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## A Theoretical Agenda for Entertainment-Education

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*With the growing number of entertainment-education (E-E) interventions worldwide, and the extensive evaluation research on their impacts, the time is ripe to explore in-depth the theoretical underpinnings of entertainment-education. This introductory article provides a historical background to this special issue of Communication Theory on entertainment-education, and charts a 5-pronged theoretical agenda for future research on entertainment-education. Theoretical investigations of entertainment-education should pay greater attention to the tremendous variability among entertainment-education interventions (Agenda #1) and to the various resistances to entertainment-education interventions (Agenda #2). E-E theorizing will also benefit from close investigations of the rhetorical, play, and affective aspects of E-E (Agenda #3). Further, E-E “effects” research should consider employing a broader understanding of individual, group, and social-level changes (Agenda #4) and be more receptive to methodological pluralism and measurement ingenuity (Agenda #5).*

Entertainment-education, defined as the intentional placement of educational content in entertainment messages, has received increasing attention from communication scholars in recent decades, mainly in the form of evaluation research on the effects of these interventions. Entertainment-education is not a theory of communication, but rather a strategy used to disseminate ideas to bring about behavioral and social change. When the first recognizable entertainment-education (E-E) interventions were launched on radio with *The Archers* (in 1951) and on television with *Simplemente María* (in 1969), communication scholars were not involved in their design or in the evaluation of their effects (Singhal, Obregón, & Rogers, 1994). However, theorizing about E-E was about to begin.

After the broadcast of *Simplemente María* in Mexico, Miguel Sabido carefully deconstructed this *telenovela* in order to understand its theoretical basis. He then produced a series of six E-E television programs for Televisa, which were evaluated as to their impacts (Nariman, 1993; Singhal & Rogers, 1999). In designing his E-E telenovelas, Sabido drew especially on Albert Bandura's (1977, 1997) social learning theory (which later evolved into social cognitive theory). This theoretical approach has

tended to dominate most theoretical writing and research about entertainment-education, and Sabido's methodology for the design of E-E programs, especially soap operas, influenced most later work on entertainment-education by communication professionals around the world. There exists a natural fit between Bandura's theory and entertainment-education interventions, which often seek to influence audience behavior change by providing positive and negative role models to the audience.

This special issue of *Communication Theory* seeks to broaden the theoretical understanding of entertainment-education interventions by inviting consideration of not only social cognitive theory but also of other communication theories that have, or may, contribute to improved understanding and design of future E-E programs. The theories to consider include social learning/social cognitive theory, the elaboration likelihood model, audience involvement, dramatic theories, social constructivism, uses and gratifications, agenda setting, knowledge-gap, cultivation, and the diffusion of innovations. Further, in identifying common themes that characterize entertainment-education interventions and evaluations, we also propose a theoretical agenda for entertainment-education scholars.

Initially, two main sets of communication scholars were engaged in the investigation of the entertainment-education strategy: (a) a set of communication scholars, including D. Lawrence Kincaid, Phyllis Piotrow, Douglas Storey, Thomas Valente, and their colleagues at the Johns Hopkins University's School of Hygiene and Public Health (now the Bloomberg School of Public Health), the Center for Communication Programs, who mainly conducted evaluation research on entertainment-education broadcasts to promote family planning in developing nations, and (b) the present guest editors Everett M. Rogers and Arvind Singhal, at the University of Southern California/University of New Mexico and at Ohio University, respectively. Rogers and Singhal and their colleagues mainly conducted evaluation research on the effects of entertainment-education broadcasts that was carried out in collaboration with Population Communications International (PCI), a nonprofit organization headquartered in New York with a central interest in E-E.

These two sets of scholars have remained in close contact, and in cooperation with other colleagues—notably Patrick L. Coleman (of Johns Hopkins University's Center for Communication Programs), Vibert Cambridge (of Ohio University), and Martine Bouman (of the Netherlands Entertainment-Education Foundation)—organized a series of three international conferences on entertainment-education, held at the University of Southern California in 1989, at Ohio University in 1997, and at Arnhem in the Netherlands in 2000. Today, a broad set of communication scholars actively work to advance the theoretical foundations of E-E.

The scholars of the present era are exploring deeper understandings of the theoretical bases of entertainment-education and working in a more eclectic manner than at previous times.

