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Incorporating ambiguity and archetypes in entertainment-education programming: Lessons learned from *Oshin*

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Abstract. Entertainment-education programming represents a promising media strategy in development communication that can increase audiences' knowledge about social issues, create favorable attitudes, and change their overt behaviors on such topics as family planning, gender equality, and child development. This article draws upon the fields of development and organizational communication, psychology, and literary criticism to analyze the audience success of a Japanese television soap opera *Oshin*, arguing that incorporation of strategically ambiguous messages and cultural archetypes can help broaden the cultural appeal of entertainment-education messages. Caveats on the incorporation of these concepts in entertainment-education programming are also discussed.

1. Introduction

In this day and age of communication satellites, global syndication networks, and multilingual dubbing centers, entertainment television programs freely cross national boundaries. During the past several decades, U.S. television exports have dominated world media markets, making Lucy (of *I Love Lucy*), Kojak (of *Kojak*), and Spock (of *Star Trek*) household names in almost every other country. In recent years, however, the nature of worldwide television flows has been changing with the rise of various regional television production and export centers such as Mexico and Brazil in Latin America, Egypt in the Middle East, and Hong Kong in Southeast Asia. The consumption of imported TV programming is on the rise worldwide, as is the concern about the harmful effects of foreign programming on indigenous audiences. Imported television programs are variously popular in different countries, depending on the audiences' viewing context, the nature of message appeals, the degree of "cultural proximity" between the program content and audience lifestyles, and other factors. Rarely is an imported television program universally popular; even more rare is an imported television program that breaks audience ratings records in country after country.

The Japanese TV series *Oshin* is one such program. Produced by NHK, the Japanese national television network, in 1983, *Oshin* broke audience ratings

records in Japan, meeting with similar audience success in nearly 30 other countries (Singhal & Svenkerud, 1994). *Oshin*'s worldwide popularity can be attributed in part to its adept depiction of "universal" human values through the story of its central character, *Oshin*. Viewers in many countries identified with such diverse human values depicted in *Oshin* as love, sacrifice, endurance, perseverance, forgiveness, and others. More importantly, viewers reported learning a great deal from this television series about the importance of upholding the above-mentioned human values (Amaralilit, 1991; Brown & Singhal, 1993a; Kato, 1991; Li, 1991; Lull, 1991; Mowlana & Rad, 1993; Singhal & Svenkerud, 1994). A program with such widespread audience impact deserves our attention as communication scholars, particularly in the case of *Oshin*, where we stand to learn a great deal about the effective shaping and sending of entertainment-education media messages across cultural boundaries.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the possibility of incorporating (1) strategically ambiguous messages, and (2) culturally-embedded archetypes in entertainment-education media messages in order to appeal to culturally-diverse audiences. We first analyze the entertainment-education strategy in mass communication, in which pro-social, educational messages are consciously embedded in entertainment content in order to promote social change. The concepts of strategic ambiguity (outlined by Eisenberg, 1984) and archetypes (originally developed by Jung, 1952) are then analyzed in light of their potential use in entertainment-educational media campaigns. The experience of the Japanese soap opera *Oshin* is then evaluated to comment on the utility of incorporating the concepts of strategic ambiguity and archetypes in pro-social message design. We conclude by discussing some of the problems associated with utilizing the concepts of strategic ambiguity and archetypes in entertainment-education programming.

2. Entertainment, education, and social change

The idea of combining entertainment and education to foster pro-social change goes back thousands of years to the days of oral storytelling and folk drama. However, the conscious use of this strategy in mass communication is a relatively new phenomenon. *Entertainment-education* can be defined as the process of embedding educational content within entertainment messages in order to increase knowledge about issues, create favorable attitudes, and change overt behavior concerning the educational issue or topic (Singhal, 1990). One of the formative theorists in this field was Miguel Sabido, creator of entertainment-educative *telenovelas*, (or soap operas) in Mexico. Based on a multi-disciplinary theoretical framework involving elements from

Bandura's social learning theory, Bentley's dramatic theory, and Jung's theories of archetype, Sabido created seven educational soap operas in Mexico that aired during the 1970's and 1980's to promote such socially desirable themes as gender equality, family planning, adult literacy, family harmony, and child development (Nariman, 1993; Singhal, Rogers, & Brown, 1993). Sabido's entertainment-education soap operas were inspired by a highly popular Peruvian television soap opera, *Simplemente Mária* (Rogers & Shefner, 1994; Singhal, Obrégon, & Rogers, 1994).

