

ARTICLES

Entertainment Education and Social Change The Communicative Dynamics of Social Capital*

ARVIND SINGHAL, MICHAEL J. PAPA, DEVENDRA SHARMA, SAUMYA PANT,
TRACY WORRELL, NITHYA MUTHUSWAMY AND KIM WITTE

This study explored processes of social change initiated by an entertainment education radio programme in India, Taru, which led to certain socially desirable effects in four villages in Bihar state. Data was collected primarily in the form of in-depth individual and focus group interviews, participant observation, and the design and implementation of a participatory theatre production by the respondents. We discovered that a media programme facilitates social change by stimulating the development of social capital in communities. Social capital was displayed through the development of: (a) relationships based on trust; (b) norms of reciprocity; and (c) communication networks. The existence of social capital contributed to educational programmes for lower-caste children, the improvement of community health, the stopping of a number of child marriages, and the promotion of gender equality. We also discovered, however, that social capital can initiate forces of both support and resistance towards social change. Furthermore, negative social capital may contribute to excluding certain people from participation in pro-social action, restricting individual freedom, placing excessive demands on group members, and downward levelling norms.

How do on-the-air media messages work at the ground level? Can media messages strengthen, deepen and widen social connections among a community of listeners? Can media messages help lubricate community life by spurring dialogue, debate and decision making on issues of local concern? Consider the following two examples from India.

In 1956 India was the site of the famous Pune Radio Farm Forum Project. It was a field experiment to evaluate the effects of radio farm forums, each consisting of several dozen villagers who gathered weekly to listen to a half-hour radio programme (broadcast by All India Radio) and then to discuss its contents (Kivlin et al. 1968). The theme of the radio forums

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was 'Listen, Discuss, Act!' For example, one of the radio broadcasts might deal with rodents as a problem. Following discussion of this topic in a radio forum, villagers would mount a rat control campaign in their community (Singhal and Rogers 2001).

The research evaluation showed that the Pune Project helped 'unify villages around common decisions and common actions', widening 'the influence of the *gram* panchayat [village government] and broadening the scope of its action' (Mathur and Neurath 1959: 101). The farm forums deepened friendships and interpersonal relationships among farmers, spurred discussions among them, leading to decisions about digging wells, adopting pure-bred bulls and Leghorn chickens, and establishing *balwadis* (children's enrichment centres). At the village level the radio forums acted like voluntary organizations 'whose members were neither appointed by authority nor elected to represent specific group interests', signifying an important experiment in village democracy (*ibid.*). Members voluntarily engaged in village clean-up drives, planting papaya trees and building pit latrines (Papa et al. 2006; Singhal and Rogers 2001).

During 1996–97 an investigation of the impacts of an entertainment education radio soap opera called *Tinka Tinka Sukh* ('Happiness Lies in Small Pleasures') showed that the media messages helped spark similar community-centred effects in a village called Lutsaan of north India. In January 1997 184 villagers in Lutsaan signed a pledge not to give or accept dowry (an illegal but widespread social practice in India). These villagers also pledged to not allow child marriages and to educate their daughters (Papa et al. 2000). The pledge, in the form of a colourful 20-by-24-inch poster-letter, was mailed by Lutsaan villagers to All India Radio, which was broadcasting *Tinka Tinka Sukh*. In the radio programme Poonam is abused by her husband and in-laws for bringing an inadequate dowry and commits suicide (Singhal and Rogers 1999).

The poster-letter stated: 'Listeners of our village now actively oppose the practice of dowry—they neither give nor receive dowry.' As a result of group listening processes, the villagers formed radio listening clubs, planted trees for reforestation, and built pit latrines for improving village sanitation. Girls' enrolment in the village's schools increased from 10 to 38 per cent, and fewer dowry marriages and child marriages occurred in Lutsaan, although these practices did not completely disappear (Papa et al. 2000).

The Indian experience with radio farm forums as well as the Lutsaan community case study seemed to suggest that on-the-air media messages work harder on the ground when audience members find the messages to be engaging and locally resonant, and when the context of listening is recurrent (say, a few times a week), spread over a reasonably long duration (say, about a year), and is group-based (Papa et al. 2000; Singhal et al. 2004). Such a message reception context seems to create the conditions for group members to engage in reflection, discussion, dialogue, debate and decision making on issues of local concern, often sparking collective action. In essence, engaging media messages coupled with favourable group-based contexts of listening can help create the conditions to build human and social capital among listener communities.