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### **The Rising Tide of Entertainment**

Where does E-E fit in the rising tide of entertainment worldwide? Entertainment is making increasing inroads into people's personal lives (Postman, 1985). Not only does the public consume more entertainment, it is becoming a more integral part of people's shopping, traveling, eating, driving, exercising, and working experiences. The Mall of America, a megamall in the Minneapolis area, attracts 40 million shoppers a year, more visitors than Disney World, Disneyland, and the Grand Canyon combined (Wolf, 1999). The Mall of America boasts an entertainment complex, a walk-through aquarium, and a seven-acre amusement park, all under one roof. Las Vegas in the U.S., Sun City in South Africa, Genting in Malaysia, and Crown Resorts in Australia are all centered around entertainment. These one-industry complexes offer gambling, shows, golf, tennis, sightseeing, and other attractions. Thematically oriented dining experiences such as Planet Hollywood, Hard Rock Cafe, and House of Blues attract large numbers of customers. A ride on Virgin Atlantic Airlines is more like a party in the air. Wolf (1999) labels this rising tide of entertainment in our personal lives and in economy sectors such as retail, travel, and food services, as the "entertainmentization" of the world. Entertainment products and services—movies, television programs, videos, pop music, spectator sports, theme parks, radio, casinos, magazines, newspapers, books, and toys—represent the fastest growing sector of the world economy. In the United States, without counting the sales of consumer electronics (VCRs, DVD players, television sets, etc.), which are tools of entertainment consumption, entertainment represented a \$480 billion industry in 1999 (Wolf, 1999). Never before in history has so much entertainment been so readily accessible to so many people for so much of their leisure time (Zillman & Vorderer, 2000).

Despite the ubiquity and growing importance of entertainment in society, which usually involves some type of human communication, communication scholars have largely neglected to give the entertainment function much attention (Katz & Foulkes, 1962; Sutton-Smith, 1988).<sup>1</sup> Some 40 years ago, Katz and Foulkes (1962, p. 378) wrote: "It is a most intriguing fact that in the intellectual history of social research that the choice was made to study the mass media as agents of persuasion rather than agents of entertainment." E-E interventions, by providing an opportunity to study mass media as agents of both entertainment and persuasion, represent an important and unique area of communication scholarship.

Why have many communication scholars been reluctant to investigate the entertainment function of communication? Many perceive entertainment as frivolous in content and unimportant in its effects, mainly amounting to taking up large amounts of the daily time of individuals, but not representing an important force for human behavior change. This perception does not apply, however, to entertainment-education, which has generally been found to be an important agent of social change (Singhal & Rogers, 1999).

The global popularity of various entertainment media and genre, attracted the attention of communication scholars and practitioners in recent years, and contributed to the rise of E-E. By adding the lustre of entertainment to the relatively “duller” fields of health promotion, education, and development, E-E fits well with the contemporary global trend to entertainmentization. In this respect, “E-E is the Viagra of health communication” (Piotrow quoted in NEEF and JHU/CCP, 2001, p. 2).

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### **Theoretic Agenda for Entertainment-Education**

Previous E-E research has mainly been conducted in developing countries and dealt with health topics. The dominant theoretical basis has been Bandura’s social learning or social cognitive theory. Consistent with the thrust of the six articles in this special issue, we propose a five-pronged theoretical agenda for the field of entertainment-education.

Agenda #1: Theoretical investigations of entertainment-education should pay greater attention to the tremendous variability among E-E interventions.

Agenda #2: Theoretical investigations of E-E should pay more attention to the various resistances to E-E interventions.

Agenda #3: E-E theorizing will benefit from close investigations of the rhetorical, play, and affective aspects of E-E.

Agenda #4: E-E “effects” research should consider employing a broader understanding of individual, group, and social-level changes.

Agenda #5: E-E “effects” research should be more receptive to methodological pluralism and measurement ingenuity.

### **Agenda #1: Attention to Variability in E-E Interventions**

Theoretical investigations of E-E need to move past scholarly research, on *what* effects E-E programs have, to better understand *how* and *why* entertainment-education has these effects. In seeking answers, entertain-

ment-education scholars should pay greater attention to the various types of entertainment-education interventions, including differences in their scope, size, reach, intensity, and other attributes. Whereas E-E interventions come in all shapes and sizes, current theoretical debates do not acknowledge the substantial variability among E-E interventions, which undoubtedly influence the answers to the what, how, and why questions of E-E effects. With a few exceptions, almost all past E-E research has concerned radio or television soap opera broadcasts. E-E is not limited to a soap opera format, or even to broadcasting.

Although some E-E interventions are national campaigns, some are designed for a very specific, local audience, and some go beyond a “national” space to include a much broader “cultural” space. For example, the *Soul City* E-E campaign reaches almost 80% of its target audience in South Africa (Soul City Institute, 2001). In contrast, E-E street theater interventions in India and in Bolivia reached only a few hundred people per performance (Valente & Bharath, 1999; Valente, Poppe, Alva, de Briceno, & Cases, 1995). Other E-E campaigns, such as the UNICEF-sponsored *Meena* and *Sara* animation films, and Street Kids International’s *Karate Kids* animated film were targeted to a “cultural” space comprising several countries (Singhal & Svenkerud, 1994). *Meena* was designed for use in various countries of South Asia, and *Sara* was designed for use in various countries of sub-Saharan Africa. *Karate Kids* has been shown to combat the prostitution of street children in dozens of nations (Sthapitanonda-Sarabol & Singhal, 1998, 1999).