Simplemente Mária told the story of Mária, who was a rural-urban migrant to the city from the Andes mountains (Singhal, Obrégon, & Rogers, 1994). It enacted the classic Cinderella-type rags-to-riches folk story of Mária, who succeeded in achieving higher socio-economic status because of her sewing skills with a Singer sewing machine (Singhal, Rogers, & Brown, 1993). Broadcast in black-and-white over a period of 21 months between April, 1969 and January, 1971, *Simplemente Mária* was the longest-running and most popular telenovela in Latin America of all time. The series earned average viewer ratings of 85 percent in Peru, a pattern repeated in many other Latin American countries where it was broadcast (Singhal, Obrégon & Rogers, 1994). Most intriguing were the unintended educational effects of *Simplemente Mária*. Young women in Peru and in every other Latin American country where the program was broadcast, began enrolling in sewing and adult literacy classes just as Mária had done on the soap opera (Singhal, Obrégon, & Rogers, 1994).

Whereas the educational effects of *Simplemente Mária* were unintentional, the promise of entertaining soap operas to promote educational messages became immediately apparent to Miguel Sabido, a creative writer-producer-director at Televisa, the Mexican national private television system. Sabido consciously harnessed the educational potential of entertainment programs on Televisa, pioneering the entertainment-education strategy in television. These entertainment-education programs were consciously designed to be "pro-social" texts, i.e., they depicted cognitive, affective, or behavioral activities that were considered to be "socially desirable" by the intended audience (Brown & Singhal, 1990, p. 268). Educational content is intentionally incorporated in such entertainment media genres as radio and television soap operas, popular music recordings and videos, film, and comic books (Kincaid *et al.*, 1988; Kincaid *et al.*, 1993; Rimon II, 1990; Rogers & Shefner, 1994).

The entertainment-education strategy has generally demonstrated its effectiveness in disseminating pro-social messages to audiences in various countries (Church & Geller, 1989; Kincaid, Rimon, Piotrow, & Coleman, 1992; Lozano, 1992; McAnany, 1992; Sabido, 1989; Singhal, Rogers, & Brown, 1993). On a theoretical level, entertainment-education draws upon

Bandura's (1977) concept of social learning, postulating that people can model their behavior after observing role models in the mass media. More specific analysis of entertainment-education programs indicates that they are: (1) *popular*, because people generally enjoy being entertained; (2) *pervasive*, because entertainment media generally have a wide reach; (3) *personal*, since audiences are moved to share the experiences of the media characters; (4) *persuasive*, since media messages and characters can persuade audience members in a variety of ways; (5) *passionate*, because they can stir strong audience emotions about pro-social issues; (6) *profitable*, because they attract the support of commercial advertisers; and (7) *practical*, because they are feasible to produce (Kincaid, Rimon, & Piotrow, 1992; Piotrow *et al.*, 1992; Singhal, Brown, & Rogers, 1993).

Although considerable research has been conducted on the audience effects of entertainment-education programs (Nariman, 1993; Rogers & Antola, 1985; Singhal, Obrégon, and Rogers, 1994; Kincaid *et al.*, 1992; Piotrow *et al.*, 1990; Rushton, 1982; Sabido, 1989), program producers are still unsure about the most effective ways to design entertainment-education programming. Also, past research on entertainment-education programs has mostly been conducted in the social science tradition, without drawing much on the literary or humanistic traditions of scholarship. The present investigation seeks to address some of these limitations. We draw upon insights gleaned from development communication, psychology, literary criticism, and organizational communication to analyze the highly entertaining and educational Japanese television program *Oshin*. Based on our analysis, we propose two specific guidelines for producing entertainment-education programming: The incorporation of (1) strategically ambiguous messages, and (2) cultural archetypes. These concepts can be especially useful in creating pro-social messages that cut across both physically-tangible and less finite cultural boundaries.