The present article investigates how social capital can emerge in communities, including how it is communicatively enacted when entertainment education radio broadcasts are strategically integrated with community-based group listening. The present investigation centres around four village communities in the Indian state of Bihar where All India Radio provided the entertainment education 'air cover' in the form of a radio soap opera, *Taru*. We also describe how *Taru* listening groups acted as informal organizing units for social deliberation and local action.

THE COMMUNICATIVE DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital is a multidimensional construct (Scheufele and Shah 2000) with a variety of interrelated definitions. Pierre Bourdieu (1985: 248) defined social capital as 'the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition'. Alternatively, Coleman (1988: 98) defined social capital by its function as 'a variety of entities with two elements in common: They all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain action of others—whether persons or corporate actors within the structure'.

There are two major differences in the definitions of social capital by Bourdieu and Coleman. Bourdieu explicitly points out the distinction of resources from the ability to obtain them in the social structure, while Coleman obscures this notion. The second difference is that Bourdieu sees social capital as a tool of reproduction for the dominant class, whereas Coleman sees social capital as more positive social control, where trust, information channels and norms are characteristics of the community as a whole, not simply the dominant class (Dika and Singh 2002).

The most commonly referenced definition of social capital is provided by Putnam (1993, 1995, 2000, 2001), who defines social capital as 'features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions' (Putnam 1993: 167). Other scholars have provided definitions that encompass Putnam's broad definition. Kawachi et al. (1999: 1187) state social capital is 'those features of social organization—such as the extent of interpersonal trust between citizens, norms of reciprocity, and density of civic associations—that facilitate cooperation for mutual benefit'. Social capital has also been described as a contextual characteristic describing patterns of civic engagement, trust and mutual obligation among persons (Bellah et al. 1985; Coleman 1988, 1990; Kawachi et al. 1997a; Kawachi et al. 1997b; Portes 1998; Taylor 1989; Weitzman and Kawachi 2000). Finally, Savage and Kanazawa (2002) classify social capital as a commodity that can be used to achieve one's ends.

Sources of Social Capital

Bourdieu looked at three sources of capital: economic, cultural and social (Dika and Singh 2002). These three sources are often considered the foundation for social capital within a community. The amount of the various sources (economic, cultural and social) within a society can determine the level of social capital within a given population. However, all three have not been studied together when determining whether a community has high or low levels of social capital.

From a culturalistic standpoint, Scheufele and Shah (2000) approach social capital from two different perspectives. The first, with decidedly Marxist underpinnings, looks at a community as a group of people 'thrown together' in a common situation. When this happens, people identify with each other and support each other's initiatives. This scenario would address two of Bourdieu's sources—cultural and social, but does not necessarily account for economic equality. The second perspective comes from Durkheim's theory of social integration and the sanctioning capacity of group rituals. In this view, social capital emerges not just from the 'throwing together' of individuals, but from the ritualistic aspects of cohesive groups.

According to Portes (1998), social capital is made up of two elements. First, the social relationship itself allows individuals to claim access to resources possessed by other associates; second is the amount and quality of those resources. Portes states that one must differentiate social capital from the resources acquired through it. Another way to look at social capital is to treat it 'as a resource gained by social relationships with other human beings that can be used for a variety of benefits. Several dimensions thought to be associated with one's level of social capital are the overall number of relationships and the type of associations' (Savage and Kanazawa 2002: 189). Along similar lines, Sanders (2002) addresses two elements of social capital; the first he calls 'bounded solidarity' which is in-group oriented, and a principled form of behaviour; the second, he calls 'enforceable trust', the monitoring and sanctioning capacity of a group.

Measures of Social Capital

Defining and identifying sources of social capital are important in order to measure a community's level of social capital. Interpersonal trust, generalized reciprocity and dense networks of civic associations (Dowla 2001; Sullivan and Transue 1999) are usually examined to study the degree of social capital in a community. Trust is understood as the 'willingness to take risks in a social context based on a sense of confidence that others will respond as expected and will act in mutually supportive ways, or at least that others do not intend harm' (Bullen and Onyx 1998: 1). In reciprocal relationships individuals provide informal mutual

services to benefit others, often at personal cost. The expectation is that kindness will be returned in the future (Kawachi et al. 1997b). Civic engagement refers to the extent to which citizens involve themselves in their communities (Putnam 1993), and is usually measured by per capita membership in groups or associations (for example, churches, labour unions, sports teams, professional or academic societies, school groups, political groups and fraternal organizations).