E-E programs vary widely in terms of the extent to which they use (a) formative research, and (b) human communication theories in their message design. For instance, E-E interventions like *Soul City* in South Africa spend 18 months conducting extensive formative research to develop one annual campaign cycle.<sup>2</sup> Detailed message design and planning processes are carried out, including pretesting of messages and materials. Also, E-E soap operas, especially those patterned after Miguel Sabido’s methodology (for example, *Hum Log* in 1984–1985 in India), purposely incorporated principles of Bandura’s social learning theory in the design of positive, negative, and transitional role models (Nariman, 1993; Singhal & Rogers, 1999). On the other hand, several E-E interventions incorporate little formative research or theoretical input and are based primarily on the intuition and creativity of the production staff.

E-E interventions also vary widely in terms of their intensity and their ability to deliver effects. E-E messages may be incorporated as a few lines of dialogue in an existing media program (as the designated driver concept was promoted in the Harvard alcohol project), or they may compose an entire episode of a popular prime-time television series (such as the discussion of Walter’s vasectomy in the CBS sitcom *Maude*). One

long-running E-E series, *The Archers*, has broadcast over 8,000 episodes on the BBC since its launch in 1951. The answers to the what, how, and why effects questions vary considerably depending on whether the audience experiences a one-time, live street theater performance or an ongoing, long-running, mediated E-E soap opera. Theoretical investigations of E-E might be guided by such research questions as: How do the impacts of localized, interactive, and single-shot messages differ from the impacts of repeated, long-running, and mediated E-E messages? What influence do long-running E-E soap operas have when they deal with a common educational theme (for example, HIV/AIDS prevention) of essentially repeated messages, and does a presentation of various characters in diverse settings hold audience attention? How do ongoing TV and radio serials, with the accompanying twists and turns in the characters' lives, stimulate talk, elaboration, and reflection among audience members?

Also, how are the answers to the what, how, and why E-E effects questions altered (or bolstered) when an E-E intervention (a) is developed locally (as opposed to being implemented with technical assistance from an international aid agency); (b) is targeted nationally; (c) incorporates extensive formative research and theoretical vigor; (d) is orchestrated as an ongoing, multimedia E-E campaign; (e) establishes and nurtures "win-win" partnerships among various stakeholders (such as donors, government agencies, media organizations, development infrastructure, creative personnel, and communication researchers); (f) aims to influence individual attitudes, boost self-efficacy and collective efficacy, change social norms, and put issues on the public agenda; (g) includes a media advocacy component; (h) promotes a policy and legislative agenda; and (i) commands a "branded" image? The *Soul City* E-E intervention in South Africa, which one may argue incorporates all the above-mentioned attributes, differs markedly from most other entertainment-education interventions that have been investigated by communication scholars in the past. Thus, by gaining a theoretic understanding of the what, how, and why of E-E effects, careful attention should be paid to the attributes of a given E-E intervention, because, as noted previously, E-E interventions take varied forms.

E-E interventions also operate in very different contexts, which undoubtedly impacts what effects they might have, and how and why. The John Sherry article in this special issue, which investigates the challenges and resistances facing E-E initiatives in media-saturated societies (such as the United States), directly speaks to this issue of context.

### **Agenda #2: Attention to Resistances to E-E**

Current theoretical debates do not acknowledge the substantial resistance to entertainment-education. These resistances should be theoretic-

cally investigated at the level of (a) message production, (b) message environment, and (c) message reception.

**Resistance to E-E Production.** On the message production side, there is tremendous resistance to initiating E-E interventions. Commercial broadcasters, for instance, are highly fearful of and resistant to charting “unknown” territories. Comfortable with time-tested media formulae, which consistently generate audience ratings, and hence profit, they fear that advertisers and audiences will be turned off if their program is perceived as playing a “big brother” role. The fear of generating controversy, and thus losing audience, is anathema. Such resistance operates more commonly in media-saturated commercial broadcasting environments such as the United States, where audiences are relatively fragmented (see the Sherry article in this special issue).

Such resistance is so deeply institutionalized that despite the commercial success in the United States of such E-E type programs as *Roots* and *All in the Family*, the logjam to embrace E-E continues. The ABC miniseries, *Roots*, and its sequel, *Roots: The Next Generation*, focused on African American people’s struggle for freedom from slavery. Broadcast as eight 90-minute episodes in 1977, *Roots* was viewed by 130 million Americans, becoming a “nightly superbowl” for U.S. audiences. Seven of the eight episodes of *Roots* ranked among the top 10 in all-time television ratings at the time, achieving an audience share between 62 to 71% (Hur & Robinson, 1978). Over 50% of its viewers hailed *Roots* as “one of the best” television programs they had ever watched. The lesson from *Roots* was that quality television programs dealing with a social cause could achieve very high audience ratings (Wander, 1997). Commercial broadcasters in the United States, however, have failed to capitalize on this lesson to produce similar E-E interventions.

