

AGING WITH TELEVISION

Images -- and self images -- viewers derive from television drama, and how they can affect the experience of aging and the values and support for public policy toward the aged

A continuation grant application in support of a program of research and action submitted to the Office of Human Development, Administration on Aging.

by

George Gerbner, Larry Gross and Nancy Signorielli

INTRODUCTION

We are in the process of conducting research and action designed to contribute to the development of program and policy initiatives aimed at improving the circumstances of individual older persons in America. The accumulated experience, resources, and energies of a team whose research in the television violence area has made a significant impact on national awareness and policy is now directed to the new objectives. The objectives include a scientific analysis of the image of aging and the aged presented in television drama, wide dissemination of the results of this research, and a prototype workshop where citizens, organizations, and media practitioners meet to work out tactics and policies of desirable portrayal and effective utilization of the products of both research and media relevant to aging and the aged. Further workshop and conferences modeled after this prototype may be proposed in subsequent applications.

This research focus on Strategy Area C described in the AoA Guidelines (July 1, 1977) as "Concerned with conditions in the larger environment that

affect the response of society to the needs of the elderly." More specifically, we are addressing Researchable Question C-1: "What is the American value structure in areas of crucial relevance to the personal and societal context within which old age is experienced in America?" Going one step further, we are also trying to explore and implement suggestions of what can be done to improve these conditions both in terms of social philosophy (represented on this project by the senior co-principal investigator who is the author of such philosophical works) and in terms of specific organizational and media policy.

The dissemination and utilization plan sets out a specific list of persons and organizations as the initial mailing list of the results and action and policy implications of the project, and outlines the prototype workshop that will be held in the fall of 1979.

The focus on low-income and minority older persons is evident throughout both the television analysis phase and the implementation phase.

I. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Television is the mainstream of the common symbolic environment which cultivates the most widely shared conceptions of reality and of value. What have been its contributions to public conceptions in areas of crucial relevance to the personal and societal context in which old age is experienced in America? Have these contributions changed in the past eleven years? What have viewers of different ages learned from television's most vivid lessons -- its dramatic fare -- about aging and the aged in general and about low-income and minority aged in particular? Will today's children, exposed to contemporary children's and adult fare have a different orientation as they grow old in the next decades? What help does television

provide and what obstacles does it pose for obtaining greater public support for policies designed to improve the circumstances of the elderly? These are the questions addressed in the ongoing research.

This project, a Full Scale Study, begins with the secondary analysis of our television content and effects data archives and has developed and implemented a procedure to monitor the role of television in shaping public conceptions of aging and the aged.

This project is based on a unique data bank and research design called Cultural Indicators.¹ This research began with the investigation of violence in network television drama in 1967-68 for the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence. It continued under the sponsorship of the Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior, the National Institute of Mental Health, the American Medical Association and The Office on Telecommunications Policy. Although violence-related findings and indicators have been published widely, the approach was broadly based from the beginning to collect observations on the role and symbolic functions of several specific aspects of life -- including age -- presented in television drama.

The research consists of two interrelated parts: (1) Message System Analysis -- monitoring the world of television, and (2) Cultivation Analysis -- determining the conceptions of social reality that television tends to cultivate in different groups of child and adult viewers. The analyses provide information about the geography, demography, character profiles, group relations, and action structure of the world of television, and will focus these images and lessons upon aging and the aged.

¹ A list of publications describing the analytic framework of Cultural Indicators as well as some of the results of this research may be found in Appendix I.

Message System Analysis

Cultural Indicators research begins with Message System Analysis, a flexible but precise tool for making orderly objective and cumulative observations of programming content. This technique allows us to identify almost any aspect of the television world, so that we can then test its contribution to viewers' conceptions of the real world.

Message System Analysis has been performed on more than ten annual samples of prime-time and weekend daytime network dramatic programming. The data base includes more than a thousand television programs and several thousand characters, actions and relationships. Coded observations are stored in a computer, available for further analysis and study.

The cumulative data base enables us to identify long term trends. For example, our annual Violence Profile² and Index has charted the fluctuations of violent relationships and action in dramatic programming for the last eleven years. With the annual Message System Analysis and our data bank, we can trace similar fluctuations and developments relevant to aging and the aged. Detailed and comprehensive demographic classification enables us to pay special attention to low-income and minority older persons.

Cultivation Analysis

Our up-to-date bank of patterns and trends in the world of television drama is the foundation for our studies of viewer's conceptions of social reality.

² George Gerbner, Larry Gross, Marilyn Jackson-Beeck, and Nancy Signorielli "Violence Profile No. 9, Trends in Network Television Drama and Viewers Conceptions of Social Reality, 1967-1977." Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania, March 1978..

The second step of the research, therefore, determines what viewers learn about the real world from the world of television drama, a world in which Americans spend more time than in work or school or play. In order to uncover this information, we turn the findings about the television world into questions about social reality. Each of these questions has a "television answer" -- the way it is in the world of television -- and another, different answer which is usually more typical of reality. These questions are presented to viewers as part of national probability and quota surveys.

While no member of society can remain unaffected by an influence so pervasive as television, those who spend more time in the world of television have been found to be more likely to perceive the real world in terms of television's lessons. Responses to our questions allow us to assess the degree to which the more frequent viewers give answers which reflect television's image of the world. These patterns are examined in light of various controls -- age, sex, education, occupation, etc. -- in order to determine the extent to which it is possible to view television's influence as independent, complementary or contrary to other major social variables.

II. RESEARCH PLAN

The study is divided into three parts:

- (1) Secondary Analysis of the Cultural Indicators Project and other relevant data bases relating to age and aging.
 - (a) Secondary Analysis of Message System Analysis data base to isolate the image of the elderly (and other age groups) in prime-time and weekend daytime dramatic network television programming.
 - (b) Secondary Analysis of Cultivation Analysis survey data collected in four samples of adults.
 - (c) Secondary Analysis of the Harris Poll on Aging (National Council on Aging funded by Merrill Clark Foundation).
- (2) Development, pilot testing and implementation of a Message System Analysis recording instrument focusing upon the portrayal of the elderly, old age, and growing old. The instrument will be applied to a sample of prime-time and weekend daytime network dramatic programming.
- (3) Development and implementation of an instrument for Cultivation Analysis focusing upon old age and the elderly.

(1) Secondary Analysis of the Cultural Indicators Project Data Archives

The Cultural Indicators Data Archives consists of two bodies of data -- Message (content) Analysis data (coded observations of "facts of life" in samples of network television drama) and Cultivation Analysis data (responses of adult and child viewers reflecting what they learn from televised "facts of life").

Message System Analysis

Message System Analysis is designed to investigate the aggregate and collective premises defining life and its issues in representative samples

of mass-produced symbolic material. Such analysis rests on the reliable determination of unambiguously perceived elements of communications. Its data base is not what any individual would select but what an entire national community absorbs. It does not attempt to interpret single or selected units of material, or draw conclusions about artistic merit or ability to "sell" products. The analysis is limited to functions implicit in the prevalence, rate, symbolic structures and distribution of clear and common terms in the samples.³

This analysis will isolate the image of the elderly in prime-time and weekend daytime network dramatic television programming. The analysis uses a data base consisting of eight one-week samples⁴ (1967-1976)⁵ of programs aired in the early to mid-fall of each year and two (1975 and 1976) one-week samples of programs aired in the early spring of these years. The programs included in these samples were videotaped and subjected to a recording instrument divided into four sections: the program as a whole, the characters,

³ A description of the analytical framework can be found in "Toward Cultural Indicators: The Analysis of Mass Mediated Public Message Systems" by George Gerbner, in The Analysis of Communication Content: Development in Scientific Theories and Computer Techniques, edited by George Gerbner et.al., New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1979.