High versus Low Social Capital

The potential of high social capital versus the possible ramifications of low social capital within a community is often addressed when discussing education and crime within society. High social capital lowers instances of dropping out of school, and social capital has been positively associated with educational achievement (Dika and Singh 2002). Also, public officials in high social capital regions are more likely to believe in political equality, and to show more willingness to compromise with their opponents. In regions of low social capital, citizens are more likely to believe that public affairs are not part of their lives (Sullivan and Transue 1999).

Effects of Social Capital

Many studies have found beneficial effects of social capital on school attainment, occupational attainment and enterprise, and emotional and intellectual development of young people (Scheufele and Shah 2000). Social capital can also be important for the functioning of democracy, for the prevention of crime and delinquency, and for the maintenance of population health (Kawachi et al. 1999).

Social capital is used in explaining how ethnic-based forms of social organization and collective action are embedded in interpersonal networks, and how these forms of organization and action generate and distribute resources (Sanders 2002). Scheufele and Shah (2000) argue that social capital serves as a source of: (a) social control; (b) family support; and (c) benefits through extra-familial networks.

Portes (1998) indicates two ramifications of studying and reporting the desirability of high social capital. First, studies focus attention on the positive consequences of sociability while putting aside its less attractive features. Second, many studies call attention to how such non-monetary forms of sociability can be important sources of power and influence. Scheufele and Shah (2000) point out four direct negative consequences of social capital: exclusion of outsiders, excess claims on group members, restrictions on individual freedoms, and downward levelling norms.

Social Capital and Health

Aside from the intellectual and emotional applications of social capital, it may also influence health in a variety of ways. For example, social capital can promote more rapid diffusion of health information, increase the likelihood that healthy norms of behaviour are adopted, exert influence over deviant health-related behaviour, increase access to local services and amenities, and provide affective support and act as the source of self-esteem and mutual respect (Campbell and McLean 2002; Kawachi et al. 1999; Lindstrom et al. 2002; Macinko and Starfield 2001; McKinlay 1995; Stone and Hughes 2002; Tsutsumi et al. 1998). Furthermore, Kawachi et al. (1999) found a strong correlation between indicators of high social capital and lower mortality rates. Communities with low social capital are characterized by a higher proportion of residents who report their health as being poor. Perhaps the strongest statement linking social capital and health is offered by Lomas (1998: 1181): 'The way we organize our society, the extent to which we encourage interaction among the citizenry, and the degree to which we trust and associate with each other in caring communities is probably the most important determinant of public health'.

Social Capital and Social Change

Social change is rarely a simple linear process. In fact, people supportive of change may encounter powerful forms of resistance as they attempt to alter power dynamics in a community. The level of social capital in a community may be an important component of the social change process, however. If there are high levels of trust in a community, people are more willing to take risks often associated with change. When expectations of reciprocity exist, people know that efforts to help others will be matched, at some point, with equivalent acts of kindness. Finally, civic associations create relational bonds that facilitate people acting together in different contexts. Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore the communicative dynamics of social capital in facilitating social change at the community level.

THE TARU PROJECT IN INDIA AND DATA COLLECTION

The present article relies primarily on qualitative data collected from Abirpur village in Vaishali district, and villages Kamtaul, Madhopur and Chandrahatti in Bihar's Muzaffarpur district. In each of these four villages folk performances dramatizing the *Taru* storyline were carried out a week prior to the radio serial's broadcasts (in February 2002) to prime the message reception environment, encouraging audience members to tune in (Singhal et al. 2004). Some 800 to 1,000 people attended these folk performances in each village. Colourful posters, stickers

and flyers bearing the *Taru* logo, and listing the day and times of the broadcasts were distributed to audiences. Transistors (with a sticker of the *Taru* logo) were awarded to groups who correctly answered questions based on the folk performance. These groups were then formalized as *Taru* radio listening clubs. Each group received an attractive notebook (with a *Taru* logo) and were encouraged to discuss the social themes addressed in *Taru*, relate them to their personal circumstances, and record any decisions or actions they took as a result of being exposed to the programme.

