

Entertainment-Education and Possibilities for Second-Order Social Change*

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Inspired by the entertainment-education radio soap opera, Taru, a family from the upper-caste brahmin community in Bihar, India, allowed men from the lower caste dalit community to serve water to guests during their daughter's wedding. While most social change projects achieve first-order change, that is, change within a system which itself remains unchanged, Taru seemed to have engendered second-order changes, that is, changing the system itself. The present article investigates how Taru generated second-order changes in Bihar, distilling lessons for how entertainment-education programmes can be strategically positioned to create and sustain systemic social change.

Kenneth Duva Burke (1950, 1954/1984, 1969)—American literary theorist, rhetorician and philosopher—wrote extensively about the symbolic, narrative and dramatic processes through which a society and its constituent actors develop certain world-views, and how these world-views lead to *trained incapacities*—that is, people losing their capacity to think beyond what they are trained in. Put another way, in Burkean thought, the one who wields a hammer is likely to be incapacitated (by virtue of their training) to look at the world as a nail, thus closing the door on a myriad of other possible roles. For Burke, such ‘occupational psychoses’ or ‘trained incapacities’ lead to partial and fossilized institutional scripts on how social actors should think and act.¹

*We thank the following individuals and organizations for their collaboration, support and conduct of the present research project in Bihar, India: David Andrews and Kate Randolph of Population Communications International (PCI), New York; Gopi Gopalakrishnan, Arisingh Dutt, Shejo Bose, Neelam Vachani, Sourov Chowdhury, Pankaj Kumar Singh, Gopa Chatterji, Akhilesh Kumar Sharma and Sushil Kumar of Janani in Patna, India (some of these individuals have moved from Janani since our collaboration); Karuna Shrivastav, Alka Kumar and Kamal Dutt of All India Radio; Pandit Ram Dayal Sharma of Brij Lok Madhuri; Usha Bhasin of Doordarshan; P.N. Vasanti, Mumtaz Ahmed, Chetna Verma, Alok Shrivastav, Alee Sinha and the team at field researchers of the Centre for Media Studies, New Delhi, India. This research was supported by a grant from PCI to Ohio University. We thank Gregory Shepherd, William Rawlins and two anonymous reviewers for their feedback and helpful comments on an earlier version of this article. A version of this article was previously presented at the Entertainment-Education and Global Africa Conference, Athens, Ohio, USA, April 2004, and at the Fourth International Entertainment-Education Conference, Cape Town, South Africa, September 2004. This article is one output of a larger research project that has yielded several other publications, including Singhal et al. (2006).

Many well-known scientists, scholars and practitioners have repeatedly called for overcoming the occupational psychoses that characterizes our approach to complex problems. For instance, when tackling intractable scientific problems, Albert Einstein's mantra was a self-coined expression: 'We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.' Lamenting the overzealous use of straight-jacketed, rational approaches to problem solving, Einstein was fond of telling his Princeton University students and colleagues: 'Logic will only get you from A to B. But imagination will take you everywhere.' In other words, Einstein believed in the power of the human imagination to break conventional moulds; to expand the solution space to solving deep-seated problems.

In his 2004 book *Solving Tough Problems*, Adam Kahane, a world-renowned designer and facilitator of processes through which business, government and civil society leaders solve their toughest problems, argues that our most common way of solving problems is to use expertise and authority to apply tried-and-true 'best practices'. While this approach may work for simple and familiar problems, Kahane argues, it fails for complex, unfamiliar and conflictual social problems. When we try to solve these complex social problems using expertise and authority, Kahane emphasizes, the problems often get stuck in an irresolvable stalemate. Such problems get unstuck only by the use of authority and force, further compounding the problem in the long run. Simply put, Kahane advocates for new ways to solve old problems.

David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva (1987), the founders of the appreciative inquiry (AI) movement in the mid-1980s, argue that organizational and social change projects are often guided by a deficit-based approach in which the expert's role is viewed as paramount in both diagnosing problems and finding solutions. They argue that a focus on the problem or 'what does not work' diminishes the capacity of participants to generate innovative solutions (also see Cooperrider and Whitney 1999). Advocating a focus on 'what works', Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) call for interventions that Gergen (1982: 136) identified as having *generative capacity*—that is, the 'capacity to challenge the guiding assumptions...to raise fundamental questions...to foster reconsideration of that which is "taken for granted" and...furnish new alternatives for social action'.