Norman Lear’s *All in the Family* was the top-rated sitcom in the United States during the 1970s and was viewed, during its peak popularity, by a record-breaking 50 million Americans (Vidmar & Rokeach, 1974). The central character of this highly popular CBS sitcom was Archie Bunker, a highly prejudiced, working class American who employed racial slurs (Vidmar & Rokeach, 1974). Lear’s intention was to use humor to raise the consciousness of viewers about ethnic prejudice, an intention that was realized only partially (as we discuss later in this section). However, *All in the Family* is notable in that, despite its roaring commercial success, it faced tremendous institutional resistance from its eventual stakeholders. Three years, two networks, endless changes of cast, and numerous conflicts with network advertisers were required to get this television program on the air.

Theoretical investigations might consider what makes commercial producers resistant to creating (or even experimenting with) entertainment-

education interventions? Why are “doing well” (commercially) and “doing good” (socially) perceived as being at odds with each other? Can such fears on the part of entertainment producers be allayed and perceived risks minimized? Have E-E advocates and scholars “positioned” E-E in ways so as to reinforce such institutional resistance? For instance, the thrust of E-E enthusiasts has been on projecting how the entertainment function enhances the education function. Would E-E scholarship benefit from asking the question in reverse? Does the educational function, if creatively incorporated, enhance the entertainment function? If Hollywood finds that it can enhance entertainment value through creative incorporation of educational content, will it embrace E-E?

Thus far, theoretical investigations of E-E have focused largely on measuring audience effects, that is, attending to the audience reception side, not the message production side. Theoretical investigations of E-E production processes are needed, including how projects are formulated, negotiated, funded, partnered, researched, produced, packaged, positioned, advertised, distributed, and broadcast. How are conflicts between partnering agencies negotiated and mediated, and how can the interests of donors, media gatekeepers, campaign coordinators, creative professionals, audience members, and researchers be harmonized? These issues are key to understanding institutional resistance to initiating and producing an E-E intervention, given that E-E interventions require more time, resources, expertise, and collaborative arrangements. Martine Bouman’s article in this special issue on “peacocks” (television professionals) versus “turtles” (health communication experts) is a theoretical investigation of the E-E collaboration process between health communication experts and creative people, including both the difficulties and possibilities.

**Resistance in the Message Environment.** Theoretical investigations of E-E should acknowledge that entertainment-education is only one of many competing, and conflicting, discourses that exist in a given message environment. In highly saturated media environments like the United States, and to a somewhat lesser degree in developing countries, entertainment-education messages face competition from, and are resisted by, various other media discourses, which are often of the “entertainment-degradation” or “entertainment-perversion” type. Examples in the United States include television programs such as the *Jerry Springer Show*, and reality television series such as *Survivor*, *Temptation Island*, and *Big Brother*, which valorize lewdness, sexual irresponsibility, greed, and other antisocial messages. Johns Hopkins University’s Population Communication Services’ (JHU/PCS) entertainment-education campaign in Mexico in the mid-1980s also pointed to an example of resistance in the message environment of E-E discourse. While the JHU/PCS number-one hit

rock song, *Cuando Estemos Juntos*, was promoting sexual abstinence to teenagers in Mexico, the second most popular song in Mexico was *No Control*, which promoted exactly the opposite message. A subtler, yet potent form of resistance to E-E discourses comes from a sea of media messages in which, for instance, aggression is exemplified and portrayed as a preferred solution, socially sanctioned by super heroes who triumph over evil by violent means. Such portrayals legitimize, glamorize, and trivialize human violence (Bandura, 2001, p. 277), complicating the task of E-E interventions.

**Resistance in E-E Reception.** Resistance also operates at the message reception end as audience members selectively expose themselves to E-E messages, selectively perceive them, selectively recall them, and selectively use them for purposes they value. One example of such audience-centered resistance is the *Archie Bunker effect*, defined as the degree to which certain audience members identify with negative role models in E-E interventions (Singhal & Rogers, 1999). In investigating Norman Lear's popular situation comedy, *All in the Family*, Vidmar and Rokeach (1974) noted that Archie Bunker, the central "bigoted" character, reinforced rather than reduced racial and ethnic prejudice among certain highly prejudiced viewers. Highly prejudiced persons, as compared to low-prejudiced viewers, were more likely to watch the television program and perceive Archie as a "lovable, down-to-earth, honest, and predictable" person. They were more likely to condone his use of racial slurs than were low-prejudiced viewers (Vidmar & Rokeach, 1974). An Archie Bunker-type effect has been observed in many entertainment-education programs, although it often is characteristic of a relatively small percentage of the audience. For instance, some female viewers of the Indian television soap opera, *Hum Log*, identified Bhagwanti, a negative role model for gender equality, as the character most worthy of emulation. Some Jamaican male listeners admired the sexual exploits of "Scattershot," the promiscuous skirt-chaser in the popular radio series *Naseberry Street*, who impregnated many naïve young women.

