFECTS AND OUTCOME OF ANGER

In none of the scripts analyzed does the anger have an effect on the program as a whole. The anger was, in every case, a part of a particular scene, having an effect on only the issue and characters involved in that scene. What follows are details on the patterns of anger as depicted in the sample scripts. Anger's impact on relationships in this sample suggests that anger usually is prompted by new rather than old situations. This is probably a reflection of the dramatic use of conflict which for network television arises freshly with each new episode. Table 4 illustrates:

Table 4. FREQUENCY OF ANGER IN OLD AND IN NEW ISSUES

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Total Issues	29	100
Old Issues	5	17
New Issues	24	83

EFFECT OF ANGER ON RELATIONSHIPS:

In the majority of cases, the anger did not alter relationships. This is a reflection of the fact that most of the anger was directed towards strangers, where there was no prior relationship, as demonstrated in below:

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Alter Relationship	10	19

However, in those cases where the relationship was altered by the expression of anger (10 instances of change in relationship), almost all (8) the changes were for the worse. In only two instances did the anger result in an improvement in the relationship between the angry character and the target, as demonstrated in Table 5 below:

Table 5. ANGER'S EFFECT ON RELATIONSHIPS

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Improved Relationship	2	20
Worsened Relationship	8	80

SUMMARY

On the whole, nighttime television's depictions of anger, as suggested by this pilot study, are not constructive or useful for problem solving. Anger most often precipitates a deterioration in the relationship between the angry character and the target of the anger, who is usually a close friend or relative.

However, the anger in this sample almost never took on racist or sexist tones.

ANGRY DIALOGUE

As "common sense" would indicate, characters on network programming express anger when under stress, when they perceive a threat or an injustice, when they are jealous, and sometimes when they are frightened. What people say under these circumstances depends upon directly upon the circumstances and the perspective of the angry character. The following examples of angry dialogue were chosen to illustrate the most frequently occurring causes of anger, and the circumstances under which anger usually appears:

Perceived Threat (Bigotry)

21 Jumpstreet (#073; p. 15)

(The hostility of working-class kids who live in a college town toward the wealthy students who attend the college is apparent in the following exchange. At a favorite hang-out of both groups, a "local" jumps the line in front of two Asian students.)

Tsang Wah: Uh...excuse me, sir...

Li: We were here first.

Local: Hey, they don't serve that Moo Goo Goo Goo here.

Tsang Wah: I can see they still serve idiots.

Local: What did you say, zipperhead?

Fear

The Wonder Years (#104; p. 24)

(Kevin, the star, chides Jeff's constant joking and sarcasm. Jeff is new in town, having moved away from "home" after the divorce of his parents, and is fearful and resentful. However, at the time of the following exchange between the boys, we do not have this information)

Kevin: What's with you? I mean, is everything a joke?

Jeff: What do you mean?

Kevin: I mean, you've got an answer for everything. But you don't try and fit in, you don't try and meet new people...

Jeff: What are you -- Ann Landers?... The proper way to do this, the proper way to do that. It's not pretty, y'know.

Kevin: Yeah, well, forget it. [Walks away]

Jeff: Hey! For your information, I didn't ask to move here. I didn't ask to have all my stuff put in a moving van and come to some new place, and "meet new people," and "fit in." My family was back there! Nobody asked me.

Kevin: So that's it? You're just going to sit here by yourself?

Jeff: You don't know anything.

The Wonder Years (#104; p. 34)

(Kevin's father Jack is angry at him for neglecting a household errand.

But Kevin, having found out about Jeff's parents' divorce, and grateful his parents are still together, doesn't let the anger of his father get to him.)

Jack: Where the hell have you been? Where are the fasteners for the gutters?
 You leave here six hours ago, and you come back with nothing?
 What's the matter with you? Where's your head?

Kevin: I love you, Dad.

Jealousy

Thirtysomething (#041; pp. 44-45)

(Elliott and Mike, former partners and owners their own advertising agency, have joined a larger firm, and Mike gets a promotion over Elliott, putting him in charge of projects, rather than his being a "collaborator" with Elliott.)

Mike: That's my decision.

Elliott: What happened to this being "our" project.

Mike: It is our project, but I have to make a decision on how it's done.

Elliott: (Sarcastically) Forget it. Your commercial is great, Mike. It's Chekhov.

Betrayal

L.A. Law (#186; p. 50)

(When a senior executive [Flicker] of a Hollywood-connected firm gets fired, he feels betrayed. Becker, [a regular member of the core ensemble cast of lawyers at McKenzie-Brackman law firm, also works for this company] is chosen to replace Flicker, and Flicker feels doubly betrayed. As Flicker is being escorted from the building by security guards, he confronts Becker.)