⁴ A sample of an entire week of dramatic programming has been demonstrated to be as generalizable to a year's programming as larger randomly selected samples. A sampling experiment, conducted in 1969, found no significant differences between dimensions of program style, format, type and tone across the solid week sample and a sample constructed according to the same time parameters but selected by a one program a day random selection procedure. Michael F. Eleey, "Variations in generalizability resulting from Sampling Characteristics of Content Analysis Data: A Case Study (The Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania, 1969). In addition a sampling experiment conducted in the spring of 1977 revealed no significant differences across dimensions of programming (George Gerbner et.al., "The Gerbner Violence Profile: An Analysis of the CBS Report," Journal of Broadcasting, Summer, 1977.)

⁵ ~~Data from the fall 1977 sample could not be included in this phase of the study because they were not available when the analysis began.~~

violent actions, and close personal relationships of characters.⁶

This part of the research focuses upon groups of television programs -- prime-time programs and weekend daytime (children's) programs. It uses data collected using three sections of the Cultural Indicators Project Message System Recording Instrument -- the program, characters, and close personal relationships. The analysis of characters in prime-time programs has been completed and is presented in Section III. It also was presented in Progress Report No. 1. The analysis of characters in weekend daytime (children's) programs, as well as the analysis of program and close personal relationship data, are being completed and will be presented in Progress Report No. 2 (September, 1978).

The Program

The Data Archive of Cultural Indicators Message System Analysis is designed to facilitate the isolation of programs focusing upon certain issues as well as programs that are populated by certain groups of characters. In this case, we have isolated programs in which the elderly appear. These programs are being analyzed along the following dimensions --program type, format, tone, time, place, setting, violence, medicine and health. We are also looking at the themes and aspects of life that are found in these programs. When possible, programs focusing upon old age are being compared with programs that do not have elderly characters.

Characters

The description of characters who populate that world of prime-time and weekend daytime dramatic television programming is an important and detailed part of the proposed analysis.

⁶ Data on character's close personal relationships is available only from 1973 on.

Characters are divided into four age-related groups -- children and adolescents, young adults, settled adults and the elderly. The four groups are used so that the image of the elderly can be compared with the image of children and younger adults. This analysis looks at characters in children's programming (weekend daytime) separately from characters in programs broadcast from 8 to 11 PM (prime time). Separate analyses are also performed for major characters (those who portray roles essential to the plot of the program) and minor⁷ characters (all other characters with speaking roles). This data base consists of 8 types of items -- demographic, occupation, health, home and family, sex and romance, general role ("good-bad", success, happiness), violence, and bi-polar personality traits.⁸

Close personal relationships

This part of the analysis is focusing upon the personal relationships in which one (or both) of the partners is elderly. Data are available for all family and romantic relationships as well as all relationships in which the partners are relatively familiar with each other and have a close relationship. The analysis will describe the type of relationship, the general aspects of the relationship (e.g. the beginning and ending state, happiness of partners) and the presence of conflict.

⁷ Data for minor characters are available on a sub-set of the variables.

⁸ The bi-polar personality scales were only coded for major characters.

Cultivation Analysis

The Cultural Indicators Project Data Archives also consist of responses to questions about social reality. Each of these questions has a "television answer" -- the way it is in the world of television -- and another different answer, which is usually more typical of reality. These questions are presented to adults as part of national probability or quota surveys, and to children in group tests and interviews. The proposed analysis will use only the adult surveys. The cultivation questions included in these surveys focus upon a variety of topics such as fear and violence, occupations, "mean-world" syndrome, aging, sex-role orientations, and general life-styles.

This part of the secondary analysis of Cultural Indicators data will analyze six samples of adult respondents. Three of these samples were commissioned for or obtained by the Cultural Indicators Project from four survey research organizations: Starch-Hooper (STARCH), The Opinion Research Corporation (ORC), the National Opinion Research Center (NORC 75 and NORC 77) and the Harris Poll on Aging⁹ (HARRIS). The sixth sample (PHILLY) was a survey conducted by Cultural Indicators Staff and Students at the Annenberg School of Communications of the University of Pennsylvania.

Starch/Hooper Survey (STARCH)

This survey was commissioned by the Cultural Indicators Project. The data base consists of a quota¹⁰ sample (N=607) interviewed by telephone in

⁹Conducted for the National Council of Aging and funded by the Clark Foundation

¹⁰From households randomly selected from telephone books, screened for sex and television viewing (less than 2 hours or more than 4 hours).

four major U.S. cities (Philadelphia, Chicago, Los Angeles and Dallas) in the spring of 1973 by Starch/Hooper. Responses were collected on a number of cultivation questions focusing upon the following topics -- aging, ethnic groups, factual and statistical "information", justice, sex-roles, occupations, fear and violence. Data were also collected on the following demographic variables -- age, sex, education, parents' education as well as the media-use variables -- newspaper reading, television viewing, daytime serial viewing, news program viewing, news magazine reading and program preferences.

This data base will be subjected to two types of analysis. First, two questions in the survey that relate to old age -- "the age at which men become old" and "the age at which women become old" will be analyzed. Second, cultivation questions will be analyzed using age as one of the controlling variables. That is respondents will be divided into three groups -- the young (18-39), middle age (40-54) and the elderly (over 55) -- to see if age is related to television viewing and conceptions of social reality. For example, do elderly respondents (who are heavy or light television viewers) reply to cultivation questions about fear and violence ¹¹ with answers that reflect "reality" or "the television world".

¹¹ See, for example, George Gerbner and Larry Gross, "Living with Television: The Violence Profile," Journal of Communication, 1976, 26:2, 172-199, George Gerbner, Larry Gross, Michael F. Eleey, Marilyn Jackson-Beeck, Suzanne Jeffries-Fox, and Nancy Signorielli, "TV Violence Profile No. 8: The Highlights," Journal of Communication, 1977, 27², 171-180, and George Gerbner, Larry Gross, Marilyn Jackson-Beeck, Suzanne Jeffries-Fox, and Nancy Signorielli, "Cultural Indicators: Violence Profile No. 9" Journal of Communication, Summer, 1978.

Opinion Research Center (ORC)

These data were collected as part of an Opinion Research Center caravan. The data base consists of personal interviews of a national probability¹² sample (N=2052) in May, 1974 by Opinion Research Corporation. Responses were collected on four fear and violence-related cultivation questions. Data on demographic and media use variables were also collected. This data base will be analyzed using age as one of the controlling variables. That is, respondents will be divided into three groups (young, middle age, and elderly) to determine whether or not the relationship between television viewing and conceptions of fear and violence in society are also related to the age of the respondent.

National Opinion Research Center (NORC75 and NORC77)

The NORC75 data base consists of personal interviews of a national probability¹³ sample (N=1490) collected in March and April 1975. NORC77 consists of data from personal interviews of a national full probability (household based) sample (N=1530) collected in February and March of 1977. Both surveys were conducted by the National Opinion Research Center.