3. Ambiguity in communication

In much of the literature of management and business "science," the concept of ambiguity is treated in a rather unambiguous manner. Ambiguity is generally considered to be an undesirable aspect of organizational culture and strategic management: McCaskey (1988) has claimed, "the stress and tension of managing change and ambiguity are enormous" (p. 3). Connolly (1988) lumps ambiguity with such organizational terrors as "conflict, turbulence, wicked problems, ill-specified alternatives and goals" (p. 38). In other words, ambiguity is often perceived as the rogue organizational/cultural variable that must be controlled. But need ambiguity fare equally poorly in the

design of entertainment-education media messages? The case of the Japanese soap opera *Oshin* would seem to indicate otherwise, as would Petty's (1994) observation that the concept of melodramatic form is "notoriously difficult to define" (p. 3). Even if incorporation of ambiguity is a desirable factor in designing entertainment-education media messages, how can we define and manage that which is by its nature uncertain, vague, and often complicated?

In answer, we can first turn Alvesson (1993), who describes ambiguity as contradictions that can not be resolved or reconciled, and as a situation where there is an absence of agreement on boundaries, or any clear principles or solutions, i.e., situations where the possibility of exercising qualified judgment becomes seriously reduced (p. 1002). Martin and Meyerson (1988) clarify further that at least three types of ambiguity can be distinguished: (1) *uncertainty*, or a lack of predictability; (2) *contradiction*, or the potential for double meanings; and (3) *confusion*, stemming from either ignorance or a lack of information (p. 112).[1]

These perspectives on ambiguity are in line with the idea of strategic ambiguity, first proposed by Eric Eisenberg in 1984. Eisenberg and others (Eisenberg, 1984, 1990, Eisenberg & Goodall, 1993; Eisenberg & Witten, 1987) have conceptualized ambiguity as a possible problem-solving strategy. Eisenberg (1984, pp. 229–230) established a more specific context for defining ambiguity, referring to the relativist view of meaning: Ambiguity "is not an attribute of messages; it is a *relational* variable which arises through a combination of source, message, and receiver factors that can be engendered through detailed, literal language as well as through imprecise, figurative language". Eisenberg draws a distinction between (1) ambiguity which is utilized for a specific purpose and (2) ambiguity which is perceived by a receiver.

Other researchers have acknowledged that a communication strategy focusing attention on ambiguity itself might legitimate it, for example as a source of innovation, creativity, or productive change (Martin & Meyerson, 1988). Similarly, Eisenberg (1984) argued that clarity, the usual standard for organizational communication and decision-making, can be considered "non-normative." He claimed that strategic ambiguity has the potential to: "(1)

[1] A classic text in literary criticism by Empson (1947) defined seven types of ambiguity: (1) when a detail "works" in several ways at once; (2) when two or more alternative meanings are fully resolved into one; (3) when two apparently unconnected meanings are given simultaneously; (4) when alternative meanings combine to make clear the author's complex perspective; (5) what is termed "a fortunate confusion," when the author is thinking aloud while writing; (6) when statements are contradictory or irrelevant and readers must invent interpretations; and (7) when full contradiction indicates a "division in the author's mind" (pp. v–vi). Whereas this analysis will not attempt to elucidate upon these seven types of ambiguity in relation to *Oshin*, the point here is to further substantiate the potential rhetorical and persuasive value of ambiguity.

promote unified diversity; (2) facilitate organizational change; and (3) amplify existing source attributions and preserve privileged positions" (p. 227). After all, in organizations as in the design of entertainment-education media messages clarity and openness in communication "represent only two of the many goals that may be pursued during interaction" (Barge, 1994, p. 207). Certainly, providing clear directions to audiences of entertainment-education programs is of little use if significant differences are not acknowledged or, alternately, if efforts to create unified consensus among viewers fail.