Albert Einstein, Adam Kahane and appreciative inquiry proponents, David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva challenge us to expand the nature and scope of our inquiry, our thinking and our actions in approaching complex social and organizational problems. We also believe that social science scholars of communication have focused too much and for too long on straight-jacketed, cognitively-structured techniques of persuasion to influence audience knowledge, attitudes and practices, leading to behavioural and social change. To bring change, communication and persuasion practitioners have been preoccupied with filling what is called the KAP gap—the gap between an individual's knowledge, attitudes and practices (O'Keefe 1990; Rogers et al. 1999; Singhal and Rogers 1999). Rhetoricians, on the other hand, have

focused on the role of communication in promoting truth, justice and other ideologies in a society. However, there is very little research that systematically explicates the communicative processes of fundamental, value-altering, sustainable social change.

The present article investigates the role of mass-mediated, entertainment-education programmes in generating second-order changes (which involve a fundamental, transformational shift in one's values and beliefs) in social systems. Most past studies of entertainment-education programmes have focused on studying first-order social changes (which involve small shifts in knowledge, attitudes and practices without any fundamental shift in one's values system) (Singhal and Rogers 1999, 2002). Specifically, we study the second-order societal changes engendered by group listening to an entertainment-education radio soap opera, *Taru*, in certain villages of India's Bihar state.

SETTING THE STAGE: SOCIAL CHANGES SPARKED IN BIHAR

As an illustration, consider the following three sets of social change processes sparked by the *Taru* entertainment-education radio initiative in Bihar (Papa et al. 2006). Of these three illustrative sets of social change processes, our article—in latter sections—focuses on one of them in great depth.

1. Inspired by the character of Neha, who establishes a school to educate dalit (lower-caste) children in the fictional storyline, young male and female listeners of *Taru* in Abirpur village come together to discuss the paucity of educational opportunities for underprivileged children, and establish a school for dalit children by the village well. For the first time in the history of Abirpur, young unmarried men and women engaged in a collaborative social cause activity.
2. Moved by the celebration of a young girl's birthday in the *Taru* storyline, a couple in Madhopur Village decided to celebrate their daughter's birthday. While a son's birthday is often a cause for celebration in rural Bihar, a daughter's is rarely a joyous occasion. Sons and daughters, or boys and girls, receive differential treatment in Bihar's rural society. Relative to girls, boys receive better education, nutrition and care; they have better mobility outside of homes; and are more pampered by parents, grandparents and community elders. The actions of this one couple in Madhopur led to a string of birthday celebrations for girls in Madhopur, complete with balloons, music, sweets and cakes. This practice is now prevalent in several neighbouring villages of Madhopur, where group listening to *Taru* occurred.

3. Vandana Kumari, a 17-year-old member of village Kamtaul's *Taru* listeners' club, also regularly listened to the entertainment-education radio serial. She noted: 'We listen to each episode of *Taru* and discuss the episode's content in our listeners' club. After listening to this serial, we have taken decisions to wipe out caste discrimination, teach dalit children, and to pursue higher education'.

By August 2002, within the first five months of *Taru*'s broadcasts, Vandana's family undertook several bold social actions—which previously would have been unthinkable. For instance, Vandana's father, Shailendra Singh, a rural health practitioner (RHP), goaded by his family members, directly intervened to stop a child marriage in Kamtaul village. 'It was the first time in our village that a child marriage was opposed', said Singh (personal interview, 3 September 2002). Further, Vandana's mother, Sunita Singh, supported by family members, launched an adult literacy programme for over 20 dalit village women. Every afternoon she walked to the Harijan *tola* (the neighbourhood where the lower-caste people lived) and taught the women alphabets, numbers and basic health practices. 'In our community, it is unthinkable for upper-caste *bahus* [daughters-in-law] to mingle with lower-caste women...but it had to be done', noted Sunita Singh (personal interview, 3 September 2002).

However, perhaps the boldest action that the Singh family took during the summer of 2002 was to involve the dalits in the wedding celebrations of Vandana's elder sister (Papa et al. 2006). The dalits (also referred to as *achuts* or untouchables) constitute the lowest rung in India's caste system. Working mainly as scavengers, toilet cleaners or garbage handlers, or engaged in menial occupations as farm labourers or cobblers, the dalits are socially ostracized from the mainstream community and live in Harijan *tolas*, such as the one in Kamtaul village. Through certain creative, strategic and new critical actions, the Singh family helped integrate dalits more fully in the social matrix of Kamtaul village. The Singh family's actions sparked systemic social changes for dalits, which decades of emancipatory governmental programmes of affirmative action had previously failed to achieve.