The data are from NORC's 1975 and 1977 General Social Surveys and provide demographic and media use information as well as answers to questions about life. Some of the topics included in the survey were health, fear, violence, politics, sex-role orientation, family-life and social/familial

¹² Stratified by geographic area and cluster at neighborhood level.

¹³ Half block quota, half full probability.

status. The analysis proposed for these data bases is similar to that proposed for ORC. That is, questions (especially those relating to fear, violence and the "mean-world") will be analyzed using age as one of the controlling variables.

Harris Poll on Aging (HARRIS)

The Harris study on "The Myth and Reality of Aging in America," conducted for the National Council on Aging and funded by the Clark Foundation will also be included in this part of the study. This data base consists of in-person household interviews of a national probability sample (N=4254) oversampled for persons over 65, between the ages of 55 and 64 and elderly blacks (65 or over). Interviews were conducted in the late spring and early summer of 1974 by trained Harris interviewers.

These data provide demographic and media use information as well as responses to questions about life, aging, and the image of elderly television characters. The analysis of these data will be similar to those conducted for the other survey data bases. In addition, there are many potentially interesting items relating to aging and other aspects of life that will be analyzed in relation to television viewing.

PHILLY

This data base consists of a probability sample (N=387) of Philadelphia area adults¹⁴ collected by telephone interview in April, 1977 by undergraduate

¹⁴ Telephone subscribers who chose to publish telephone numbers in the August, 1976 Philadelphia telephone book (white pages).

students in a course given at the Annenberg School of Communications, Phila. The data include demographic and media use variables as well as responses to cultivation questions. One question about "old age" was included in the survey -- respondents were asked to estimate the percent of people in the United States who are over 65. This question, as well as the cultivation questions relating to fear, violence, and the "mean world," will be analyzed using age as an important controlling variable. The analysis of these six cultivation data bases will be presented in Progress Report No. 3 (March 1979).

- (2) Development, Pilot Testing and Implementation of a Message System Analysis Recording Instrument focusing upon the portrayal of the elderly, old age and growing old in network Television Drama

Message System Analysis

This part of the research involves the analysis of approximately 300 programs in the Cultural Indicators Project videotape archive that have elderly characters. The recording instrument has been pilot tested on 25 of these programs. The principal aspects of methodology are the instrument of analysis, the sample, the training of analysts, the coding procedure, and the assessment of the reliability of the observations.

Recording Instrument Development: Testing and Implementation

An important part of this research has been the development and testing of an appropriate recording instrument. This instrument (Appendix IV) consists of content items that can be used to fully describe the image of old age in dramatic television programming. For example, it includes items to note the presence of certain themes and aspects of life such as sex, violence, love, health, and illness. It also focuses upon the life style of the elderly --

whether or not they live alone, with a spouse, or in a nursing home; their financial situation, physical mobility, etc.

The instrument underwent several testing sessions. First, members of the entire staff used the recording instrument to code three programs. The staff met and discussed all problems encountered in the initial testing period. Second, the recording instrument was pilot tested by the staff and three veteran coders on a sample of 25 programs. The full scale coding of all programs in the Cultural Indicators videotape archive that focus on old age and the elderly is now beginning. The data for these programs will be added to the data originally collected as part of the ongoing Cultural Indicators Project Message System Analysis.

Coding and Training Procedures

In Message System Analysis coders are trained in a specialized kind of observation. They must reliably make the discriminations required by the recording instrument and record them in a specified form. Coders focus on what is presented in the material and not how it might be judged by a critical viewer. Their task is to generate the data for the subsequent analysis that will permit interpretation of the common message elements and structures available to a public of diverse viewers.

Twelve coders have been recruited to complete the full coding of this sample. These coders will complete a two week training period of instruction and testing. An introductory session will be devoted to an item-by-item discussion of the recording instrument. The trainee group will be subsequently split into randomly assigned coding teams of two each, and all coder-pairs then will view and code three selected programs that have been previously viewed and coded by the staff. Each coder-pair will work independently of

all other pairs, and will return a joint coding for each program. In the next general meeting, the entire staff will discuss the difficulties encountered in the three-program exercise. When these problems have been resolved, the coder-pairs will code an additional seven programs.

The data generated by the coder-pairs on the ten training programs will be keypunched and subjected to computerized analysis. On the basis of these results, instructions and variables will be further discussed and if necessary, revised. Moreover, idiosyncratic coder-pairs will be isolated. The coder-pairs who service this testing process will proceed to analyze the sample of programs. This phase of the project should be completed in the fall of 1978.

During both the training and data-collection phases, coder pairs can monitor the assigned videotape of the program as often as necessary. Between fifty and one hundred percent¹⁵ of the sample of programs with elderly characters will be recorded independently by two separate coder-pairs to provide double-coded data for the reliability analysis.

The final set of data will be compiled from the double-coded data base by randomly selecting one of the two codings for each program. As a last check against deviant coding, and before the final data selection, reliability measures will be computed for each coder-pair. This procedure will help identify problem coder-pairs who may not have been screened out in the training and pre-test phase. In such an instance, the data recorded by the questionable pair will be excluded from the final selection.

Assessment of Reliability

Reliability measures are designed to ascertain the degree to which the recorded data truly reflect the properties of the material being studied

¹⁵ We would like to conduct reliability on the entire sample. However, the final percentage of included programs will depend upon the amount of money available for coding.

and not the contamination of observer bias or of instrument ambiguity. Theoretically, both types of contamination are correctable, either by refining the instrument or intensifying coder training; as a last resort, by eliminating the unsalvageable variable or dismissing the incorrigible coder. Measures of reliability thus serve two functions: as diagnostic tools in the confirmation of the recording process, and as final evaluators of the accuracy of the phenomena's representation in the actual recorded data.

Five computational formulae are currently available for calculating the coefficients of agreement. The variations are distinguished by a difference function, the form of which depends upon the scale type of the particular variable being analyzed. Except for their respective scale-appropriate sensitivity to deviations from perfect agreement, the coefficients make the same basic assumptions as the prototype for nominal scales devised by Scott.¹⁶ Thus, in the case of the binary variable, all formulae yield identical results¹⁷.

The reliability of the analysis is thus ascertained by multiple codings and the measured agreement of trained analysts on each usable item. If one were to substitute the perceptions and impressions of casual observers, no matter how sophisticated, the value of the investigation would be reduced, and its purpose confounded. Only an objective analysis of unambiguous message

¹⁶ William A. Scott, "Reliability of Content Analysis: The Case of Nominal Scale Coding," Public Opinion Quarterly, 17:3, 321-325, 1955.

¹⁷ For the derivation of the formulae and discussion of their properties, see Klaus Krippendorff, "A Computer Program for Analyzing Multivariate Agreements, Version 4," Mimeo, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, the Annenberg School of Communications, July 1973. For a more extended discussion by the same author of part of this family of coefficients see "Bivariate Agreement Coefficients for the Reliability of Date," in E.F. Borgatta, ed., Sociological Methodology, 1970, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

elements, and their separation from personal impressions left by unidentified clues, can provide the basis for comparison with audience perceptions, conceptions, and behavior.