Flicker: Et tu, Becker? ...How could you? I took you under my wing, the heir apparent...

Becker: (snapping back) You manipulated, used, and abused me every chance you had, Ben. I never believed you had my best interests at heart.

Flicker: You were like a son...a son.

Becker: Goodbye, Ben.

L.A. Law (#186; p. 56)

(Gwen and Morales are colleagues at McKenzie-Brackman; they are also lovers. But Morales' estranged wife, Allison, finds out that he's invited Gwen for dinner at his place, and rushes over to arrive at the apartment before Gwen does. When Gwen

finally arrives, prior to Morales' arrival, she finds Allison busily preparing a romantic dinner for two, feigning innocence about Gwen's presence.)

[Using her key to Morales' apartment, Gwen senses movement in the apartment and calls out to Morales]

Gwen: Daniel?

Allison: Daniel isn't home.

Gwen: Who let you in? What are you doing?

Allison: Whipping egg whites. Lemon meringue pie is my husband's favorite.

Gwen: Who are you?

Allison: I'd really like for us to be friends. We got off on the wrong foot. And after all, you do work with Daniel...(conspiratorily) He thinks you're going to make a wonderful attorney. I'd give you a hug, but my egg whites are peaking.

[Gwen grabs her briefcase and backs toward the door]

Allison: Aren't you staying for dinner?

Knots Landing (299; p. 36)

(Alex throws a party for Claudia, ostensibly to honor her, but more sinister motives are revealed during the party and in a contentious discussion later. At the party he surprises her with a large oil painting of her deceased mother, which dredges up conflicting feelings in Claudia, feelings Alex counted on to make Claudia vulnerable. During the party, after the portrait is unveiled, Alex asks):

Alex: Well, are you surprised?

Claudia: Nothing you could do would surprise me, Alex.

Alex: Shall I take that for a thank you?

Claudia: You can take it any way you want.

[After the party:]

Alex: Is that the way you remember her?

[Claudia does not answer]

Alex: I thought it was a nice party. Did you enjoy yourself?

Claudia: No, but I'm glad we had it.

Alex: (delighted at having gotten to her) Really? And why is that?

Claudia: Because now I know just how far you're willing to go.

Alex: Do you? I think we still have a ways to go.

Claudia: Don't play with me, Alex. What is this about?

Alex: Some people might call it murder. You could have reached out and stopped it and you didn't.

Claudia: Stopped what?

Alex: I was there. Even if I was very young. I saw your mother reaching for her medicine -- I even saw the bottle break. One move, you could have saved her. But you didn't. I saw you stand by and watched it all.

Claudia: That's not how it happened!

Alex: You have your version. I have mine. Do you really want your brother to hear either one of them?

Stress

Knot Landing (#299; p. 48)

(Gary Ewing, having gambled on saving his business by putting up his family farm and home as collateral, loses everything when the business goes under. He is forced to auction off all but the personal effects within the family house, but loses control when two especially zealous bargain seekers wander into his house after the auction.) [Gary and wife Val are comforting one another when they become aware that strangers have entered their home. He goes to investigate.]

Women #1: Can you tell me if that desk in the other room is an antique? I'm not interested if it isn't.

Gary: (instantly irate) None of these things are for sale! None of this is part of the auction!

Woman #2: Not the piano either?

Gary: Will you please get out of here? --

Val: Gary --

Gary: Will you get out and tell everyone else to say the hell out!?! This is our home! Doesn't anybody understand that?! That this is our home! That we live here!

Val: (trying to calm and comfort him) Gary, Gary, Gary -- It's alright.

Gary: This is our home, Val.

Val: I know, I know.

ANGRY BY SEX2 SOCAGE AGE60 SES MARITAL3 RACE3 RACEETH
 CHARTYPE SUCCESS VIOLENCE VICTIM

ANGRY Does Char Get Angy in Program? by SEX2

	Count Col Pct	SEX2		Row Total
		Male	Female	
		1.00	2.00	
ANGRY		-----		
Yes	1	242 25.1	120 23.7	362 24.6
No	2	724 74.9	386 76.3	1110 75.4
	Column Total	966 65.6	506 34.4	1472 100.0

*1/4 of all Primetime chas
 are angry.
 No gender difference.*

Number of Missing Observations: 24

ANGRY Does Char Get Angy in Program? by SOCAGE SOCIAL AGE OF CHARACTER

	Count Col Pct	SOCAGE					Row Total
		CANNOT CODE 0	CHILD & ADOLESENT 1	YOUNG ADULT 2	SETTLED ADULT 3	ELDERLY 4	
ANGRY		-----					
Yes	1	2 5.6	37 30.3	76 21.2	234 25.3	14 25.9	363 24.3
No	2	34 94.4	85 69.7	283 78.8	691 74.7	40 74.1	1133 75.7
	Column Total	36 2.4	122 8.2	359 24.0	925 61.8	54 3.6	1496 100.0