Our data sources from these four villages include: (a) some 45 transcripts of in-depth and focus group interviews with listeners of *Taru*, conducted at two points in time—September 2002 (six months after *Taru*'s broadcasts) and March 2003 (after *Taru* had finished its broadcasts); (b) transcripts of 18 *Taru* listeners' club diaries (each with weekly entries); (c) 22 transcripts of audiotaped listeners' club discussions in village Abirpur after listening to *Taru*; (d) some 14 hours of video testimony provided by listeners of *Taru* and their community members; and (e) extensive field notes of the present authors and other researchers involved in collecting data.¹

In addition, in the summer of 2003, a participatory theatre workshop and folk theatre performances were conducted with 50 *Taru* listening club members from these four villages. The week-long workshop was designed to empower members to develop participatory theatrical performances to capture: (a) their personal and group listening experiences in relation to *Taru*; and (b) their concomitant attempts to secure political and social reform in their respective villages (Harter et al. forthcoming). These folk performances were then staged for village members in an attempt to bring the personal narratives of the participants into the realm of public discourse. This summer workshop yielded scripts, video footage of performances and transcripts of three dozen interviews conducted in these four villages with viewers of performances, workshop participants and community members.

Taru's Story

The story of the radio serial revolves around *Taru*, a young, idealistic and educated woman who works in Suhagpur village's Sheetal Centre, an organization that provides reproductive health care services, carries out village self-help activities, and fights social injustices by mobilizing community action. *Taru* is a close friend of Shashikant, her co-worker at the Sheetal Centre. While there is an undercurrent of romance between the two, they have not yet explicitly expressed it, given that Shashikant is mindful of his lower-caste status (*Taru* belongs to an upper-caste family). Their relationship, including its romantic interludes, represents a call to caste and communal harmony.

Taru's mother, *Yashoda*, is highly supportive of her daughter, whom she sees as an embodiment of her own unaccomplished dreams. On the other hand, *Mangla*, *Taru's* rogue brother,

derides Taru's social work and ridicules her friendship with the lower-caste Shashikant. With the help of Aloni Baba (a village saint) and Guruji (a teacher), Taru and Shashikant fight multiple social evils in a series of intersecting storylines, including preventing a child marriage, stopping the killing of a newborn girl child, encouraging girls to be treated at par with boys, and fostering compassion for those afflicted with AIDS.

A sub-plot involves Naresh, his wife Nirmala, his mother Ramdulari, and his four daughters. Ramdulari insists on a fifth child, arguing for the importance of having a grandson. Nirmala uses contraception to avoid an unwanted pregnancy, and as the story evolves, Ramdulari undergoes a change of heart and starts valuing her granddaughters. Taru and Shashikant work with this family to celebrate the birthday of one of the granddaughters.

Another sub-plot involves Neha, a close friend of *Taru's*, newly married to Kapileshwar, the son of the local *zamindar* (landlord). Kapileshwar starts out as a controlling husband, restricting Neha's mobility outside the home. But Neha wants to lead a meaningful life and begin a school for *dalit* (low-caste) children. Kapileshwar undergoes a change of heart, and becomes highly supportive of Neha's activities, despite criticism from his parents.

Importantly, the storyline of *Taru* clearly shows that this is a programme about building social capital in communities. In each episode there are examples of deepening friendships and relationships across gender and caste lines, sparking volunteerism and civic engagement.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

When entertainment education sparks the process of organizing for social change, social capital may be helpful for people to confront and execute changes in personal behaviour and community dynamics. In this section of the study the communicative dynamics of social capital are described.

Social Capital: Communicative Processes and Outcomes

Our data revealed many examples of social capital and provided insights into how social capital helps both initiate and resist the process of social change. Here the communicative dynamics of social capital are described by focusing on the formation of communication networks, the establishment of relationships based on trust, and the formation of civic associations. These dimensions of social capital helped to produce social change with respect to education, health, child marriage and gender equality. We also gained an understanding of the simultaneity of support and resistance within the context of social capital and gleaned insights into negative social capital.

Education for Lower-caste Children

Mini is a 12-year-old girl from village Chandrahatti. She lives in a joint family. She told us that *Taru* has helped change her family members' views toward such issues as caste distinctions and dowry. Prior to *Taru's* broadcasts, Mini's father was strongly against family members having contact with *dalits*. Motivated by *Taru*, Mini and her brother, over the course of multiple conversations, persuaded their father to change his views towards people of lower castes. Now their father allows anyone from a lower caste to visit his home and allows his son to teach at the school for *dalits*. The cooperative front formed by Mini and her brother is a clear display of social capital embedded within their family structure (Dika and Singh 2002) and it helped to produce a beneficial outcome for the community. There is now increased contact between people of different castes (personal interview, 5 March 2003).