(3) Development and Implementation of Cultivation Analysis focusing upon old age

The final phase of the research will involve the development and implementation of a Cultivation Analysis instrument to determine some of the notions of old age that may be cultivated by watching television.

Cultivation Analysis begins with the patterns found in a "world of television programming (e.g. dramatic programming). The common message systems composing that world present a coherent image of life and society as well as an image of certain groups of people. How is this image reflected in the images, expectations, definitions, interpretations, and values held by its audiences? Do people see the world as it is presented in television?

This step of the research will determine what viewers may learn about old age from the world of television; that is, findings about the image of the elderly will be turned into questions about conceptions of old age. Each of these questions will have a "television answer" (the way it is in the world of television) and another, different answer (usually the way it really is). For example, we may ask whether older people are more likely to live in nursing homes, in their own dwelling, or with their children. We may also ask if the elderly are more likely to be victimized. Finally, this instrument will include cultivation questions, such as those focusing upon fear, violence, and the "mean world" that have provided interesting data in past analyses. An important part of the proposed research will be concerned with turning findings from the Message System Analysis of dramatic programs focusing upon old age into questions suitable for Cultivation Analysis.

The full implementation of the Cultivation Analysis Instrument will involve giving these questions to adults in a specially commissioned quota survey. A quota sample will be used to insure that the sample has a pre-determined percentage (for example 33 percent) of elderly people. Responses of this sample to the questions will be related to age, television exposure, other media habits, and a number of demographic characteristics. The responses of light, medium and heavy television viewers -- with other characteristics held constant -- will indicate what conceptions of social reality the viewing of television tends to cultivate in what groups and to what extent. The analysis will focus specifically upon the response to these questions. We will also be interested in determining whether or not people's perceptions of old age tend to change with age and/or whether or not these perceptions are related to television viewing habits. The results of these cultivation analyses will also be compared with previous findings.

In both Message System and Cultivation Analyses, special attention will be paid to the ways in which low-income, minority and women elderly are portrayed on television and in which they and the general public are affected by these portrayals.

This is the general framework in which we are carrying out the investigation of television's contribution to public conceptions of aging and the aged. In addition to filling a critical gap in understanding the opportunities for and barriers to greater public support for the aged that television entertainment represents, the proposed study will also establish the basis for an organizational-media workshop and for the continuing monitoring of these issues and policies, as well as for the other dissemination and utilization efforts described below.

III. SPECIFIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

Two important parts of this research have been completed at the present time.

(1) The Image of the Elderly in Prime-Time Network Dramatic Programming

The next section presents an in-depth discussion of the image of elderly characters in prime-time network dramatic programs. The first part of this section describes the methodology and the second part focuses upon the findings of this analysis.

METHODOLOGY

The Data

The data utilized in the analysis are part of the Cultural Indicators Project Message System Analysis Data Archives. They were generated from the message system analysis of eight one-week samples¹⁸ (1969-1976) of prime-time and weekend daytime dramatic network television programs aired in the early to mid-fall of each year, and two (1975-1976) one-week samples of programs broadcast in the spring of these years. Most of the items included in this analysis were coded from 1969; however, a small number were added to the recording instrument in 1975.

¹⁸ A sample of an entire week of dramatic programming has been demonstrated to be as generalizable to a year's programming as larger randomly selected samples. A sampling experiment, conducted in 1969, found no significant differences between dimensions of program style, format, type and tone across the solid week sample and a sample constructed according to the same time parameters but selected by a one program a day random selection procedure. Michael F. Eleey, "Variations in Generalizability Resulting from Sampling Characteristics of Content Analysis Data: A Case Study," (The Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania, 1969).

This analysis used the data archives for major and minor characters and included only male and female human characters who populated programs aired during prime-time hours; that is, from 8 to 11 P.M. These characters were further divided into four age-related groups using a classification scheme entitled Social Age. These groups are: children and adolescents, young adults, settled adults, and the elderly. Characters who could not be classified were eliminated from the analysis.

Cross-tabulations of a number of content items by Social Age were generated for six groups of characters -- all major characters, all minor characters¹⁹ and the males and females within each of these two character classifications. In addition some of the items included in the analysis were further broken down by when the program was broadcast; that is, during the family viewing hour (8-9 P.M.) and during the late evening hours (9-11 P.M.).

The data consisted of five types of content items -- demographic, descriptive, health, home and family, and bi-polar personality scales. The demographic items included category schemes for sex, race, socio-economic status, employment and chronological age. The descriptive items included category schemes to differentiate character role, character type, success, social age, committing violence and victimization. Health related items focused upon whether or not a character was afflicted with a physical handicap, a physical illness or a mental illness. Home and family included seven items -- marital status, performance of household duties for other characters, having children, referring to other relatives, the importance of family life, and whether or not the character was romantically involved. The fifth type of data item consisted of twelve personality trait scales coded on five point bi-polar adjective scales.

¹⁹ Major characters include the characters who play leading roles representing the principal types essential to the story; minor characters include all speaking characters except those already analyzed as major characters.

Reliability

The purpose of reliability measures in Message System Analysis is to determine the degree to which the data reflect the properties of the material under investigation rather than contamination of instrument ambiguity or observer bias. The measures used in the assessment of reliability for the Cultural Indicators Project Message System Analysis are agreement coefficients that indicate the degree to which agreement among independent pairs of observers is above chance.²⁰

The minimal acceptable agreement coefficient for most of the items used in this analysis was .600. However, certain items, such as the personality trait scales, had a minimum acceptable coefficient of .500. The agreement coefficients for each item are presented in Table 1.

The Analysis Procedures

Two basic procedures were used in this analysis. First, simple cross-tabulations were generated for each of the items by Social Age. Three and four dimensional cross-tabulations were also generated using sex and time of broadcast (family hour vs. late evening programs) as controlling variables. Second, personality trait profiles²¹ were generated for major characters in each of the four social age classifications. These profiles were also calculated for male and female characters in each of these groups. The significance of differences between these groups was tested either by analysis of variance or t-tests.

²⁰ A full description of the methodology used to assess reliability in the Cultural Indicators Project may be found in George Gerbner, loc.cit., pp. 17-19.

²¹ Mean score on each scale.

Structure of the Discussion

This discussion continues with a simple description of the breakdown of social age and sex of the human characters in prime-time network dramatic television programs. It then describes the basic image of the elderly characters who populate these programs. The last part of the report focuses upon the description of differences in the portrayal of the four social-age groups of major characters in these programs on five groups of related content items -- demographic and descriptive items, violence items, health items, home and family items and personality trait scales.

The distribution of minor characters in some of the content items may be found in Appendix III and the breakdown by programs broadcast during family hour (8:00 - 9:00 p.m. EST) and late evening hours (9:00 - 11:00 p.m. EST) is located in Appendix IV.

CHARACTERS IN PRIME-TIME DRAMATIC PROGRAMS

The Social Age of Characters in Prime-Time Television Drama: An Overview

The elderly have been a consistently small segment of the character population of prime-time network dramatic programs. Table 2 presents the yearly distribution of major and minor characters on the Social Age categorization scheme. Examination of this table reveals that the elderly are the smallest segment of the major and minor character population, while settled adults are the largest. Children and adolescents also form a very small segment of the character population.