In summary, entertainment-education interventions face a variety of challenges and resistances from the start of the message production process, to the message environment, and even during message reception. Theoretically based research on entertainment-education should pay greater attention to these various resistances, and identify ways to overcome them.

### **Agenda #3: Attention to the Rhetorical, Play, and Affective Aspects of E-E**

Theoretical investigations of E-E, to date, have largely provided cognitive and rational explanations of effects, utilizing the hierarchy-of-effects, stages-of-change, and other models. Future investigations of E-E

should focus more on the rhetorical, play, and affective aspects of E-E, which emphasize the entertainment, rather than the education.

E-E almost necessarily involves the use of narrative, suggesting the possibility of utilizing Walter Fisher's (1987) narrative theory to investigate the rhetorical nature of E-E discourse. Fisher argued that humans are essentially storytellers, i.e., *homo narrans*, and employ a narrative logic in processing discourse and arguments. E-E soap operas, whether on television, radio, or another channel, represent highly complex narratives with various protagonists and antagonists, plots and subplots, and conflicts and resolutions. Theoretical investigations employing narrative theory might study why certain narratives are perceived by audience members as being more coherent, believable, and involving than are others. How is a narrative's rhetorical influence mediated by the E-E intervention's medium, genre, broadcast frequency, length, and other attributes? Green and Brock (2000) conducted experimental research indicating the ability of narratives to "transport" an audience individual from his or her real-life situation into a hypothetical situation. In this special issue, Slater and Rouner propose a cognitive approach to understanding the narrative structure of E-E messages. We urge E-E scholars also to employ rhetorical approaches to understanding narratives (such as Walter Fisher's narrative theory), in order to gain an enhanced understanding of the persuasive power of narratives.

E-E programs necessarily deal with the pleasurable aspects of communication. Huizinga's (1950) work on *homo ludens* and Stephenson's (1988) play theory of mass communication, both of which focus on how communication serves the cause of self-enhancement and personal pleasure, are relevant to investigating E-E discourse. One may investigate questions such as: What pleasure do E-E viewers derive from conflict-laden and suspenseful drama? Does repeated, prolonged empathic distress from seeing a favorite character in imminent danger enhance the enjoyment of drama and the resolution of the threat (Zillman & Vorderer, 2000, p. ix)? Here Zillman's concept of "excitation transfer," which explains why viewers appreciate suspense and undergo long periods of suffering to gain a short moment of pleasure, may be especially relevant (Zillman, 1995).

E-E programs necessarily deal with the affective and emotional aspects of human communication (Papa et al., 2000; Rogers et al., 1999). Theoretical investigations of E-E should take the role of emotions more seriously. To a large extent, communication scholars have dismissed emotions as unimportant, internal, irrational, uncontrollable, amoral, and ahistorical (Planalp, 1999). Of the studies that exist, emotions have been mainly investigated in interpersonal contexts (Anderson & Guerrero, 1998), and to a limited extent in organizational contexts (Fineman, 1993),

but not systematically in mass-mediated contexts. E-E investigations should especially focus on the communication of affect, feelings, and emotions from media characters to audience members. For instance, why do audience members laugh when characters laugh? Why do they cry? How are audience members “infected” by the feelings of characters?

The role of emotions as a valid form of human experience, which may trigger, for instance, the practice of preventive health behaviors, is often underestimated, understated, and overlooked. For instance, witnessing the death from AIDS of a favorite soap opera character, and seeing the grief of his parents, infected widow, and child, may serve as a more powerful trigger to adopting a prevention behavior than a rationally structured media message promoting condom use (Airhihenbuwa, 1999; Singhal, 2001a). This matter is directly addressed in Suruchi Sood’s article in this issue, on audience involvement through affective parasocial interaction with characters of an E-E radio soap opera in India.

In summary, E-E theorizing would benefit greatly by investigating the rhetorical, play, and affective aspects of E-E. Larry Kincaid’s paper about drama theory in this special issue is a step in the right direction.

#### **Agenda #4: Rethinking the Old Conceptualization of Behavior Change**

A few years ago, we defined entertainment-education as “the process of purposely designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate, in order to increase knowledge about an issue, create favorable attitudes, and change overt behavior” (Singhal & Rogers, 1999, p. 229). Today, we consider this definition of E-E as limited, in that it implies that *individual-level* behavior change is the main purpose of this communication strategy.

Although many past applications of E-E sought to increase individuals’ knowledge, change their attitudes, and alter their overt behavior, an overwhelming focus on individual-level behavior change runs the risk of mistakenly assuming that all individuals (a) are capable of controlling their environment, (b) are on an even playing field, and (c) make decisions of their own free will. Such is seldom the case. For instance, whether or not a commercial female sex worker can protect herself from HIV is often a function of whether or not her male client agrees to use a condom. She is often voiceless, powerless, and vulnerable in such encounters (Singhal & Rogers, in press).