4. Archetypal analysis in communication

One of the five essential components of an effective entertainment-education soap opera, according to a theoretic model developed by Miguel Sabido in Mexico, is an emphasis on using cultural archetypes and stereotypes to carry pro-social messages. Jung's defined archetypes as "a thinking in primordial images, in symbols which are older than the historical man, which are inborn in him from the earliest times, and, eternally living, outlasting all generations, still make up the groundwork of the human psyche" (quoted in Campbell, 1971, p. 21). Drawing on Jung's work, Lozano and Singhal (1993) described archetypes as being forms and images that are part of a universal and collective memory. Multi-dimensional and not always operational at a surface level of consciousness, they are manifested through symbols, prototypes and myths.

Incorporation of myth and archetype can be a potentially powerful strategy in communication research. Myth, given its characteristics of being symbolic, situated, and playful, provides the support and language in which instruction can be appropriated (Lozano, 1992). Lincoln (cited in Procter, 1992) claimed that myth is a discursive act, evoking sentiments out of which society is actively constructed. By further utilizing the recitation of myth one might be able to mobilize a social group effectively, similar to referencing revolutionary slogans and ancestral invocations. Applications of myth and archetypal analysis within the field of communication study have already been prevalent in rhetorical criticism (Burkholder, 1989; Chesebro, Bertelsen, & Gencarelli, 1990; Gustainis, 1989; O'Leary & McFarland, 1989; Payne, 1989; McGuire, 1977; Rushing, 1989; Rushing & Frentz, 1980, 1991, 1993; Solomon, 1983; Solomon & McMillan, 1991; Terrill, 1993); have begun to be explored in organizational communication, behavior and development (Rahoi & Daniels, 1994; Stein & Hollwitz, 1992); and are being reintroduced to the field of entertainment-education (Lozano, 1992; Lozano & Singhal, 1993).

5. Oshindrome as entertainment-education

Having reviewed communication perspectives on ambiguity and archetypes, we now apply these concepts to a specific case of entertainment-education type programming: The *Oshin* fad, or "Oshindrome," of the mid-1980s and early-1990s, when the Japanese soap opera, *Oshin*, gained tremendous worldwide popularity. Our analysis not only suggests the potential value of incorporating strategic ambiguity and cultural archetypes in entertainment-education programming, but also illustrates how difficult it can be to predict the effects of educational messages, especially on diverse audience segments.

The 1983 Japanese television program *Oshin* traced the life of the central character Oshin from age seven to age 83, documenting the difficulties she faced, and overcame, in moving from poverty to prosperity. The story centers on Oshin's hardships and tragedies, which she always somehow managed to overcome. At the age of seven, Oshin was exchanged for a bale of rice to feed her poor family. She worked at a timber merchant's home where she was ill-treated and falsely accused of stealing. In her youth, she fell in love with a handsome young man, only to find out that he was in love with her best friend. Eventually, she married a wealthy farmer's son, whose mother treated her very poorly. During the outbreak of World War II, her son died during fighting and her husband committed suicide. She lost her house, but fought to reestablish a profitable family business of supermarkets. Her ability to transcend tragedy came from personal strength, intelligence, and aggressiveness in looking out for the well-being of her family (Lull, 1991). She never despaired.

5.1. *Depiction of pro-social values*

Oshin represented a blending of entertainment and educational messages (Kato, 1991, p. 93). The educational value of *Oshin* was not unintended, according to Sugako Hashida (1991, p. 95), the scriptwriter of *Oshin*:

> There were many (educational) messages that I wanted in *Oshin*. I could have written this in essay form....(then) it could have become a Hashida doctrine....But when sharing a message with others, you want it to have flavor. You want people to enjoy the taste. That is what dramas are all about....I do appreciate the fact that people discovered morals within my story.

What were the educational messages in *Oshin*? The educational messages of *Oshin* centered around the importance of upholding such human values as love, endurance, forgiveness, and sacrifice, depicted through the life of the central character, *Oshin*. The storyline dealt with a wide range of social

issues, highlighting the importance of well-knit family structures and the pain and suffering caused by war.