Table 3 presents the breakdown of major and minor characters by social age and sex for the 10 samples included in the analysis. In this table we find that the elderly make up only 3.7 percent of the major and minor character populations. Female characters who are portrayed as elderly are more likely to be cast in minor roles (4.8 percent) than in major roles (3.4 percent); while males who are portrayed as elderly are more likely to be cast in major roles (3.8 percent) than in minor roles (3.4 percent).

In general, more than half of the characters in prime-time network dramatic programs are cast as settled adults; that is, characters portrayed as having careers, being part of a family, or in the prime years of life (30 to 65 years old). However, there are fewer females than males cast as settled adults. Examination of Table 3 reveals that 70.8 percent of male major characters are settled adults while 60.3 percent of female major characters portray these roles. This difference is even more noticeable for minor characters. In this case almost 75 percent of the male characters are settled adults and only 55.7 percent of the females are so cast.

TABLE 3

Social Age and Sex for
All Major and Minor Characters
(1969-1976)

	<u>ALL</u>		<u>MALE</u>		<u>FEMALE</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>MAJOR CHARACTERS</u>						
TOTAL	1898	100.0	1372	100.0	526	100.0
Child-Adolescent	103	5.4	68	5.0	35	6.7
Young Adult	436	23.0	280	20.4	156	29.5
Settled Adult	1289	67.9	972	70.8	317	60.3
Elderly	70	3.7	52	3.8	18	3.4
<u>MINOR CHARACTERS</u>						
TOTAL	7233	100.0	5381	100.0	1902	100.0
Child-Adolescent	485	6.7	299	5.6	186	9.8
Young Adult	1432	19.8	866	16.2	566	29.7
Settled Adult	5047	69.8	3988	74.8	1059	55.7
Elderly	269	3.7	178	3.4	91	4.8

TABLE 4

Sex of Characters in Prime-Time Drama
(1969-1976)

	<u>ALL</u>		<u>MAJOR</u>		<u>MINOR</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
ALL	9131	100.0	1898	100.0	7233	100.0
MALE	6703	73.4	1372	72.3	5331	73.7
FEMALE	2428	26.6	526	27.7	1902	26.3

The percentage of females portrayed as young adults is greater than the percentage of males in these roles. While almost 30 percent of female major and minor characters are portrayed as young adults, only 20 percent of male major characters and 16 percent of male minor characters portray these roles. Finally, children and adolescents are more likely to be female than male.

22

A number of previous analyses of television drama has revealed that the world of prime-time network dramatic television programming is predominantly male. This finding is substantiated in this work. Examination of Table 4 reveals that males make up almost three quarters of the entire character population, while slightly more than one-quarter of these characters are female. For the most part, females in the world of prime-time network dramatic television are somewhat more visible in the younger age classifications. In Table 5 it can be seen that for major characters females make up more than a third of the young age groups (children/adolescents and young adults) and only one-quarter of the settled adult and elderly populations. The distribution of female minor characters in these age groups is somewhat different - females make up almost two-fifths of the young age groups, one third of the elderly and only one-fifth of the settled adult group.

Portrayal of the Elderly

Table 6 presents the distribution of major and minor male and female elderly characters on all items included in the analysis. Elderly characters in prime-time network television drama are not judged to be very old (mean age 63). For the most part elderly characters who portray major roles are

22

See for example, Nancy Signorielli (Tedesco), "Patterns in Prime Time," Journal of Communication, 1974, 24:2, 119-124.

TABLE 5
 Sex and Social Age of Characters in
 Prime-Time Drama
 (1969-1976)

	Major		Minor	
	N	%	N	%
ALL CHARACTERS	1898	100.0	7233	100.0
Male	1372	72.3	5331	73.7
Female	526	27.7	1902	26.3
CHILDREN/ADOLESCENTS	103	100.0	485	100.0
Male	68	66.0	299	61.6
Female	35	34.0	116	38.4
YOUNG ADULTS	436	100.0	1432	100.0
Male	280	64.2	866	60.5
Female	156	35.8	566	39.5
SETTLED ADULTS	1289	100.0	5047	100.0
Male	972	75.4	3988	79.0
Female	317	24.6	1059	21.0
ELDERLY	70	100.0	269	100.0
Male	52	74.3	178	66.2
Female	18	25.7	91	33.8

white (82.9 percent), middle class (75.7 percent), and not likely to be seen working (60 percent). Only 40 percent are portrayed as being employed. Elderly minor characters are even more likely to be white (91.8 percent), but they are somewhat more likely to be employed (47.2 percent) than elderly major characters (40.0 percent).

Elderly major characters are often portrayed as "good" (47.1 percent) or neither "good" nor "bad" (38.6 percent), they are cast in serious roles (48.6 percent), and are neither "successful" nor "unsuccessful" (44.3 percent). However, more elderly major characters are portrayed negatively than elderly minor characters. Almost one out of five elderly major characters are "unsuccessful" and 14.3 percent are "bad", while only 5.6 percent of elderly characters who portray minor roles are "bad" and 14.5 percent are "unsuccessful."

Most Elderly major characters are not involved in violence; more than three quarters of these characters do not commit violence and 70 percent are not victimized. However, elderly major characters are more likely to be killed (8.6 percent) than to kill others (2.9 percent). Minor characters classified as elderly are even less likely to hurt or kill other characters. In Table 6 we find that only 5.9 percent of these characters were categorized as committing some violence, while almost one-quarter of elderly major characters committed some violence. Minor characters are also less likely to be victimized (85.9 percent are not victims). However, as with elderly major characters, the percentage of elderly minor characters who are killed during the course of the program is fairly high (4.1 percent).

Further examination of Table 6 reveals that for the most part, the distribution of elderly male and female major and minor characters for this group of demographic and descriptive classification schemes is quite similar. However, there are some differences. For example, female elderly characters

(major and minor) are much more likely to be portrayed as not being employed (about 70 percent) than elderly male major characters. The only group of elderly characters who are more likely to be portrayed as employed are elderly males who portray minor roles (55.6 percent are employed).

Another important difference in the characterizations of elderly males and females is that almost three out of ten elderly females who portray major roles are classified as being "unsuccessful" and only 16.7 percent "successful". On the other hand, more elderly male major characters are portrayed as "successful" (39.6 percent) or as neither "successful" nor "unsuccessful" (41.5 percent) while only 18.9 percent are classified as "unsuccessful". Success, however, does not differentiate between elderly male and female minor characters.

There are also differences in the type of role (serious or comic) elderly male and female major characters portray. About three out of ten male characters portrayed comic roles, while only 16.7 percent of the females were so categorized. Also, elderly men were more likely to be cast in serious roles (50 percent) than women (44.4 percent). However, elderly females were more likely to be categorized as portraying roles that were somewhat comic in nature -- 38.9 percent portrayed roles that had both comic and serious aspects while only 19.2 percent of the elderly males were so categorized.

Elderly characters tend to be healthy. Almost nine out of ten elderly major characters do not have a physical illness and only 3 percent are portrayed as being mentally ill. Finally, only 5.6 percent of these characters suffer from physical handicaps.

Although most of the home and family content items included in this analysis are relatively new items (i.e., data are available for only four samples), this area seems to play an important part in the characterization

of elderly major characters. Almost two thirds of this group are married (61.5 percent of the males and 77.8 percent of females), about 50 percent are portrayed as having had children or other close relatives, and family life is coded as being important to seven out of ten of the elderly. However, elderly major characters, especially females, are not likely to be involved in romantic relationships.