The actions undertaken by the Singhs, sparked by listening to an entertainment-education soap opera, we argue, hold important lessons for social change practitioners interested in fostering lasting second-order changes. To convey our main points, we organize the present article in the following manner. First, we enunciate the key differences between first- and second-order social changes, and propose a framework for understanding how entertainment-education programmes can spark second-order social changes (like the ones initiated by the Singh family) through a process of modelling, interpersonal dialogue, reframing of existing social realities, and enactment of a new critical action. We propose that once a new critical action is legitimized, then other social actions can follow, which amplify the previous ones, reshaping old social norms. We then discuss our various data collection methods, including a description of how the storyline of *Taru* modelled second-order changes. We then systematically analyse the second-order social change processes sparked in Kamtaul village by focusing

on certain critical actions of the Singh family (mentioned previously) and distilling key insights for social change scholars and practitioners.

FIRST- VERSUS SECOND-ORDER CHANGE

In their landmark book *Change: Principles of Problem Formation and Problem Resolution*, Watzlawick et al. (1974) offered a useful approach to understanding social change. Consistent with the call to employ non-linear, lateral and 'unconventional' approaches to solve complex social problems—as advocated by Einstein, Kahane and Cooperrider and Srivastava at the beginning of this article—Watzlawick et al. argued that the way social change agents define the problem determines the nature of the proposed solutions. In most cases the problem is poorly defined, be it at the individual, group or societal level. Embracing a systems perspective, Watzlawick et al. argue that change can either be classified as 'first-order change' or as 'second-order change' (ibid.: 10). First-order change 'occurs within the given system which itself remains unchanged'. In second-order change the system itself changes. In other words, 'second-order change is change of change' (ibid.: 11).

The concepts of first- and second-order change have been explicated by scholars in several disciplines. In inter-cultural communication, Bennett (1993) argued that when people adapt to new cultures two types of modification occur—behavioural modification and value modification. When a sojourner learns to bow appropriately in front of a Japanese business colleague, behaviour modification occurs. However, after years of living in Japan, if one's fundamental values about the importance of showing respect have changed when one bows, value modification has occurred. Behaviour modification (without value modification) represents first-order change; value modification, which is more fundamental and transformational, represents second-order change.

Using a familiar analogy, Maier (1987) argues that when water becomes warmer or colder, first-order change occurs. However, when water turns into ice or steam, second-order change has occurred. First-order change is incremental; involving a linear progression to do more or less, better, faster or with greater accuracy. Second-order change, on the other hand, involves a non-linear progression, a transformation from one state to another (ibid.). Second-order change requires greater creativity and prolonged investment of time and contact by a change agent.

Moursund (2002) also distinguishes between first- and second-order change. He argues that most new inventions tend to 'amplify' what already exists, that is, engender first-order changes. For example, an electric typewriter is replaced with a word processor with a memory. With new diets and exercise regimens, athletes are able to run faster and jump higher. Second-order change occurs, however, when there is a fundamental shift in the way a technology is used.

For example, the invention of the steam engine fundamentally changed the way mechanical power was harnessed, bringing far-reaching social changes in terms of both societal production and consumption.

The key propositions we associate with first- and second-order change are contrasted in Table 1.

Table 1
Key Differences between First- and Second-order Change

<i>First-order change</i>	<i>Second-order change</i>
Adjustments within the existing system	Change of the existing system
Doing more or less of the same thing	Trying things 'outside the box'
Generally reversible	Generally irreversible
Non-transformational	Transformational
Not much new learning	Requires new learning
No fundamental shift in values or behaviours	Fundamental shift in values or behaviours
Old story can still be told	New story is told

As noted previously, first-order change involves a response to problems in which one tries more or less of the same idea. For example, to stop smoking, people are persuaded to try the latest nicotine patch in the market. However, this behavioural shift, even if it occurs, does not adequately address the underlying causes of smoking. Thus, such behavioural changes are often short-lived. The story of quitting smoking a million times is told over and over again. Second-order change, on the other hand, represents a more fundamental, transformational and irreversible shift in a social system.

