

# On 9/11 Americans were more than angry

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## ***Examiner:***

A study in 2010 by three scientists showed that on September 11, 2001, the air was sizzling with anger — and the anger got hotter as the hours passed. That analysis was obtained by employing a commonly used tool called Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC), which teases out information from the frequency of word usages in texts on the 85,000 pages of messages sent that day.

Yet, was anger the only feeling on that terrible day a decade ago? Turns out it wasn't. Although anger was a definite part of the national response, there was also sadness, sympathy, bravery, fear, compassion, and a profound concern for our fellow Americans.

Clemson University psychologist Cynthia L. S. Pury wasn't out to answer this question when, by chance, she did. A researcher on courage, Pury thought the data set would be ideal to unearth signs of that virtue during those terrible hours — either of people springing to action or praising others who did. “I downloaded the whole thing and started playing around with it in *Excel*,” she says. But because that program shows the messages line by line, instead of aggregating it as LIWC does, Pury quickly saw that the previous scientists had drawn inaccurate conclusions.

Read the whole story: [Examiner](#)