Number of Missing Observations: 0

ANGRY Does Char Get Angy in Program? by AGE60 Age 60 below, above

	Count Col Pct	AGE60		Row Total
		Under 60 1.00	60 or ab ove 2.00	
ANGRY		-----		
Yes	1	325 24.5	22 23.7	347 24.5
No	2	999 75.5	71 76.3	1070 75.5

Column	1324	93	1417
Total	93.4	6.6	100.0

Number of Missing Observations: 79

ANGRY Does Char Get Angry in Program? by SES SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

		SES				
		CANNOT CODE	CLEARLY UPPER	MIDDLE	CLEARLY LOWER	Row Total
		0	1	2	3	
ANGRY		-----				
	Count Col Pct					
	1	5 18.5	14 35.0	343 24.2	1 7.1	363 24.3
Yes						
	2	22 81.5	26 65.0	1072 75.8	13 92.9	1133 75.7
No						
	Column Total	27 1.8	40 2.7	1415 94.6	14 .9	1496 100.0

Number of Missing Observations: 0

ANGRY Does Char Get Angry in Program? by MARITAL3 Married or not

		MARITAL3			
		Cant cod e	Not marr ied	Married	Row Total
		.00	1.00	2.00	
ANGRY		-----			
	Count Col Pct				
	1	114 14.4	181 34.9	68 36.2	363 24.3
Yes					
	2	675 85.6	337 65.1	120 63.8	1132 75.7
No					
	Column Total	789 52.8	518 34.6	188 12.6	1495 100.0

Number of Missing Observations: 1

ANGRY Does Char Get Angry in Program? by RACE3 Race in 3 categories

		RACE3			
		Cant cod e	White	Non-whit e	Row Total
		.00	1.00	2.00	
ANGRY		-----			
	Count Col Pct				
	1	16 18.4	297 25.4	50 20.7	363 24.3
Yes					
	2	71	871	191	1133

No	81.6	74.6	79.3	75.7
Column	87	1168	241	1496
Total	5.8	78.1	16.1	100.0

Number of Missing Observations: 0

ANGRY Does Char Get Angry in Program? by RACEETH American race & ethnicities

		RACEETH											
		Count											
		Col	Pct	Cant e	White er	Afr-Amer	Asian-Am er	Native A mer	Row Total				
				.00	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00					
ANGRY		-----											
	1	38	18.2	281	26.2	42	21.4	2	18.2	363	24.3		
Yes													
	2	171	81.8	793	73.8	154	78.6	6	100.0	9	81.8	1133	75.7
No													
Column		209		1074		196		6		11		1496	
Total		14.0		71.8		13.1		.4		.7		100.0	

Number of Missing Observations: 0

ANGRY Does Char Get Angry in Program? by CHARTYPE CHARACTER TYPE

		CHARTYPE									
		Count									
		Col	Pct	CANNOT CODE	GOOD - POSITIVE	BOTH - MIXED	BAD - NEGATIVE	Row Total			
				0	1	2	3				
ANGRY		-----									
	1	110	25.2	208	21.8	45	42.9	363	24.3		
Yes											
	2	3	100.0	326	74.8	744	78.2	60	57.1	1133	75.7
No											
Column		3		436		952		105		1496	
Total		.2		29.1		63.6		7.0		100.0	

Number of Missing Observations: 0

ANGRY Does Char Get Angry in Program? by SUCCESS OVERALL SUCCESS IN GOAL

		SUCCESS							
		Count							
		Col	Pct	CANNOT CODE	CLEAR SU CCESS	BOTH -MI XED	CLEAR FA ILURE	Row Total	
				0	1	2	3		
ANGRY		-----							
	1	135	26.5	142	18.3	86	43.2	363	24.3
Yes									

DISREGARD

↓

NEED ROW PCTS as well

↓

No	2	12	375	633	113	1132
		100.0	73.5	81.7	56.8	75.7
Column		12	510	775	199	1496
Total		.8	34.1	51.8	13.3	100.0

Number of Missing Observations: 0

ANGRY Does Char Get Agy in Program?
by VIOLENCE VIOLENCE COMMITTED BY CHARACTER

		VIOLENCE				Row Total
		DOES NOT COMMIT	NONFATAL VIOLENCE	FATAL VIOLENCE	Suicide	
Count	Col Pct	0	1	2	3	

ANGRY						
Yes	1	254	92	17		363
		19.9	48.9	56.7		24.3
No	2	1021	96	13	2	1132
		80.1	51.1	43.3	100.0	75.7
Column		1275	188	30	2	1495
Total		85.3	12.6	2.0	.1	100.0