Theoretical investigations of entertainment-education should thus go beyond the exclusive use of individual-level theories and models of preventive health behaviors such as stages-of-change, hierarchy-of-effects model, and social cognitive theory to more multilevel, cultural, and contextual theoretical explanations (McKinlay & Marceau, 1999). Metaphorically speaking, entertainment-education scholars should go beyond

investigating the bobbing of individual corks on surface waters and focus on the stronger undercurrents that determine where cork clusters are deposited along a shoreline (McMichael, 1995).

Some recent E-E investigations have gone beyond studying individual-level behavioral changes to investigate E-E instigated changes at the community level (Papa et al., 2000). In a community-level investigation in India, a popular E-E radio soap opera, accompanied by group listening, local self-help groups, and progressive opinion leaders, brought about changes in group, community, and organizational norms. Interacting with the ground-based context, the year-long E-E radio soap opera led to enhanced levels of *collective efficacy*, defined as the degree to which people in a system believe they can organize and execute courses of action required to achieve collective goals (Bandura, 1997). The villagers, through a process of extensive deliberations, organized to change the system norm on dowry. Since the giving and receiving of dowry payments involves a relationship between families, individual change alone could not alter the practice (Papa et al., 2000). Deeply ingrained cultural norms can often be altered only by concerted action from the collective.

E-E interventions can also model individual *self-efficacy*, defined as an individual's perception of his or her capability to deal effectively with a situation, and one's sense of perceived control over a situation. In the popular E-E television series *Soul City* in South Africa, a new collective behavior was modeled to portray how neighbors might intervene in a domestic violence situation. The prevailing cultural norm in South Africa is for neighbors, even if they wished to help the victim, not to intervene while the domestic abuse is being carried out. Wife (or partner) abuse is seen as a "private" matter carried out in a "private" space, with curtains drawn and behind a front door that is closed. In the *Soul City* series, the neighbors collectively decided to break the ongoing cycle of spousal abuse in a neighborhood home. While a wife-beating episode occurred, they gathered around the abuser's residence and collectively banged their pots and pans, censuring the abuser's actions. This entertainment-education episode highlighted the importance of creatively modeling collective efficacy to energize neighbors, who, for cultural reasons, felt previously inefficacious. Evaluation research found that exposure to the *Soul City* E-E intervention was associated with the willingness to stand outside the home of an abuser and bang pots (Soul City Institute, 2000). After this episode was broadcast, pot banging to stop partner abuse was reported in several locations in South Africa (Singhal & Rogers, in press). Patrons of a local pub in Thembisa Township exhibited a variation of this practice—they collectively banged bottles upon witnessing a man physically abusing his girlfriend (Soul City Institute, 2000).

Theoretical investigations of E-E interventions can additionally benefit from adopting a more nuanced understanding of various types of desired behavior changes: (a) individual versus collective, (b) one-time (e.g., getting an immunization) versus recurring (e.g., physical exercise), (c) self-controlled (e.g., fastening an automobile seat belt) versus other-dependent (e.g., paying and receiving dowry), (d) private (e.g., using a condom) versus public (e.g., cleaning up an unsanitary neighborhood), (e) preventive (e.g., using sunscreen) versus curative (e.g., administering oral rehydration therapy to a baby with diarrhea), (f) costly (e.g., adopting a tractor) versus low cost (e.g., breast-feeding), and (g) high involvement (e.g., enrolling in an adult literacy class) versus low involvement (e.g., buying Girl Scout cookies). The theoretical question to pose is: Are different types of E-E interventions more effective in achieving different types of desired behavior changes? In summary, E-E “effects” research would benefit from a broader understanding of individual, group, and social-level changes.

### **Agenda Item #5: Employing Methodological Pluralism and Measurement Ingenuity**

The history of research on entertainment-education shows that theories can be tested and enhanced in the real world. When social learning theory was initiated, Albert Bandura tested his theory in laboratory settings, such as in the famous Bobo doll experiment on media violence and children’s aggressive behavior (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1961). The Mexican writer-producer-director Miguel Sabido took Bandura’s theory out of the laboratory and into the real world, designing E-E soap operas portraying socially desirable and undesirable models of behavior. Now Bandura’s cognitive learning/self-efficacy theory is being applied in a wide range of field settings, including in the form of interactive video games by ClickHealth, a Silicon Valley high-tech company with which Bandura and his colleagues are associated. For example, one ClickHealth game is designed to teach children how to more efficaciously live with diabetes. A randomized, controlled clinical trial found that this game led to a 77% decrease in emergency room visits over a 6-month period (Lieberman, 2001). Thus, from the perspective of theoretical usefulness, E-E interventions are something like a piece of toast buttered on both sides; they not only incorporate theory in their design, but also provide an opportunity to test and advance a given theory.