Watzlawick et al. (1974) argue that there is a critical need for change agents to understand what level of social change is needed. When first-order change is required and a second-order strategy is used, there is bound to be a 'revolution'. In contrast, if there is a need to change the fundamental values of a system, and a first-order change is promoted, only cosmetic social changes are achieved. The first-order change strategy of 'more of the same' can actually make the problem worse. For instance, regulating the consumption of alcohol in a society is necessary, but when restrictions do not work, a natural tendency is to add more punitive restrictions. Legislation may increase the age to get a driver's licence, reduce the levels of blood alcohol content to be cited for drinking and driving, or even revoke one's driver's licence after a first offence. Or, as an extreme first-order change strategy, one could implement total prohibition. However, in every country where prohibition has been tried, new sets of problems have emerged, including bootlegging, crime and corruption. Watzlawick et al. (ibid.) argue that the solution (prohibition) can become the bigger problem.

So, in order to bring about transformational social changes, where both behavioural and value modification are desired, change agents need to understand the processes through

which second-order changes occur. For instance, how does a society fundamentally change its values about egalitarianism to place an equal value on the well-being of a girl child as much as a boy child, or of a lower-caste dalit as much as a higher-caste priest? And what role can entertainment-education discourses play in generating second-order social change processes?

E-E-initiated Second-order Change Processes

For second-order change to occur, new stories that resonate with the existing realities of audience members need to be told (see Table 1). These new stories must embody dramatically different solutions to old problems. These solutions have to be of the *here and now* variety; that is, things that can be done here and now to effect a change (Watzlawick et al. 1974)). E-E programmes can model new social realities (Singhal et al. 2004a). Existing patterns of social behaviour can be questioned and new ways of dealing with them can be modelled. For instance, in the 1999 *Soul City* entertainment-education television series in South Africa, a new collective behaviour was modelled to portray how neighbours might intervene in a spousal abuse situation (Singhal and Rogers 2003). The prevailing cultural norm in South Africa was for neighbours, even if they wished to help a victim, not to intervene in domestic abuse. Wife (or partner) abuse is seen as a private matter, carried out in a private space, with curtains drawn and behind closed doors. In the *Soul City* series neighbours collectively decide to break this ongoing cycle of abuse. When the next wife-beating episode occurred, they gathered around the abuser's residence and collectively banged pots and pans, censuring the abuser's actions (Soul City 2000; Usdin et al. 2004). After this episode was broadcast, pot banging was reported in several locations in South Africa (Singhal and Rogers 2002). By watching the neighbours collectively act against an abuser, viewers learned new ways to break the cycle of spousal abuse.

However, for second-order change to occur, merely learning new behaviours through media models is not enough (Bandura 1977, 1997). Acquiring (or learning) a new behaviour is only the first step. Audience members typically have various doubts, inhibitions and fears about performing the newly-learned behaviour. These doubts need to be clarified and fears overcome before they can think of performing them in their own social context (Freire 1970). Discussions, dialogue and conversations among audience members regarding the content of a media programme can clarify doubts, overcome inhibitions, and provide a sense of collective efficacy to act (Papa et al. 2000; Svenkerud et al. 1999). Collective efficacy is the degree to which individuals in a system believe that they can organize and execute courses of action required to achieve collective goals (Bandura 1997). Collective efficacy helps promote meaningful social change because such change is embedded within a network of social influences. It is concerned with people's confidence in their joint capabilities to accomplish set goals, and to withstand opposition and setbacks (ibid.). For this process to begin, people need to believe that they can solve their mutually-experienced problems through unified effort (Papa et al. 2000).

Members of a community can collectively feel efficacious to solve a social problem that could not be dealt with on an individual basis (as demonstrated in the *Soul City* pot-banging episode).

Once audience members feel empowered to act, they often discuss and mentally rehearse how their actions may be implemented and tailored to their specific local cultural context. For second-order change to occur, audience members have to think about acting in the here and now go 'outside the box', and provide a new definition to an old circumstance (as the neighbours did by intervening in the *Soul City* pot-banging episode). In essence, the existing problem is reframed so that it does not carry the implication of unchangeability (Watzlawick et al. 1974). For example, Mahatma Gandhi in 1918 arbitrated a wage dispute between textile mill owners in Ahmedabad and factory workers. Locked in a stalemate, the factory workers wanted a 35 per cent increase in salary; the mill owners' best offer was 20 per cent. Both parties were hurting but did not budge, and no viable solution seemed to be in sight. Gandhi stepped in with a culturally-acceptable solution that reframed the existing problem and saved face for both parties. The factory workers received their desired 35 per cent increase the first day (hence satisfying their demand), 20 per cent the next day (mollifying the factory owners), and then a perpetual 27.5 per cent increase, the arithmetic compromise (Gardner 1997).