Sunita from Abirpur village provided an example of how social capital formation helped open a school for *dalit* children in the community. One day Sunita was talking with her friend Usha and they decided to start a school for poor *dalit* children the way Neha did in *Taru*. They offered the instruction free of charge because the parents could not afford tuition. Although some other community members thought their idea was a good one, no one else was willing to risk such an enterprise. So Sunita and Usha talked to other *Taru* listeners in Abirpur and cooperatively established the school (personal interview, 6 March 2003). This example shows that social capital can be powerful at even the basic interpersonal level within a community (Dika and Singh 2002).

The school did not start without problems, however. Some people in the community criticized Sunita, Usha and their friends for starting a school out of greed. Even after they clarified that they were not accepting money for tuition, the critics were not satisfied. Somewhat paradoxically, even some of the poor families who were sending their children to the school free of charge withdrew their children. Fortunately, the school stayed open for several months with as many as 40 children in attendance on any given day. Sunita strongly believes that by keeping the school open many in the Abirpur village community have learned an important lesson: 'You can offer to help others without receiving any direct economic benefit' (personal interview, 6 March 2003). Rather, you help others in your community because when you help others move forward, everyone moves forward, thus providing a form of reciprocity (Kawachi et al. 1997b; Kawachi et al. 1999). Clearly, this is a vital form of social capital in action.

Community Health

In order for social change to occur, relationships of trust need to be established between people (Bellah et al. 1985; Coleman 1988, 1990). This is particularly important with respect

Kumkum Kumari of Abirpur established contacts with *dahits* based on the storyline of *Taru*, which encouraged the formation of friendships across caste lines. Once friendly relations are established, it becomes possible for people to influence one another in meaningful ways (Caulkins and Peters 2002). Kumkum explained that she found out one *dahit* family was

Child Marriage

As the villagers of Abirpur witness Usha's selfless actions on a daily basis, they recognize the critical role she plays in their community. Usha was inspired to continue her work, in part, by the example set by *Taru*. In the character of *Taru*, Usha was able to recognize the importance of selfless actions in moving a community forward. She has also influenced others in the community to act. This gradual building of social capital is palpable in Abirpur as people are beginning to recognize the power of helping one another through establishing norms of reciprocity (Putnam 1993, 1995, 2000, 2001).

Usha (Maharaj) of village Abirpur is the sister of the local RHP [Manoj Maharaj]. One day she was at home helping her mother in the kitchen when a man appeared at the door carrying a small child who felt ill and had not eaten for two days. Usha immediately retrieved the first-aid box, took the boy's temperature, and administered an injection for his fever. Usha quickly and selflessly shifted between her role as daughter and village doctor. (field notes, 14 July 2003)

to personal issues pertaining to health (Campbell and McLean 2002; Kawachi et al. 1997b; Kawachi et al. 1999; Lomas 1998). Manoj Maharaj, the rural health practitioner (RHP) from Abirpur explains that *Taru* has encouraged girls and women to be more proactive with respect to personal health and hygiene. He personally encouraged women in his village and in surrounding villages to share their concerns and questions with him. In his conversations with us he emphasized how an increasing number of village women seek his help. Specifically, a number of women now talk with him concerning problems with their monthly menstrual cycle. At least a dozen girls from Abirpur have discussed their menstrual cycles with him. In all his years of practice this has never occurred before. Some have asked him for medicine associated with abdominal cramps, others request him to purchase sanitary napkins for them (which are more hygienic than the pieces of torn cloth typically used by village women). Manoj attributes this change in behaviour to the trusting relationship he has formed with women in Abirpur, but he also recognizes that this trust could not have been established were it not for the messages embedded in *Taru* (personal interview, 6 March 2003). One of the more powerful characteristics of social capital is the selfless action of one person to help another. One of the clearest instances of such an action was observed by one of our research team members in their field notes:

about to marry off their child who was not yet of legal age. Importantly, she had already established a respectful relationship with the young girl's father. The first time she visited this family's home, the father put a piece of cloth on the chair before she sat down. Kumkum said, 'No I will sit exactly the same way that you sit. There is no difference between us. Everybody has the same blood. God makes everybody the same way.' For this *dalit* family this was a unique event in their lives. A person of a higher caste treated them with respect. Sometime after this first encounter Kumkum found out that this family was about to marry off their underage daughter. She said to the father, 'What you are doing is not right. You are only doing this for personal benefit so you can end your financial responsibility to care for your child. What sort of life will your daughter have if she is married so young?' (personal interview, 5 March 2003). This conversation could never have occurred if the friendship had not been established first. The outcome was significant and the marriage was called off.