Figure 1 and Table 7 present the personality trait profiles for elderly male and female major characters. Examination of this figure and table reveals that these characters are portrayed with somewhat positive personality traits. They are neither attractive nor unattractive, somewhat fair, quite sociable, warm, peaceful and supportive. They are on the smart side and are somewhat rational, potent and efficient. However, these characters are portrayed as being a little more unhappy than happy.

Distribution of Characters on Demographic and Descriptive Items

Table 8 presents the distribution of major characters of the four age groups included in this analysis on a number of demographic and descriptive items. This table reveals that elderly major characters are portrayed quite differently than other age-related classifications of adult characters. Although in general the television world has a small number of non-white characters, fewer non-white characters are cast as settled adults (males and females) or as young women than any other age group. When non-white characters do appear they are often cast as elderly (17.1 percent) or young men (18.6 percent). Elderly characters are also less likely to be employed than any other age group except children and adolescents. However, more of the elderly (18.6 percent) are portrayed as upper class.

Other striking differences revealed in Table 8 are that elderly females are more likely to be cast as "bad" than females in the other age groups; and

TABLE 7

Mean Scores on Personality Trait Scales
for Elderly Major Characters
(1969-1976)

	All		Male		Female	
	\bar{x}	s	\bar{x}	s	\bar{x}	s
TOTAL	(N = 70)		(N = 52)		(N = 18)	
REPULSIVE - ATTRACTIVE	3.1	.87	3.1	.84	3.0	.97
UNFAIR - FAIR	3.2	1.16	3.2	1.19	3.2	1.10
UNSOCIABLE - SOCIABLE	3.7	1.09	3.5	1.09	4.2	.92
COLD - WARM	3.5	1.16	3.4	1.19	3.9	1.02
POWERLESS - POTENT	3.4	.96	3.5	.87	3.1	1.14
STUPID - SMART	3.6	.84	3.7	.80	3.4	.92
IRRATIONAL - RATIONAL	3.3	1.09	3.3	1.06	3.1	1.18
BUNGLING - EFFICIENT	3.3	.93	3.4	.93	3.1	.87
FEMININE - MASCULINE	3.4	1.08	3.9	.59	1.9	.80
UNHAPPY - HAPPY	2.8	.90	2.9	.91	2.7	.84
VIOLENT - PEACEFUL	3.5	1.16	3.4	1.21	4.0	.91
UNSUPPORTIVE - SUPPORTIVE (1975-1976)	3.7	1.26	3.6	1.29	3.8	1.33

that a smaller percentage of the elderly are categorized as "good" than is true for the other age groups. Finally, a greater percentage of elderly characters portray comic roles or roles that are both comic and serious while more characters in the other age groups portrayed serious roles.

Portrayal of Violence

Previous research²³ has revealed that the portrayal of violence (i.e. committing violence and/or being victimized) is an important indicator of the allocation of power. The findings of this previous work are substantiated in this analysis.

Table 9 presents the distribution of the four age-related groups of male and female major and minor characters for the two violence items; that is, characters who commit violence and those who are victimized. This table presents the number and percentage of characters who commit violence (hurt or kill other characters), or are victimized (are hurt or killed), and a ratio indicating the relationship between these two roles. These risk ratios²⁴ are obtained by dividing the more numerous of these two roles by the less numerous within each group. A plus sign indicates that there are more violent or killers than victims or killed and a minus sign indicates that there are more victims or killed than violent or killers.

Overall we find that major characters are more likely to commit violence and also be victimized than minor characters. Table 9 also reveals that minor characters are more likely to be victimized than to inflict violence upon other characters. The elderly were the least likely of the three adult age-

²³ George Gerbner, Larry Gross, Michael F. Eleey, Marilyn Jackson-Beeck, Suzanne Jeffries-Fox and Nancy Signorielli, "TV Violence Profile No. 8: The High-lights," Journal of Communication, 1977, 27:2, 171-180.

²⁴ A zero ratio preceeded by a sign means that the group has either no violent or no victims. +0.00 means only violent; -0.00 means only victims.

groups to either commit or suffer violence. In general, when characters are involved in violence, they are more likely to be victimized than commit violence. However, when major characters are involved in killing, all age groups, except the elderly, are more likely to be the killers than to be killed. In fact, elderly major characters are the only group with negative Killer-Killed ratios. However, minor characters in all four age groups are more likely to be victimized or killed than to hurt or kill others.

Characters and Health

The number of major characters in prime-time television dramatic programs who are likely to be physically or mentally ill or suffer from a physical handicap is quite small. Table 10 reveals that about 11 percent of the elderly and 11 percent of children and adolescents are portrayed as having a physical illness, while only 8.5 percent of the young adults and 6.9 percent of the settled adults are ill. A greater percentage of young adults, than any other age group, are portrayed as being mentally ill, and a larger percentage of the elderly characters suffer from physical handicaps. Moreover, men and women are similarly categorized on these items.

Home and Family

Table 11 presents the distribution of the four age-related groups of male and female major characters on content items focusing upon the portrayal of home and family life in television drama. These items include a character's marital status, whether or not the character has children or other relatives, whether family life is important to the character, whether the character performs homemaking activities for other people, and whether or not the character is involved in a romantic relationship. Most of the items included in this section are relatively new and thus this part of the analysis is based upon data from

only four samples, i.e., the number of characters coded on these items is somewhat small.

Although the number of cases included in Table 11 is smaller than one would like, home and family seem to be emerging as a potentially important aspect of the image of elderly major characters. Almost two-thirds of these characters are married, almost half have children or other close relatives, and family life is important to more than 70 percent of them. However, few elderly characters are involved in a romantic relationship or perform homemaking activities. Home and family seem to be even more important for female elderly major characters. Fourteen out of the sample of eighteen (77.8 percent) are or have been married²⁵, three out of six have children or other close relatives, and family life is coded as being important to five out of the six characters in this group. Females cast as elderly or as settled adults are the groups most likely to be seen performing home-making activities.

Family items also differentiate between young and settled adults in that some of these items are coded less positively (that is, not pro home and family) for the younger characters. For example, fewer young adults are married, are shown performing homemaking activities for other people, and have children. However, young adults are portrayed as being involved in a romantic relationship. Similar distributions were found for minor characters (see Table 2, Appendix II).

Involvement in a romantic relationship differentiates male and female major characters in different ways at different times in the life style. Examination of this item in Table 11 reveals that fewer male young adults and male settled adults are involved in romantic relationships. That is,

²⁵ Data for marital status are available from 1969.

more than half of the women but less than a third of the men in these age groups are involved in romantic relationships. However, the distribution of elderly male and female major characters on this item is quite different. In this case, none of the elderly women, while almost two of the eleven elderly men coded on this item are involved in romantic relationships. As would be expected most children and adolescents are not involved in romantic relationships.

Table 11 also reveals that the concept of family life appears to be most important for characters at either end of the age dimension -- that is, the children and adolescents and the elderly. Family life is also quite important for female major characters cast as settled adults.