For second-order change to occur a new critical action is introduced that reframes an existing reality (as illustrated by the Gandhi's arithmetic compromise). Some residents of Thembisa township in South Africa, where domestic abuse was widespread, were inspired by the *Soul City* pot-banging episode (discussed earlier) to intervene in a local domestic abuse situation. This critical collective action, previously unknown, helped reframe the role of neighbours in addressing spousal abuse (Singhal and Rogers 2003). Previously neighbours served as silent colluders, helplessly watching an ongoing cycle of domestic abuse in their neighborhood. However, through the critical action of banging pots and pans outside the abuser's home, Thembisa residents reframed the perceptually 'private' nature of spousal abuse into an act of 'public' censure. A few months later patrons of a local pub in Thembisa township exhibited a variation of this practice: they collectively banged bottles when a man physically abused his girlfriend in a bar (Usdin et al. 2004). When such collective interventions in abuse situations occurred with some frequency in Thembisa, they gained in legitimacy. Within the next year such neighbourly interventions spread to other townships in South Africa (ibid.).

When second-order change gains legitimacy, amplification occurs. Amplification involves the spread of a second-order change from one context to another with the necessary modifications to fit the new context. So when community members go from banging pots and pans outside a domestic abuser's home to banging bottles inside a bar, they engage in amplification. Amplification of second-order changes over a period of time and leads to a routinization of the 'new' values, norms and actions in a society.

In summary, when audience members attend to entertainment-education, they can learn new ways of dealing with existing problems. When they talk about these new possibilities with others, they clarify in their minds how these new ways relate to their circumstance.

These discussions create a climate of social support and collective efficacy for audience members to consider taking critical action. The performance of the critical action is preceded by mental rehearsal as audience members reframe existing realities into culturally-acceptable interventions. When such interventions gain social acceptance, they find legitimacy and are routinized through a process of amplification.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

Our research on how the *Taru* project's various interventional activities sparked second-order changes in certain villages of Bihar is guided by methodological triangulation, the use of multiple research methods (both quantitative and qualitative) to investigate the same phenomenon. The present article draws mostly on various types of qualitative data collected over a period of 18 months from four villages in India's Bihar state: Abirpur in Vaishali district and villages Kamtaul, Madhopur and Chandrahatti in Muzaffarpur district.

Taru was publicized by the local rural health practitioners in each of these four villages, including by Shailendra Singh of Kamtaul village—whose bold social actions were discussed at the beginning of this article. Through the support of rural health practitioners in 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 and to encourage audience members to tune in (Singhal et al. 2004b). Some 800 to 1,000 people attended these folk performances in each village, including mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, high-caste brahmins and low-caste dalits, men and women, both married and unmarried. Colourful posters, stickers and flyers bearing the *Taru* logo, and listing the day and times of broadcasts were distributed to audiences. About half a dozen colourful wall paintings (20 feet by 10 feet) promoting *Taru*'s broadcasts were placed at major intersections and public places around these four villages (one of them was in Kamtaul's high school, which is located on the main state highway). Transistors (with a sticker of *Taru*'s 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 the programme, relate them to their personal circumstances, and record any decisions or actions they took as a result of being exposed to it.

Our data sources from these four villages included: (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 initial broadcast) 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 first author (who made four visits to these villages during the 18 months of interventional activities), and of the other half-dozen field researchers involved in collecting data.

In addition, in the summer of 2003 a participatory theatre workshop and folk theatre performances were conducted with 45 *Taru* listening club members hailing from these four villages. One of the authors (Saumya Pant), along with other members of the *Taru* Project team, co-led this theatre workshop. The week-long workshop was designed to empower *Taru* listening club members 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. In addition, the author spent two weeks living in village Abirpur (a week before and a week after the workshop), conducting in-depth and focus group interviews, collecting data through the technique of participatory photography, and keeping an extensive field journal of her ethnographic observations. We draw upon these different sets of data to analyse the *Taru*-sparked second-order change processes in Bihar, India.