Networks of association and the building of trust may help build social capital, but resistance to social change can prevent progress. Vandana from village Kamtaul became friends with members of a lower-caste family. One day Vandana heard that the 13-year-old daughter in this household was to be married. Vandana went immediately to her friend's home and tried to convince the parents not to marry their daughter. She was, however, unsuccessful in persuading them. She observed sadly, 'What can we do when their thinking is different than ours?' (personal interview, 24 July 2003).

Gender Equality

Forming communication networks across genders builds social capital (Portes 1998) and creates the potential for social change. Indeed, the empowerment of women becomes possible only when men and women are able to converse with one another on a broad range of topics. In village Abirpur it became clear to the members of our research team that girls are much more vocal than in most other neighbouring villages. A number of our interviewees explained that prior to *Taru* they never used to sit with boys. Now they not only sit with boys in public areas, they also talk about many issues, including socially controversial topics such as gender equality, caste, dowry and family planning (focus group interview, 26 July 2003). The emergence of girls as vocal advocates for change is important on two fronts. First, change becomes possible when people begin to express their ideas in public. Second, change involving women's empowerment and gender roles can occur only when men and women talk with one another, thereby initiating the process of role negotiation (Sanders 2002).

One of the most powerful engines of change that we encountered was Chandni, a 9-year-old girl from village Chandrahatti. Her exposure to *Taru* has ignited a fire in her to empower girls in her village. She has a sharp mind and articulates her thoughts with passion. When she heard that a participatory theatre workshop was being conducted for *Taru* listener club members, she went around her village, recruiting young girls and boys to take the trip to

village Kamtaul (located about 8 km away). When the day came for the workshop, however, few girls showed up. Anger and helplessness were inscribed on Chandni's face, but she was not to be denied. Yogita, a member of our participatory theatre facilitation team, accompanied Chandni to the homes of all the girls who had agreed previously to participate. Chandni directly confronted parents imploring them to permit their daughters to attend the workshop. Although such direct confrontation by a young girl is unheard of in rural India, most of the parents could not say no to Chandni. On the second day of the workshop Chandni brought more children with her, including teenage girls (field notes, 25 July 2003: 37–38). Chandni's success in recruiting participants was a matter of activating communication networks (Caulkins and Peters 2002). In developing these network connections, Chandni enacted relationships of trust (Bellah et al. 1985; Coleman 1988, 1990) with children and adults in the community. These dimensions of social capital (networks and trust) were central to her accomplishments in recruiting participants to the theatre workshop.

Central to Putnam's (1993, 1995, 2000, 2001) concept of social capital is participation in clubs. Although the participatory theatre workshop we started in Kamtaul did not have the status of a club when we began our work with community members, it eventually sparked the formation of the *Taru* Dramatic Club in at least two villages—Abirpur and Kamtaul. Importantly, this workshop involved only minimal direction from our professional theatre team. Most of the production was guided by the participants' own efforts. Participants selected issues to be presented in the play, developed the plot, wrote the script, selected roles, arranged for costumes and properties, built the stage and performed. The theatrical performance worked as a platform, giving participants space to discuss issues and question the status quo. There were several disagreements among the participants regarding the nature of the problems to be presented in the play. Consequently, scripts were revised until all the participants were in agreement. Then, during the performances, scripts were sometimes modified extemporaneously. For example, in one of the performances, Vandana, a young woman from Kamtaul, played the role of the protagonist in a play depicting the practice of dowry. Vandana became so agitated about the practice of dowry that just after the play ended she addressed the audience directly. She made an appeal to everyone to not take dowry and to not torture their daughters-in-law (field notes, 31 July 2003: 2).