Most past research on entertainment-education effects relied mainly on audience surveys (sometimes coupled with content analyses of E-E messages and with analyses of audience letters). Sypher, McKinley, Ventsam, and Valdeavellano’s article in this special issue points to the advantages of employing methodological pluralism in complementing survey techniques with ethnographic methods, including the use of fo-

cus group interviews, participant observation, in-depth interviews, letters from audience members, and input from trained peer promoters. The article by Michael Slater and Donna Rouner in this issue calls for greater use of laboratory experiments on entertainment-education messages in order to better understand the theoretical mechanisms through which E-E affects individuals' behavior. The article by D. Lawrence Kincaid in this issue proposes a novel method for testing theories of drama, employing the techniques of image mapping and multidimensional scaling. Suruchi Sood explores the theoretic construct of audience involvement in her article in this special issue, analyzing audience letters written to an entertainment-education radio soap opera in India.

Audience letters represent a rather "pure" form of audience feedback, and E-E scholars should consider tapping the research potential of these messages more fully. These letters are usually unsolicited, unprompted (and, hence, free of researcher bias), in the writer's own language, and rich in insights about how the E-E intervention affects the audience (Law & Singhal, 1999). Such data also costs very little to gather. Over 400,000 letters from viewers were received by Dordarshan, the government television network in India, in response to an E-E soap opera *Hum Log* ("We People"), providing rich insights about the program's effects on highly involved audiences.

Telephone hotlines also represent a useful programmatic and research resource in E-E interventions. A popular song, "I Still Believe," performed by Lea Salonga in the Philippines, was used to encourage telephone calls from adolescents to "Dial-a-Friend," where they could receive information and advice about contraception and other sexually related topics. Trained professional counselors maintained four hotlines, which averaged over 1,000 calls per week (Rimon, 1989). Telephone helplines for abused women also supplemented the *Soul City* prime-time television series on domestic violence. Some 180,000 calls were answered in 5 months (when the *Soul City* series on domestic violence was broadcast in late 1999), and monitoring of call data suggested that in places like Johannesburg, only 5% of the calls could be answered during peak times; the remaining 95% got a busy signal (Soul City Institute, 2000).

E-E researchers increasingly realize the importance of having more robust measures to assess audience members "degree of exposure" to the E-E intervention and to gauge the degree to which E-E interventions spur interpersonal communication between audience and nonaudience members (which represents a measure of the "indirect" effects of an E-E intervention in a version of the "two-step flow" process). A reliable measure of the audience members' degree of exposure to an E-E intervention is essential, given its centrality as an independent variable to predict audience effects (Hornik, Gandy, Wray, & Stryker, 2000). In

audience surveys, respondents are usually asked the extent to which they have been exposed to the E-E intervention (whether a soap opera, or a miniseries, or some other genre), and data are recorded in terms of the number of episodes heard or seen, or perhaps on an ordinal scale of low, medium, or high exposure. Such self-reports to a general exposure question may be unreliable. Past research shows that E-E interventions tend to spur a great deal of interpersonal communication among audience members and also among audience members and their spouses, children, relatives, and friends, who may not be directly exposed to the E-E intervention. However, this important indirect effect of E-E interventions has not been adequately captured in past E-E research studies (Rogers et al., 1999).

In order to have more robust measures of degree of exposure and to more adequately gauge indirect effects of E-E interventions, we recommend that during the production of E-E messages, multiple *markers* should be proactively incorporated. Markers are distinctive elements of a message that are identifiable. The simplest way of introducing a marker in an E-E intervention is to rename an existing product so that it becomes identifiable with only that product. For instance, in the popular St. Lucian family-planning radio soap opera *Apwe Plezi* (After the Pleasure), a new condom brand called Catapult was introduced. This new term was identified by 28% of the radio program's listeners, validating their claim of direct exposure to the program, and by 13% of the nonlisteners, suggesting that the message was diffused via interpersonal channels, and thus providing a test of diffusion of innovations theory (Vaughan, Regis, & St. Catherine, 2000).

Alternatively, a marker might consist of creatively naming characters in E-E programs, like the skirt-chasing character Scattershot in *Nasebery Street*, a radio soap opera about sexually responsible fatherhood in Jamaica (Singhal & Rogers, 1999). Scattershot became a common term in Jamaican discourse, as in "Oh, you Scattershot you," providing an opportunity to trace the direct and indirect effects of listening to the radio program.

The most powerful markers model new culturally appropriate realities to break oppressive power structures in society, exemplified by the collective pot banging by neighbors in the South African entertainment-education series *Soul City*, so as to stop wife or partner abuse (Singhal & Rogers, in press). Markers, which model new realities, not only enhance the message content of the E-E intervention, but also provide additional validation for whether or not audience members were directly or indirectly exposed to the E-E intervention. In summary, theoretical investigations of E-E "effects" would benefit by employing methodological pluralism and measurement ingenuity.

