Entertainment education: a communication strategy for social change, Arvind Singhal and Everett M. Rogers, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ, and London, UK, 1999

"Why can one not sell brotherhood like one sells soap?" Wiebe once asked. Proponents of the entertainment-education strategy ask the same question about the "selling" of media messages. "Why can we not use the media, often portrayed as visualizing and favoring anti-social messages, to promote pro-social values?" That this can be accomplished is demonstrated through the use of entertainment education.

The use of entertaining and educational messages to solve social issues has been employed for years to fight social problems such as teen-age pregnancy, HIV/AIDS prevention, and domestic violence in countries all over the world. Not only have these new media messages and programs become popular and profitable, they have often had a significant impact on behavior and helped address important social issues.

In this book, Arvind Singhal and Everett M. Rogers provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the entertainment-education approach. *Entertainment education* is the process of purposely designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate, in order to increase audience members' knowledge about an educational issue, create favorable attitudes, and change overt behavior. The authors examine the entertainment-education strategy by tracing the history of the

genre, examining its theoretical framework and practical implementation, and exemplifying its uses in various settings.

In the past 15 years, more than 100 entertainment-education projects have been carried out in nations all over the world. The formats, from television soap opera series to Puppet Theater, have dealt with such educational issues as healthcare, family planning, adult literacy, gender equality, environmental preservation, and many others. The authors represent much of the knowledge accumulated and have been involved in researching the effects of such entertainment-education programs for over 15 years. Through their vast experience, the authors have synthesized the various theoretical and methodological aspects of this strategy in the unique form of the present book.

According to Singhal and Rogers, the entertainment-education strategy contributes to social change in two ways. First, it can influence audience awareness, attitudes, and behaviors toward a socially desirable end. Here the anticipated effects are located in the individual audience members. Second, it can influence the audiences' external environment to help create the necessary conditions for social change at the group or system level. Here the major effects are located in the social-political sphere of the audiences' external environment. Entertainment education thus serves as an agent of social mobilization, an advocate, or an agenda-setter, influencing public and policy initiatives in a socially desirable direction.

The book discusses the role of theory and research in the design of entertainment-education messages (as one component of the formative research process) and also in evaluating the effects of such messages (as part of the process and summative research procedures). Perhaps more importantly, the book draws a series of scholarly generalizations on lessons learned about the effective use of this strategy for both media practitioners and communication scholars.

The book offers a clear and sound theoretical background and provides a rich overview of what can be done in the area of social development via the entertainment media. It offers powerful arguments regarding how the entertainment–education strategy can contribute to positive change in a world filled with countless media messages by providing numerous examples of how effects can be measured in a more accurate fashion.

Most past research and scholarship in the realm of entertainment education have drawn largely on social psychological theories of behavior change, investigating the role of audience involvement (cognitive, affective, and referential), social learning and modeling, and boosting of audience members' individual and collective efficacy to change their behavior. More recently, theoretical investigations of entertainment-education programs have increasingly begun to pay attention to media-stimulated peer conversations, social mobilization activities, media advocacy, and agenda-setting processes. In this sense, research on the entertainment-education communication strategy, as explicated in this book, holds important implications for scholarship in applied communication theory, research, and practice. Such research can impact real-world health and development.

This book can undoubtedly be used as a guideline for the design of communication strategies for social change. It will help public health professionals and

scholars to realize the potential of the approach. One reason for the growing application of entertainment education is that such programs achieve very high audience ratings, thus allowing broadcasting systems to make profits (i.e. be commercially viable) while at the same time being socially responsible. Integrating and aligning commercial interests (of media producers) and social interests (of media consumers) holds important implications for communication theory, research, and practice.

Because of its strong theoretical framework and its many practical examples and implications, the book is now widely used in communication and development courses at important academic institutions all over the world. Michigan State University, University of Southern California, Johns Hopkins University, Regent University, Chulalongkorn University, Wageningen Agriculture University in the Netherlands, Universidad del Norte in Barranquilla, Colombia, and many others have adopted this text.

Two key organizations, The Johns Hopkins University's Center for Communication Programs, and Population Communications International have for many years worked on the design, implementation, and evaluation of entertainment-education programs, continually refining the framework. UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank have launched (or are launching) entertainment-education programs. In the US, the Harvard School of Public Health, the Children's Television Workshop in New York (creators of "Sesame Street"), the Centers for Disease Control, and others are increasingly embracing entertainment education.

The widespread use of this approach demonstrates the potential effectiveness of entertainment education in addressing significant social issues and, hence, underlines the importance of this book.

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