Taru's Story: Modelling Second-order Changes

Taru was a 52-episode entertainment-education radio soap opera, broadcast in India from February 2002 to February 2003. Its purpose was to promote gender equality, small family size, reproductive health, caste and communal harmony, and community development. *Taru* began broadcasting in Bihar on 22 February 2002. One episode was broadcast each week on Friday at 8:00 PM, with a repeat broadcast each Sunday at 3:40 PM. Each episode of *Taru* began with a theme song and a brief summary of the previous episode. Each episode ended with an epilogue that posed a reflective question to the listeners, inviting them to write in their responses to All India Radio, the Indian national radio network that broadcast *Taru*.

The story of *Taru* revolved around *Taru*, a young, 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 idealistic, intelligent and polite, and works with a network of friends and supporters to empower rural women. *Taru* is a close friend of Shashikant who, like *Taru*, is educated, intelligent and involved in social work at the Sheetal Centre. However, he belongs to a lower

caste and is subject to discrimination by the high-caste people in the village. While several caste-conscious community members in Suhagpur deride Taru's friendship with a lower-caste man, Taru likes Shashikant for his sincerity, and he in turn is supportive of Taru's socially ameliorative efforts. 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 embodying 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 join hands to 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 dalits at par with high-caste brahmins, and fostering compassion for those afflicted with AIDS.

One subplot involves Naresh, his wife Nirmala, his sister Ranjana, 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. It was the first time that the village came together to symbolically rejoice the presence of a girl child.

Another subplot involves Neha, a close friend of Taru, who is newly married to Kapileshwar, the son of the local *zamindar* (landlord). Kapileshwar starts out as a controlling husband and influenced by his parent's dogma about daughters-in-law only staying indoors, restricts Neha's mobility outside of the home. But Neha wants to lead a meaningful, socially involved life, and with encouragement and support from Taru and Shashikant begins a school for dalit (low-caste) children. In time, Kapileshwar undergoes a change of heart, and becomes supportive of Neha's activities.

Importantly, an examination of the overall storyline of *Taru* shows clearly that this is a programme that models second-order changes, introducing decisively different codes of social behaviour that radically challenge existing norms and practices: For example, a friendship between a high-caste girl and a dalit social worker despite opposition from family and community members; the stopping of a child marriage; the stepping out of a high-caste *bahu* (daughter-in-law) outside of her in-laws' home to start a school for dalit children; the celebration of a girl's birthday for the first time in a village; and others. As the storyline evolved over 52 episodes and over a one-year long period, these messages modelling new social practices were reinforced repeatedly.

TARU-SPARKED SECOND-ORDER CHANGE PROCESSES IN KAMTAUL VILLAGE

In this section we analyse how the Singh family in Kamtaul village engendered an array of second-order changes when they were inspired by *Taru's* egalitarian messages to wipe out caste discrimination in their village. The Singhs told us that in *Taru's* storyline, Shashikant, a member of the lower-caste, is ill-treated in the opening episode in Neha's marriage ceremony. Several guests question his presence, taunting and humiliating him. Taru is disturbed by the guests' parochial caste behaviours, and apologizes to Shashikant. She argues that the caste system belonged to a bygone era, and dalits should participate equally in weddings and all other social rituals. So Vandana, the daughter of Shailendra and Sunita Singh, noted in her *Taru* listening diary that a new credo for treating lower-caste people was modelled on *Taru*. This *Taru* episode presented a new solution to an existing problem.

Consequently, numerous discussions, over several months, occurred in the Singh household about untouchability and ill-treatment of dalits. The family considered several possibilities of what they could do here and now to combat untouchability in Kamtaul village. But how could they challenge a social practice that was nurtured by tradition and so firmly ingrained in Kamtaul's social ethos? Some ideas began to surface through discussion and dialogue. Sunita Singh decided to open a school for dalit women in the Harijan *tola*. Her daughters and husband supported her, even though many others in the village firmly believed that a *bahu* should not step outside one's home. In essence, the family context provided efficacy for Sunita to act. Empowered by this action, the Singh family began to think of other ways to make a more public statement about untouchability. They played out various scenarios, mentally rehearsing and refining them. Their biggest worry and challenge was how to reframe the issue of untouchability in a way that it would be culturally acceptable. The wedding celebrations of Vandana's elder sister provided an opportunity to enact their new ideas.