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## Summary and Conclusions

This article provides a historical background to this special issue of *Communication Theory* on entertainment-education and proposes a five-pronged theoretical agenda for the field of entertainment-education. Theoretical investigations of entertainment-education should pay greater attention to the tremendous variability among entertainment-education interventions (Agenda #1) and to the various resistances to entertainment-education interventions (Agenda #2). E-E theorizing will also benefit from close investigations of the rhetorical, play, and affective aspects of E-E (Agenda #3). Further, E-E “effects” research should consider employing a broader understanding of individual, group, and social-level changes (Agenda #4) and be more receptive to methodological pluralism and measurement ingenuity (Agenda #5).

What else does the future hold for theory and practice in entertainment-education? In September 2000, when the 115 participants, including practitioners and scholars from 28 countries, met at the Third International Entertainment-Education Conference for Social Change in the Netherlands, they made the following commitment to advancing entertainment-education theory and practice: “Theory and practice are based on inclusiveness, diversity, and a variety of genres, multi-disciplinary theories, methods, formats, and channels. Theory and practice should incorporate intuitive and scientific, modern and traditional approaches, including folk media, community broadcasting, and emerging technologies” (NEEF and JHU/CCP, 2001, p. 58).

In the future, E-E will more closely integrate “modern” and “traditional” entertainment outlets, and “big” and “little” media technologies. The field of entertainment-education will go beyond its mass mediated (television, radio, film, video, and print) discourses to include crafts, art, textiles, murals, toys, and other creative expressions. For instance, in South Africa, “positive pottery” (made by HIV-positive people) includes colorful AIDS ribbons etched with traditional African motifs. Similarly in East Africa, *khangas*, the traditional fabric wrap worn by women has begun increasingly to carry health and development messages.

Also, the rise of the Internet opened new possibilities with respect to conveying E-E interventions. For instance, a soap opera on the Internet is being used to target and encourage mammography screening in Hispanic women (Jibaja et al., 2000). Such Web-based delivery of an E-E intervention allows for *tailoring*, defined as the individualization of a communication message to audience members. Jibaja and others (2000) determined each Hispanic woman’s stage-of-change (Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992) regarding mammography screening, so that they could then deliver a version of the soap opera most appropriate to whether the participant was already contemplating mammogra-

phy versus having adopted the practice but not yet committing to maintaining breast cancer screening behavior.

However, despite the rapid rise of Internet services worldwide, the older, less educated, poor, and rural individuals, both in developed and developing countries, do not yet have access to the Internet (Cole et al., 2000; Rogers, in press). These individuals tend to have the greatest need for health and other types of information. The Internet can always be utilized as one part of a larger E-E campaign. For instance, Univisión, the main Spanish-language television network in the United States, offers its audience members an online Web site through which they can interact with each other (as in “fan” communities), with their favorite shows’ producers and stars, and with scriptwriters, to whom they can directly provide feedback. By 2001, Univisión had accumulated a subscriber base of over 5 million Spanish-speaking individuals.

In the future, E-E interventions are likely to see more integration with participatory communication approaches. The work of Brazilian theater director Augusto Boal, who founded the theatre of the oppressed (TO) movement, is especially relevant here. TO’s techniques—based on Paulo Freire’s principles of dialogue, interaction, problem posing, reflection, and conscientization—are designed to activate spectators (“spect-actors”) to take control of situations, rather than passively allowing actions to happen to them (Boal, 1979). The idea of a “spect-actor” emerged when Boal encouraged audience members to stop a theater performance and to suggest different actions for the actors, who then carry out the audience suggestions. During one such performance, a woman in the audience was so outraged that an actor could not understand her suggestion that she came charging onto the stage, enacting what she meant (Singhal, 2001b). From that day on, audience members were invited up onto the stage. Boal discovered that audience members became empowered not only to imagine change, but also to actually—and collectively—practice it. TO’s techniques have been used by thousands of drama troupes all over the world, and by community organizers and facilitators as participatory tools for democratizing organizations, analyzing social problems, and transforming reality through direct action (Singhal, 2001b).

In the future, we believe entertainment-education will also go beyond the boundaries of its mainstay messages—reproductive health, family planning, and HIV prevention—to include other pressing social issues such as peace, conflict mediation, race relations, and reconstruction. The role of E-E will likely be realized further in struggles for liberation and empowerment, especially with the use of songs and other expressions as means of protest, resistance, dialogue, debate, and coping. In essence, the future of E-E practice and research is one of exciting possi-

bilities, challenges, and debates. The six articles in this special issue will address some of these possibilities, raise new challenges, and stimulate new debates.

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**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Even university communication departments located in such entertainment industry centers as Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and New York have not been oriented particularly to studying or teaching about the entertainment function. One recent exception is the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Southern California, which, since 1999, has taken entertainment as its main theme by establishing the Norman Lear Center; in fact, the entire university has adopted entertainment as its core specialty (thus, the USC law school offers a specialization in entertainment law, the engineering school focuses on the technology of entertainment production, and so forth).

<sup>2</sup> One campaign cycle includes a 13-episode prime-time television series, a 60-episode radio series in nine different languages, and one million copies each of three different glossy comic booklets, each distributed through 10 partner newspapers, nongovernmental organizations, and government departments.

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