Chandni also played a critical role in making the theatrical performance a success. As a member of the children's group, she told stories that could be considered for the play. Once the best stories were selected, Chandni took over and organized the whole group in the creation of their script. Within a couple of hours they produced a script and allocated roles. In their first run, Chandni's group produced a spectacular show depicting gender inequalities at home (field notes, 31 July 2003: 38).

Before the formal performance Chandni approached one of the members of our theatre team and asked if she could sing a song. We agreed. She then sang a beautiful song on dowry

and the status of the girl child in society. When asked where she had learned the song, she told us that she had written and composed the song herself. An excerpt from her song follows:

Mother and Father, why do you differentiate between my brother and I?
You send him to school but you keep me home to cook.
Why do you differentiate between him and I?
When he gets married, you will be smiling
But when I get married, you will be crying because you have to give dowry.
Why do you differentiate between him and I? (field notes 30 July 2003)

Importantly, Chandni's emotionally moving song was made possible through the formal enactment of the theatre workshop. In rural India children rarely talk to their elders about issues such as dowry, gender equality or family planning. Through theatre and music, however, performers created a 'free space of discourse' in which they addressed topics on the 'imaginative platform' of the stage. Such topics are difficult to bring up in the 'real platform' of direct face-to-face interaction. So the participatory theatre workshop (and its spin-offs, such as the *Taru* Dramatic Clubs in Abirpur and Kamtaul villages) becomes an important generator of social capital in Bihar's rural communities.

Social Capital: The Simultaneity of Support and Resistance

When social capital is built between different groups it offers the potential for community building activities, but there are also limits to what can be accomplished. Mukesh from Abirpur explains that in his community divisions between people based on caste are blurring. However, when it comes to inter-caste marriage, the line is drawn. 'We can't go in for inter-caste marriages. We can't think of any love story, like is going on between Shashikant and *Taru* [the two characters from the radio soap opera]' (personal interview, 25 July 2003: 11). This example shows one of the negative aspects of social capital. Although social capital may exist within each caste, there are limits between castes. This is due to the fact that, at some level, each caste views the other as separate or as the 'other' (Scheufele and Shah 2000).

The process of forming social capital is not simple. Often there are forces of both support and resistance that people confront. Kumkum from Abirpur explained to us that when she became part of a *Taru* Listeners' Club her brothers told her, 'If you write the *Taru* diary, we will tear out the pages.' Kumkum responded by saying that even if they tear the pages, she will continue to write. Her mother was unsupportive as well; arguing that there was no purpose in Kumkum writing down her thoughts after listening to *Taru*. Her mother also told her to not talk to boys because other people in the community would 'talk'. One way of interpreting

Kumkum's family interactions is that social capital was present but it was in the form of restricting her individual freedom (ibid.).

Despite the resistance that she faced at home, Kumkum received support from her father and her friends. Soni, one of her closest friends, told her to listen to *Taru* and write her notes secretly, out of view of others. Kumkum did so and she was able to continue her participation in the listeners' club (personal interview, 2 September 2002: 18). Without the social support of her friend and encouragement from her father, it is unlikely that Kumkum would have continued her participation.

Negative Social Capital

Norms of reciprocity can be based on negative aspects of social capital. Beena Kumari of Chandrahatti is an extremely shy teenage girl. It took considerable time for us to convince her to talk to us. She first asked the permission of her mother. At times Beena would not meet our eyes while talking. Upon coaxing, she explained that she did not listen to *Taru* because of all her housework responsibilities. She explained that after *Taru*'s broadcasts, she has become aware of the debates over the issue of dowry in Chandrahatti. Beena told us that 'dowry should not be taken because it is a social ill', but she also recognizes that 'dowry secures the position of the girl in her in-laws' home. Without dowry she may be abused and tortured for not contributing to the economic well-being of her in-laws' (personal interview, 2 March 2003: 2). So the giving and taking of dowry is a form of reciprocity in many Indian families. Money and gifts are given in the hope of being treated in a humane manner. Such reciprocity cannot be construed as a positive form of social capital formation (Portes 1998).