Dalits are involved in almost all wedding celebrations; however, their roles are limited to cleaning toilets, collecting and disposing garbage, and doing other menial jobs. So, rarely do they come in contact with guests (in fact, even their shadow is considered as inauspicious), and they do not have anything to do with preparing or serving food and/or drinks (for that would represent 'contamination'). The Singh family decided to break tradition by introducing a new critical action with new rules. There was considerable resistance from Shailendra's mother, who dissuaded her son, noting: 'Why do you want to get into this mess?'

A few days before the marriage, when guests began to arrive at the Singh household (for pre-marriage rituals and ceremonies), several dalits were asked to help out. During the evening, while several guests were sitting, Shailendra Singh asked one of the dalits, whom he had asked previously to dress in clean clothes and be properly groomed, to serve him a glass of water. In front of others, he emptied the glass and then asked him to also serve water to other guests. Some relatives followed Singh's lead, even if somewhat reluctantly, by accepting the glass of

water and then drinking it. Some relatives said they were not thirsty. Some others, 'who were offended but felt that they couldn't say anything, got up from their chairs, gave some banal reason, and left the scene' (personal interview, 3 September 2002).

Once tradition was broken and a new social precedent was legitimized, for the next three days six or seven dalits were actively engaged by the Singh family to serve food and drinks to the invited guests. 'We gradually increased their involvement.... Dalits went from serving water, to serving drinks, to serving both food and drinks.... They went first from serving family members, to serving close relatives, to serving outside guests' (personal interview, 3 September 2002). On the wedding day some 30 dalits participated in the celebrations and half of them served food and drinks to the 600 guests, of which two-thirds comprised the local population of Kamtaul. In essence, the new codes of social behaviour about the participation of dalits were further legitimized through amplification.

Shailendra and Sunita Singh jointly summarized for one of the present authors how *Taru* helped generate social change processes in Kamtaul (personal interview, 3 September 2002):

'Previously, it was just a thought. As a family, we were always good to dalits, but still the *samajik deewar* [social wall] existed. But after listening to *Taru* and discussing this issue on a daily basis, the thought began to take on a concrete shape. We always used to talk about the beautiful *dosti* [friendship] relationship between *Taru*, the high-caste girl, and Shashikant, the low-caste but highly accomplished man.

We were inspired by the character of Neha, who despite her in-laws' opposition, decides to open a school for low-caste children. So we said, we also need to do something. But it was important that we did it in a way that it would send a message. And then we said, it is *our* daughter's marriage; so we can use that event.

After their daughter's marriage was over, the Singhs noted that many villagers came to them and said that they had not done the right thing, and they should have kept the dalits separate. Many told them that they 'felt bad that tradition was subverted, but they had no choice but to witness silently as it was, after all, a wedding celebration, a joyous occasion' (personal interview, 3 September 2002). How did the Singhs respond to the resistance and the support? Shailendra said: 'I told them I am a health practitioner. Everyone falls sick. I can't discriminate between saving a brahmin or a dalit child'. Further, he told them: 'Times are changing. We should change with the times.' The Singhs also noted that many in Kamtaul applauded their actions: 'People came and said that never before was such a step taken in Kamtaul. This has happened for the first time. Many said that now this can happen again. In fact, now it will happen in larger numbers' (personal interview, 3 September 2002).

Our preceding analysis suggests that *Taru* modelled new realities for a more egalitarian integration of dalits in society, created a space for discussion and dialogue about this issue among listeners' club members, helped the Singh family to clarify how existing realities could

be reshaped and reframed, and gave them courage to implement these new possibilities by introducing a critical new action. Once the action was legitimized in a small way, other actions followed which amplified the effects of previous ones, helping, in part, to fundamentally reshape old norms and values.

CONCLUSIONS

Marketers, politicians and public health officials strive to bring about fundamental shifts in people's values and behaviours (that is, second-order change). However, they usually meet with limited success—in other words, accomplishing only first-order changes. In addressing this quandary, Watzlawick et al. (1974) argue that the way we define 'problems' shape our solutions. If we assume that the problem is outside of us, all our interventions begin there. In contrast, Mahatma Gandhi, who led India's freedom struggle believed that, as opposed to trying to change others, each of us needs to embody the change we wish to see. Accordingly, Gandhi worked on himself not others, and by changing himself, he changed others.