Audience reaction to the themes portrayed in *Oshin* was positive from all corners of the world. *Oshin* was "regarded as a welcome relief" from the usual soap opera themes of greed, sex, and violence (Ylstra, 1991, p. 112). Viewers in Japan, Belgium, the Netherlands, Indonesia and China "appreciated the themes of human warmth and affection in the story" (Ylstra, 1991, p. 112; also refer to Kobayashi, 1991; Li, 1991; Mowlana, 1991; Tanaka, 1991).

Hundreds of anecdotal assessments point to the pro-social impacts of *Oshin* in Japan and outside. For instance, in China, many children were inspired by Oshin "and began to help with the housework, become kinder to (their) mothers, and started studying harder" (Li, 1991, p. 98).

5.2. *Widespread audience popularity*

In November 1983, at the height of its popularity, *Oshin* was watched by about 65 percent of Japanese viewers. It had an average episode rating of 55 percent, spread over 297 episodes, each of 15 minutes duration ("End of a good cry," *The Economist*, 24 March 1984, p. 88). This overwhelming audience reaction to *Oshin* was by no means unique to Japan. Consider the following audience reactions to *Oshin* from cultures across the world:

In the Indonesian capital city Jakarta, where *Oshin* was initially aired in the late afternoon, the tremendous popularity of the series forced the television station to change the airtime after complaints from viewers flooded in. A number of families wrote letters to the television station requesting the time change; they were tired of having supper served late because their maids were busy watching *Oshin* (Ylstra, 1991).

In Belgium, where viewership during *Oshin* broadcasts was estimated at over 17 percent of the total television audience, groups of nuns regularly rescheduled their prayer time in order to avoid missing their favorite programs (Ylstra, 1991).

In China, as soon as the broadcast of *Oshin* began each day, the streets cleared. An experimental survey of program ratings revealed viewership as high as 90 percent in some regions of the country (NHK, 1991).

In Indonesia, thousands of regular women viewers of *Oshin* were often so moved by the perseverance and endurance of *Oshin* that they broke into tears during the broadcast of the series (Takahashi, 1991).

To date, *Oshin* holds the record as the most popular Japanese entertainment television program of all time, both in and outside of Japan. *Oshin* was broadcast in such seemingly diverse settings as China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, Poland, Brunei, India, Canada (in Vancouver

Table 1. Countries where *Oshin* was Broadcast (Source: NHK, INC).

	Countries	Year	Episodes	Language	Dubbed or subtitled
1.	Japan	1983	297	Japanese	Original
2.	Australia	1984	297	English	Subtitled
3.	Thailand	1984	297	Thai	Dubbed
4.	Singapore	1984	297	Mandarin	Dubbed
5.	U.S. (Jpn TV)	1984	297	English	Subtitled
6.	Belgium	1985	297	Flemish	Subtitled
7.	Brazil	1985	297	Portuguese	Subtitled
8.	Canada (Jpn TV)	1985	48	Japanese	Original
9.	China	1985	297	Chinese	Dubbed
10.	Hong Kong	1985	297	Cantonese	Dubbed
11.	Macau	1985	48	Portuguese	Subtitled
12.	Poland	1985	48	Polish	Subtitled
13.	Indonesia	1986	297	Bahasa	Subtitled
14.	Iran	1986	297	Persian	Dubbed
15.	Malaysia	1986	297	Malay	Dubbed
16.	Saudi Arabia	1987	297	English	Dubbed
17.	Sri Lanka	1987	297	English	Dubbed
18.	Brunei	1988	297	Malay	Subtitled
19.	Mexico	1988	297	Spanish	Dubbed
20.	Bahrain	1989	48	English	Dubbed
21.	Syria	1989	48	English	Dubbed
22.	Qatar	1989	48	English	Dubbed
23.	Bangladesh	1990	96	English	Dubbed
24.	Dom. Republic	1990	48	Spanish	Dubbed
25.	Pakistan	1990	48	English	Dubbed
26.	Peru	1990	48	Spanish	Dubbed
27.	Philippines	1990	48	Tagalog	Dubbed
28.	India	1992	48	English	Dubbed

and Toronto), and the United States (in Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco) (Table 1).