Number of Missing Observations: 1

ANGRY Does Char Get Agy in Program? by VICTIM VICTIMIZATION OF CHARACTER

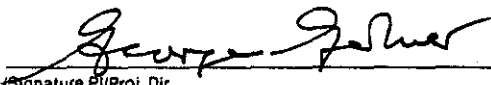
		VICTIM			Row Total
		NOT A VICTIM	V SUFFERS NONFATAL	DIES VIOLNTLY	
Count	Col Pct	0	1	2	

ANGRY					
Yes	1	238	110	15	363
		19.5	45.3	50.0	24.3
No	2	984	133	15	1132
		80.5	54.7	50.0	75.7
Column		1222	243	30	1495
Total		81.7	16.3	2.0	100.0

Number of Missing Observations: 1

*NEED
Rev PCTS.*



FOR ORA USE ONLY - LOG NO.		UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA Office of Research Administration PROPOSAL TRANSMITTAL AND APPROVAL FORM			DATE	
PI/CO-PI or SPONSOR/FELLOW NAMES GEORGE GERBER		POSITION/TITLE Emer. Prof	SOC. SEC. NO. 560-264169	DEPARTMENT Humboldt School	SCHOOL	
ADMINISTERING DEPARTMENT		ADMINISTRATIVE CONTACT			PHONE	
TYPE OF PROJECT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RESEARCH <input type="checkbox"/> TRAINING <input type="checkbox"/> FELLOWSHIP <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (Specify) _____			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NEW PROJECT <input type="checkbox"/> SUPPLEMENTAL <input type="checkbox"/> COMPETING CONTINUATION RENEWAL <input type="checkbox"/> REVISION <input type="checkbox"/> NON-COMPETING CONTINUATION			
TITLE OF PROJECT Depiction of Anger on TV Programs						
SPONSOR Inst. for Mental Health Initiatives			GRANT NO. (if active)			
FUNDS REQUESTED 1st Yr: \$ TOTAL: \$ 15,000	IND. COST RATE 15%	PROPOSED START DATE Jan 1, 1994	DURATION 6 mo	COST SHARING? \$ Source:	SUBCONTRACTING: \$ Name:	
SPONSOR'S NAME AND ADDRESS (if no label enclosed) DR. SUZANNE S. STUTMAN INST. FOR MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES 4545 42nd ST. SUITE 311 WASHINGTON DC 20016 (202.364.7111)			MAILING INSTRUCTIONS (ORA needs file copy) <input type="checkbox"/> ORA to mail <input type="checkbox"/> Dept. to mail Mail _____ copies Call _____ for pickup. SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS Due Date:			
IDENTIFY EXISTING SPACE AND FACILITIES TO BE USED FOR PROJECT: (Bldg., Room, Type, etc.) Rooms 329, 137 <input type="checkbox"/> Requires new space, renovations or major equipment installation. (Attach description and Facilities Management cost estimate).						
OTHER APPROVAL INFORMATION (Check each of the following) (Call 8-2614 for guidelines on 1a and 2a).			APPROVAL ATTACHED? (Complete, if "Yes" in left section)			
DOES THIS PROJECT INVOLVE THE USE:			YES	NO	Protocol File Date	Date Approved
1a. Human subjects?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1b. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
2a. Vertebrate animals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2b. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
3a. Radioactive materials/radiation-producing equipment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3b.	Call Radiation Safety - Ext. 8-7187		
4a. Investigational new drugs or new devices?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4b.	IND/IDE Number _____		
5a. Potentially infectious agents, including human blood or tissue?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5b.	Call Environmental Health - Ext. 8-4453		
6a. Carcinogens?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6b.	Call Environmental Health - Ext. 8-4453		
7a. In vitro formation of recombinant DNA?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7b.	Call Environmental Health - Ext. 8-4453		
APPROVAL CERTIFICATIONS						
1. PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR/PROJECT DIRECTOR: I certify that the above information is accurate and complete as of this date. I agree to accept responsibility for scientific and technical conduct of this project and for provision of required technical reports if a grant or contract is awarded as a result of this application.						
		11/19/93				
(Signature PI/Proj. Dir.)		(Date)		(Signature Co-PI)		
2. DEPARTMENT CHAIR: The attached application is approved. It is within the total program and academic objectives of the Department. Adequate space is available or planned for the conduct of the project. The professional time allocations described therein are realistic.						
_____		_____		_____		
(Signature Dept. Chair.)		(Date)		(Signature Participating Dept. Chair(s))		
3. DEAN OF SCHOOL: The proposed project is approved. It is consistent with the total program objectives of this school & the commitments of this project are acceptable.						
_____		_____		_____		
(Signature Dean)		(Date)		(Signature Participating Dean(s))		