In this article we explored how *Taru*, an entertainment-education radio soap opera, motivated individuals and communities in India's Bihar state to create their own processes of second-order change. Even though exploratory, this analysis makes important theoretical and practical contributions to understanding change processes. Research on the impact of E-E programmes have traditionally only looked at knowledge-attitude-practice (KAP) as the outcome variables (Rogers et al. 1999; Singhal and Rogers 1999). More recently, scholars have started to analyse the processes of social change created by E-E interventions (Singhal et al. 2004b; Usdin et al. 2004), arguing that for E-E programmes to be effective, audience members need to be involved with the soap opera, have para-social relationships with key characters, and engage in conversations and dialogue about social issues with other community members (Papa et al. 2000; Sood 2002). This analysis of how E-E programmes can initiate a process of second-order change, a goal in many interventions today, is perhaps the first step to further study in this area.

In conclusion, we offer a set of seven factors and processes that can initiate second-order change. First of all, the primary purpose of an E-E programme is not to change others. It is to offer a 'new' story and a set of 'new' ideas for audience members to explore and consider. *Taru* focused on promoting gender equality, small family size, reproductive health, caste and communal harmony, and community development. Our data suggest that audience members from our four community case study villages identified with *Taru* and other key actors in the soap opera. For example, audience members in the Abirpur village started a school based on what Neha did in the soap opera.

Second, the audience members talked, discussed and debated a variety of ideas and chose to act on some of the issues (untouchability, creating a school for children, etc.). Several scholars (Freire 1970; Papa et al. 2000) have shown that dialogue is a critical prerequisite for social change to occur.

Third, having the support of family members and other community members is a critical part of embarking on second-order change. Shailendra Singh and his family would not have considered inviting the dalits to help in the wedding if they had not felt collectively efficacious in handling the anticipated resistance. Indeed, second-order change involves agreement on values and action beyond the level of isolated individuals.

Fourth, once the Singh family felt empowered to change, they had to reframe the existing issue of untouchability to community members in a culturally-appropriate manner. The process of reframing, and in many cases going outside the box, is a key ingredient for the creating second-order solutions to existing social problems (Watzlawick et al. 1974).

Fifth, as mentioned earlier, this reframing has to be translated into a critical action that was culturally compatible with the intended audience (ibid.). In this case the Singh family chose to act in small doses, having the dalits serve water and after a few days have them serve a meal.

Sixth, since it is natural for the audience members to resist second-order changes (for example, when dalits serve water to high-caste members), continually addressing the resistance from community members is essential. The Singhs answered the opposition and resistance with respect and dignity, and over a few days this legitimized the new ritual of dalits serving water. In this case it certainly helped that Shailendra Singh is seen as the 'doctor' in the village and is highly respected by community members. This credibility influenced enough people in the village to support Shailendra's choice to treat dalits fairly, thus helping to routinize the action.

Finally, when an individual or a member of a community introduces second-order change behaviour into a specific context, amplification must begin to occur (ibid.). Amplification is a critical and necessary ingredient to sustain second-order change. Amplification allows for an issue to stay on the agenda and for a critical action to trigger other multiple actions. For example, the Singh family's choice to treat dalits fairly prompted Singh's daughter, Vandana, to urge her friends to do the same. In addition, *Taru* played a key role in empowering Vandana and her friends to make tough choices with courage and conviction (see Singhal et al. 2004a).

While providing insights on E-E sparked second-order change processes, this article embodies certain limitations. First, we considered only one set of social change processes in one village. Second, we did not specifically address the ethical issues surrounding E-E-initiated change. For example, what if the Singh family members were ostracized because of their actions? Finally, this article is a post facto (not concurrent) analysis of the spontaneous effects of *Taru* in India's Bihar state.

Nevertheless, this article—in Burkean terms—calls for overcoming occupational psychoses and trained incapacities in conceiving and implementing social change interventions. For far too long communication and social change practitioners have focused on bringing about incremental first-order changes. We call for a different orientation, a different world-view, and a different way to frame social problems to expand the space for solutions.

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NOTE

1. See Harter (2006) for a brilliant discussion on how such occupational psychoses comes into play when doctors encounter an end-of-life diagnosis for cancer patients.

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