6. Ambiguity and *Oshin*'s worldwide popularity

What were the reasons for *Oshin*'s amazing popularity across such a wide range of socio-cultural contexts? The broadcasts of *Oshin* were particularly effective because audiences in each of the cultures, where the program was

broadcast, could draw on their own beliefs in translating, interpreting, and deciding how *Oshin*'s events and characters were intended to be conveyed (Kobayashi, 1991; Takahashi, 1991). Also the series focused on such human values as perseverance and endurance, which hold meaning across various cultures.

In Belgium, the tremendous audience success of *Oshin* was attributed to the similarities between Belgian and Japanese lifestyles a century ago the time period in which *Oshin* was set (Mowlana & Rad, 1992; Ylstra, 1991). Studies of *Oshin* conducted in Indonesia, demonstrated that viewers were moved by Oshin's heroinic struggle for her well-being. Oshin's qualities of perseverance and endurance also resonated with Japanese and Chinese viewers (Li, 1991; Takahashi, 1991).

Others have proposed that *Oshin*'s depiction of "simple" values and "ordinary" lives endeared it to audiences from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Mowlana (1991), for example, concluded that the social and human appeal of *Oshin* was a key determinant in the popularity of the series. When the program was broadcast in Iran during the debilitating Iran-Iraq War, 72 percent of the viewers reported the suffering (economic and physical) depicted in *Oshin* as being extremely similar to their own (Mowlana, 1991). Despite tremendous cultural differences between Iran and Japan, certain modes of human behaviors were perceived as similar, especially responses associated with human tragedy and suffering.

Amaralilit (1991) provided several reasons for the popularity of *Oshin* in Thailand. The suffering and hunger experienced by Oshin in the time of Meiji Japan, for instance, mirrored with some of the contemporary problems of farmers in Central and Northern Thailand. Furthermore, *Oshin* called attention to the fact that many young girls (ages 12 to 16) routinely are sent to Bangkok from the Northern Province so that they can earn money to send to their families, as Oshin had done in the television series.

Li (1991) argued that the popularity of *Oshin* in China could be attributed to the sense of "realism" the series conveyed. Since the Chinese realist literary tradition emphasized the naturalistic depiction of characters, the well-developed personalities and actions of featured players in the *Oshin* series fit right into the Chinese cultural tradition (Li, 1991, p. 57). Kato (1991) noted: "*Oshin* was very simple and direct; you didn't have to be knowledgeable about the entire history of Japan to be able to understand [it]" (p. 51).

Oshin did not attempt to analyze crime, war, or international issues or resolve colossal controversies; instead, it discussed practical, "real-world" problems of the kind its many viewers might face daily. *Oshin*'s messages became appealing to diverse audience groups because it portrayed messages

that were born out of the experiences of diverse audience groups (Surkhamad, 1991).

7. Archetypes in *Oshin*

The first level at which archetype functions in *Oshin* is a very general one: The archetype of the "*self seeking individuation*," reflected in Oshin's desire to rise above the poverty and tragedy of her early life. Jung explained that the "self seeks consciousness" (Ross, 1993, p. xii) is a drive that establishes inherent conflict with the self's simultaneous desire for obedience. Perlman (1992) clarified that "individuation is always a process of claiming one's unique self in opposition to the pulls of the collective, which would always tend to make the individual like everyone else" (1992, p. 181). So Oshin's struggle probably resonated with viewers across diverse cultures at the very basic archetypal level of the self-belonging/self-determination struggle, while remaining strategically ambiguous about the preferred place of separation, i.e. where the line is drawn between the individual and the group. But this archetypal image alone would not seem to explain the widespread appeal of the series to so many viewers across so many cultural boundaries.