Personality Traits

Table 12 and Figures 2, 3 and 4 present the personality trait profiles of all characters, males and females in the four age classifications included in this analysis. Examination of Figure 2 reveals that the elderly tend to be rated less positively except for the scales of violence and supportiveness than the other three groups. Children and adolescents and young adults are rated more positively on the "socially oriented scales"; that is, these characters are more attractive, sociable, warm and happy. Settled adults tend to be rated positively on the four personality trait scales dealing with effectiveness -- potency, smartness, rationality and efficiency; that is, settled adults seem to be the most effective group of characters.

Figure 3 presents the personality trait profiles for males in the four age groups. Children tend to be rated as attractive, sociable, warm and supportive. They are less potent and less efficient than any other group. Young adults are attractive, fair, warm, and very masculine. Male settled

adults are rated as potent, smart, rational and efficient. They are also rated as being slightly violent. For the most part the elderly males tend to be rated less positively than the other age groups. They are the least attractive, fair, and rational and also are rated as being slight unhappy.

The personality trait profiles for female characters classified by social age is presented in Figure 4. All women except the elderly are rated as being quite attractive. Female children are rated as less sociable and less warm than the other age groups. However, they are more potent, rational and efficient than any group except the settled adults. They are also the most happy and supportive. Young women are rated as the most feminine and attractive but the least supportive of the groups. Women who are classified as settled adults are rated as the most fair, potent, smart, rational and efficient. Elderly women are generally rated less positively than the other groups. They are somewhat unhappy, neither attractive nor repulsive, and the least smart, potent, rational and efficient. However, they are the most sociable and the most peaceful.

DISCUSSION

The overall image of the elderly in this sample of prime-time network dramatic television programs is that the elderly may be home and family loving people who are generally ineffective and somewhat passive. The elderly are almost invisible in television drama -- that is, very few characters are classified as being old. Although the elderly are healthy (so are all other television characters), they do not portray roles that are very effective or active. Also, they portray comic, or somewhat comic, roles more often than they portray serious roles. Fewer of the elderly characters are seen as "good," and in general, a greater percentage of the elderly, than any other age group, portray roles that are classified as "bad" or "unsuccessful." Moreover, the elderly are not portrayed as a particularly powerful group because they are much more likely to be victimized than to inflict violence. Finally, their personality traits also reveal an image of general ineffectiveness.

For the most part, the findings of this analysis substantiate those reported by previous investigators. First, the elderly form a very small percentage of the characters who populate the world of prime-time network dramatic television programming.²⁶ As was reported by Aronoff²⁷, the elderly are portrayed more negatively than any other age group; moreover, his finding that elderly women fail more often than they succeed was also substantiated.

²⁶ George Gerbner, Larry Gross, Marilyn Jackson-Beeck, Suzanne Jeffries-Fox & Nancy Signorielli. Violence Profile No. 9, Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania, 1978.; Nancy Signorielli (Tedesco), "Patterns in Prime Time," Journal of Communication, 1974, 24:2, 119-124.

²⁷ Aronoff, Craig. "Old Age in Prime Time." Journal of Communication 24:4, 1974, pp. 86-87.

Previous findings relating violence and power²⁸ were also substantiated. The elderly are less likely, than any other age group, to commit violence and/or be victimized; also the elderly are three times more likely to be killed than to kill, and elderly women are only portrayed as being hurt or killed and never as hurting or killing other characters. This analysis also substantiates Peterson's²⁹ finding that the elderly are usually portrayed as being healthy. Finally, an earlier analysis indicating the ineffective nature of the elderly in television drama was also substantiated.³⁰

The emerging and potentially important relationship between home and family and the elderly³¹ discovered in this analysis is especially interesting. Home and family are an extremely important part of the image of the elderly -- elderly television characters are often married, have children, perform homemaking activities, and value family life; however, the elderly, especially elderly women, are not at all likely to be involved in romantic relationships. Generally this analysis revealed that as characters get older, home and family become more important aspects of their characterizations.

There are many possible effects of presenting old age by a small group of characters who portray essentially ineffective and unimportant roles. Our society places a premium on being young (particular young and beautiful),³² while avoiding and ignoring the elderly. Although old age is a natural (and ultimate) part of human existence, people fight the aging process and

²⁸ Gerbner, et.al, op.cit.

²⁹ Peterson, op.cit.

³⁰ Signorielli, op.cit.

³¹ Unfortunately, this part of the analysis is based upon a small number of cases and thus the finding must be viewed cautiously.

³² For example, most magazines, especially women's magazines, are filled with advertisements and articles about how to "stay young" and "be beautiful".

try to forget that they will grow old. The breakdown of the extended family has also added to today's overconcern with youth, because direct, day-to-day information about aging has been almost entirely eliminated. Most people in our society do not see or interact with old people on a normal basis; and, as a result, do not know what it means to be old. Thus, old age is unknown, feared, and fought.

Prime-time television programming cannot positively prepare people for being old because there are very few characters who are old and also presented as effective and important people. Rather television reinforces the notion that childhood is a very happy and positive time; that the most important people are those in the "prime" of life (fairly young or middle-aged -- especially when good-looking); and that old age is negative. Unfortunately, this image may also foster the notion that old age does not have to be accepted or confronted and that being old is very threatening; that is, as far as television is concerned, being old means being ineffective, unimportant and useless, and having no power or status.

Although home and family seem to be a potentially important and positive part of the image of the elderly in television drama, this portrayal may actually reflect home and family in a negative light because these aspects of life are important to an essentially ineffective and powerless group of characters. Thus, television might reinforce the notion that home and family are important and necessary only to people who are past the prime achieving and successful years of their lives.

Thus, this analysis has revealed that the image of the elderly in television drama has not changed in any important way over the past five years. The elderly are still invisible, and portrayed as home and family loving but still basically ineffective, powerless, and passive. An image that should be improved so that an easily available source of positive information about growing and being old will be available in our society.

(2) Development of the Recording Instrument Focusing upon the Portrayal of the Elderly, Old Age and Growing Old

A new and detailed recording instrument focusing specifically upon the portrayal of Aging and the Elderly has been completed and is about to be used to generate additional content data. The process of the development of this instrument has been described in Section II of this report (see pp. 14-18).

The new recording instrument may be found in Appendix IV.

IV. PLANS FOR TASK ACCOMPLISHMENT

The research outlined in the original proposal is being conducted on schedule.

- (1) Secondary Analysis of Existing Message System Analysis Data is being conducted by George Gerbner and Nancy Signorielli.
 - a. Analysis of characters in prime-time programs has been completed and presented in Section III and Progress Report No. 1.
 - b. Data relating to characters in weekend daytime (children's) programs, all program-related data, and close personal relationships data are in the last stages of analysis and will be presented in Progress Report No. 2 (September, 1978).
 - c. Cultivation Analysis data are in the primary stages of analysis. This part of the research will be presented in Progress Report No. 3 (March, 1979).

- (2) Development, Pilot Testing and Implementation of a Message System Analysis Recording Instrument focusing upon the portrayal of the elderly, old age and growing old in network television drama

This part of the research is the responsibility of George Gerbner and Nancy Signorielli and is well underway. The recording instrument (Appendix IV) has been developed and pilot tested. Coders are presently being trained to use this instrument and the coding of the sample of programs with elderly characters will begin in July and should be completed some time in the fall. The analysis of this data will be presented as part of the Final Report.