The tight interconnectedness that exists in many rural Indian communities clearly facilitates social capital formation. When restrictive views are held toward others' empowerment and advancement in society, however, social capital restricts the growth and potential of particular people. Meenakshi, a 17-year-old girl from Madhopur who listened regularly to *Taru*, explained that taking the daring steps of the protagonist is not possible for her because she has to honour the expectations of her parents. She cannot dissent or cross the boundaries of gender expectations. So, although she has thoughts of emancipation from societal restrictions, she does not believe she can translate these thoughts into action. Furthermore, Meenakshi believes that change will only be possible if boys take the lead in advocating social change. Until then women will be suppressed in the name of '*ghar ki izzat*' (maintaining the honour of the household) (personal interview, 3 March 2003: 1-2). Thus, an important component of social capital formation (familial interconnectedness) can repress empowerment and social change rather than fuel it. Scheufele and Shah (2000) argue that such manifestations of social capital place excessive demands on group members and pressure the powerless to accept downward levelling norms.

Neelam Devi reported another example of tight interconnectedness leading to negative outcomes in village Madhopur. After she gave birth to her first daughter, her husband convinced her to undergo tubal ligation to limit their family size. She, however, was more influenced by the neighbours, who said that their family would be cursed if they did not have a boy. After the birth of a second and then a third daughter, they finally had a son. Neelam realizes now that she should have limited the size of her family, but the community pressure was too strong for her to resist (personal interview, 4 March 2003).

One of Putnam's (2000) recommendations for social capital formation is encouraging participation in team sports. Sports may not always promote positive civic engagement, however. Consider the formation of the *Taru* Cricket Club in Abirpur for example, when teenage boys and young men participate in cricket matches, they display camaraderie and cooperation, behaviours that can spur positive community development. In village Abirpur, however, the cricket club had a dysfunctional effect on social change. Soni of Abirpur explains that young women and men helped to start a village school for poor *dalit* children. The school was growing in size and popularity until the male members became more interested in playing cricket than in teaching in the school. They slowly started drifting away from the school, showing up to teach less and less. A meeting was held to discuss this problem and the men agreed to teach more often. Unfortunately, they only showed up to teach one or two days a week, spending most of their free time playing cricket (focus group interview, 4 March 2003). These actions are consistent with Dyreson (2001: 26) who argues that sport can 'build and destroy community in the same moment. It can unite and segregate in the same instant'. In Abirpur the cricket club helped unify the men, while at the same time it separated them from their responsibilities in the village school.

CONCLUSIONS

In the present article we examined an entertainment education radio soap opera in India, *Taru*, which led to certain socially desirable effects in the state of Bihar by sparking the development of social capital.

Exposure to and engagement with an entertainment education programme may facilitate the formation and existence of social capital in communities. In this study we saw social capital displayed through the development of: (a) relationships based on trust, (b) norms of reciprocity; and (c) communication networks. The existence of social capital in the four villages examined contributed to educational programmes for lower-caste children, the improvement of community health, the stopping of a number of child marriages, and the promotion of gender equality.

We also discovered, however, that social capital can initiate forces of both support and resistance towards social change. Furthermore, negative social capital may contribute to excluding certain people from participation in pro-social action, restricting individual freedom, placing excessive demands on group members, and a downward movement of social norms. Future research is needed to develop our understanding of the range of positive and negative community effects produced by social capital.

Our study also raises important questions about the ethics of entertainment education programmes. When millions of audience members listen to a radio programme, how can a programmer attempt to spark social system changes without taking some responsibility regarding the changes that are produced? What is needed is sustained collaboration and discussion among media programmers, researchers and targeted audience members about the ethical implications of changing the thinking and behaviour of people in socially meaningful ways (Brown and Singhal 1990; Singhal and Rogers 1999).

Arvind Singhal is at the School of Communication Studies, Lasher Hall 206, Ohio University, Athens, OH 45701, USA. E-mail: singhal@ohio.edu.

Michael J. Papa is at the Department of Speech Communication and Dramatic Arts, Central Michigan University, Mt Pleasant, MI 48858, USA. E-mail: papalmj@cmich.edu.

Devendra Sharma is at the Department of Communication, California State University—Fresno, 5241 N Maple Avenue, Fresno, CA 93740, USA.

Saumya Pant is Doctoral Student, School of Communication Studies, Lasher Hall, Ohio University, Athens, OH, USA.

Tracy Worrell, Nithya Muthuswamy and Kim Witte are at the Department of Communication, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824, USA.

NOTE

1. Other forms of data were collected to deepen our understanding of how *Taru* influenced its audience, including a pre-post random sample survey of *Taru* listeners and non-listeners in a sentinel research site in Begusarai district, Bihar, India. *Taru* seemed to have engendered strong audience effects (Singhal et al. 2003).

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