- (3) Development and Implementation of a Cultivation Analysis Instrument focusing upon aging

Larry Gross and Nancy Signorielli will have responsibility for this part of the study. It will be designed and implemented beginning in January, 1979. This part of the project is dependent upon some of the results from phase 2 of the study. Results will be presented in the Final Report.

(4) Workshop of Organizational Representatives, Communications Researchers and Media Personnel

The proposed workshop (see Section VI) to develop organizational and media policies in regard to television and the aged will be organized by Drs. Gerbner, Gross and Signorielli. It will be held in Philadelphia sometime in the early fall of 1979 (September or October). More detailed plans for the workshop will be presented in Progress Report No. 3.

V. ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

This project is being implemented by three Co-Principal Investigators (see Appendix V for vitae and Bibliographies of the Investigators). Dr. George Gerbner has major responsibility for the Message System Analysis phases of the research and Dr. Larry Gross will oversee the research relating to Cultivation Analysis. Dr. Nancy Signorielli is serving as the Project Director (Project Manager) and is responsible for coordinating all of the research. She oversees all data collection, processing and analysis and supervises the support staff (two graduate student assistants, an Information Systems Technician, Data Control Clerk and Message System Analysis Coders).

The proposed survey of adults will be conducted by a survey research facility such as the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) or the Opinion Research Center (ORC). This decision will be determined in January, 1979 because the interview schedule and sampling plans must be based upon findings from the preceding phases of the project.

The final report of the research findings will be written by the Drs. Gerbner, Gross, and Signorielli. The complete Dissemination and Utilization Plans, including the proposed mailings, the press conference, and workshop (see section VI of this proposal) will be developed and implemented by the three Co-Principal Investigators. Dr. Signorielli will be the coordinator for this phase of the project.

This project has the support of a proposed Center for Aging at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Plans for this center are currently being developed by the Office of the Vice President for Health Affairs at the University. Funds for the development of this

center are being supplied by an Administration on Aging developmental grant to the School of Medicine and by a gift from Mr. Thomas McCabe, a friend of the University.

Two members of the Steering Committee for the proposed Center for Aging at the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Vincent Cristofalo (Chairman) and Dr. Sharon Simson (Executive Secretary) have indicated their willingness to work with the Co-Principal Investigators in developing and implementing final plans for the proposed workshop.

The total research support and facilities of the Annenberg School of Communications, a graduate school, and the University of Pennsylvania will be available to assist in this project.

VI. DISSEMINATION AND UTILIZATION PLAN

The results of the research will be disseminated by popular and scholarly publication and by direct mailing. The principal precedents to guide that plan are the dissemination of the results of our annual television violence reports and a mailing list (see Appendix VI) composed of AOA Centers for Aging and those who requested copies of the special issue (Autumn, 1974) of the Journal of Communication (edited by the senior co-principal investigator) which carried a major research symposium on "Myths of Old Age."

A press conference coordinated with AoA staff (and, if desired, leading organizations in the field) will initiate press and popular magazine coverage of the results and will announce the forthcoming workshop of organizational representatives, communications researchers, and media (particularly television network) personnel. At the conclusion of the workshop, another press release will announce the agreements reached between workshop participants, and other follow-up research and action plans.

The workshop itself will be held in Philadelphia at the conclusion of the research. It will be confined to an invited group of about 30 participants. Its purpose will be to serve as a prototype for similar workshops in other parts of the country. (A plan and grant application for the additional workshops will be submitted separately.)

The invited participants will be representatives of federal and community organizations (to be selected in cooperation with AoA staff); prominent communications researchers (including the co-principal investigators) on the social and cultural sources of values on aging; and television writers, producers; and network Standards and Practices (Production Code) representatives.

The workshop will consist of four working sessions, attended by all participants. Three of these sessions will be conducted by and devoted to the specific interests and needs of each of the three types of participants. The first will be conducted by the Co-Principal Investigators for this project and will present and discuss the findings and implications of the research. The second session will be conducted by representatives of federal and community organizations and will explore social and organizational policy objectives with reference to the findings and their implications. The third will be conducted by media representatives and will elaborate the television network and other media policies, constraints and recommendations.

The fourth and final session will be conducted by a representative from each of the three groups of participants. The final session will work out the areas of agreement (and/or disagreement) that may provide common ground for both organizational and media policies with regard to television and the aged, and make recommendations for further monitoring, workshops, and other follow-up efforts.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
LIST OF TABLES	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	2
Message System Analysis	4
Cultivation Analysis	4
RESEARCH PLAN	6
(1) Secondary Analysis of the Cultural Indicators	
Project Archives	6
Message System Analysis	6
Cultivation Analysis	10
(2) Development, Pilot Testing and Implementation	
of a Message System Analysis Recording Instrument	
focusing upon the portrayal of the elderly, old	
age, and growing old in network television drama	14
Message System Analysis	14
(3) Development and Implementation of Cultivation	
Analysis focusing upon old age	18
SPECIFIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE	20
(1) The Image of the Elderly in Prime-Time Network	
Dramatic Programming	20
Methodology	20
Characters in Prime-Time Dramatic Programs	25
Discussion	50
(2) Development of the Recording Instrument	
focusing upon the portrayal of the elderly,	
old age and growing old	53
PLANS FOR TASK ACCOMPLISHMENT	54
ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN	56
DISSEMINATION AND UTILIZATION PLAN	58
APPENDIX I	60
Background Publications Describing the Theory	
and Methodology of the Research	
APPENDIX II	63
Distribution of Minor Characters on Content Items	
APPENDIX III	66
Distribution of Major and Minor Characters on	
Selected Content Items for Programs Broadcast	
During the Family Viewing Hour or Late Evening	
Hours	

	<u>Page</u>
APPENDIX IV Message System Analysis Recording Instrument	76
APPENDIX V Vitae and Bibliographies of Co-Principal Investigators List of Pending Grant Applications	99
APPENDIX VI Partial Mailing List for Report Dissemination	109

LIST OF TABLES

	<u>Page</u>
TABLE 1: Agreement Coefficients (1969-1976F)	23
TABLE 2: Social Age of Major and Minor Characters by Year (1969-1976)	26
TABLE 3: Social Age and Sex for All Major and Minor Characters (1969-1976)	27
TABLE 4: Sex of Characters in Prime-Time Drama (1969-1976)	27
TABLE 5: Sex and Social Age of Characters in Prime-Time Drama (1969-1976)	29
TABLE 6: Distribution of Elderly Characters on Content Items (1969-1976)	30
TABLE 7: Mean Scores on Personality Trait Scales for Elderly Major Characters (1969-1976)	35
TABLE 8: Distribution of Major Characters in Four Age Groups on Demographic and Descriptive Items (1969-1976)	37
TABLE 9: Violence Roles for Four Age Groups of Major and Minor Characters (1969-1976)	39
TABLE 10: Distribution of Major Characters on Health--Related Items (1969-1976)	41
TABLE 11: Distribution of Major Characters on Home and Family Content Items	42
TABLE 12: Mean Score on Personality Trait Scales for Major Characters (1969-1976)	45

LIST OF FIGURES

	<u>Page</u>
FIGURE 1: Personality Trait Profile of Elderly Characters	36
FIGURE 2: Personality Traits of All Characters by Social Age	46
FIGURE 3: Personality Traits of All Male Characters by Social Age	47
FIGURE 4: Personality Traits of All Female Characters by Social Age	48