Let us turn, then, to a second level of archetypal analysis in examining *Oshin*: The level of the "*disobedient female*" archetype. We must explain that although the idea of the disobedient female bears some resemblance to Clarissa Pinkola Estes' (1992) conceptualization of the "Wild Woman/Wolf Woman," *Oshin* is clearly not the story of a woman who overcomes all social restrictions. And had this been the case, the pro-social nature of *Oshin* might not have been nearly as appealing across cultural boundaries. Instead, in labeling this archetype the "disobedient female," we tap into a much more deeply-embedded archetype where a woman reshapes her world and that of others through her "endurance, determination, and curiosity" (Allen, 1979, p. 65).

The idea of the disobedient female as an archetype in the cultural collective consciousness was explained by Ross (1993), who noted a similarity between stories told about Ahweyoh (Water Lily) in Native American cultures and those of Psyche or Cinderella in Western cultures. Ross argued that such connections were reflective of "what Jung would have called a synchronicity, not a coincidence. In these myths, disobedience is celebrated rather than condemned, and it is viewed thankfully" (p. xiii). In the case of *Oshin*, the synchronicity is again in play; Oshin disobeys the social restraints that force her into a position of oppression and sorrow, and continually fights for a better place in the world for herself and her family. The fact that she does this without rejecting social norms altogether makes it possible for women

and men in collectivistic as well as individualistic cultures to appreciate and value her disobedient struggle. So the "disobedient woman," rather than the "wild woman" archetype, is a second element that probably contributed to *Oshin*'s widespread appeal.

However, we believe, an archetype operates in *Oshin* at a third and more powerful resonant level as well: The archetype of the "*heroic struggle.*" What *Oshin* models in her "heroic struggle" for a better life fighting against human "monsters," famine, poverty, and ill fortune is familiar to any of us, whatever our cultural referents. As Jung pointed out, "if a man [sic] is a hero, he is a hero because, in the final reckoning, he did not let the monster devour him, but subdued it, not once but many times. Victory over the collective psyche alone yields the true value the capture of the hoard, the invincible weapon, the magic talisman, or whatever it be that the myth deems most desirable" (Campbell, 1971, p. 119). But we stand to gain not only identification but also insight in identifying this as a heroic/heroinic struggle. Anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod (1993), who studied Bedouin women's discourse, demonstrated her counter-interpretation of Foucault's idea "where there is power, there is resistance" as "where there is resistance, there is power." In other words, the fact that *Oshin* could struggle against overwhelming physical, economic and social constraints not only was heroinic in providing a model of virtue; it also provided inspiration, hope, *and* potential strategies for viewers who might thereby be encouraged to contemplate resistance of their own.

Having now identified three levels of powerful archetype at work in *Oshin* "self-individuation", the "disobedient woman," and the "heroic/heroinic struggle", we now move to a broader application of ambiguity to the field of entertainment-education as a whole.

8. Ambiguity in entertainment-education programs

Given our previously-established understanding of ambiguity, how can the concept of ambiguity be utilized generally in the formulation of entertainment-education programs and policies? Storey (1993) postulates that development theory might evolve in the future into an increasingly "normative, qualitative, change-oriented, indigenistic, polycentric, interdisciplinary perspective" (p. 33). Ambiguity, of the kind employed in the openness to interpretation of the messages contained in the television series *Oshin*, offers a possible means to reach this end. The "plurality of interpretations and the diversity of manners in which texts can be decoded" (Lozano, 1992, p. 215) renders the concept of a single, unambiguous audience or interpretation meaningless in discussing entertainment-education programming.

This is especially true given the openness of possible actions and events in the fictional world of the television serial (Lozano & Singhal, 1993). *Oshin*'s script writer, Sugaho Hashida, claimed that an overt/direct depiction of moral "lessons" within the melodramatic series would have been less productive, and possibly even counterproductive (1991). The implicit, *ambiguous* inclusion of educational messages within the melodramatic series, allowing room for viewer interpretation and response, proved to be more effective.

The audience reception to *Oshin* indicated that the more deeply a particular message touches human emotion, the more easily it can transcend cultural boundaries. A program designed carefully with knowledge of such common cultural factors as mythic/archetypal elements and social history can reach audiences in a variety of cultural contexts. As Surakhmad (1991) argued, such commonality will surface "everywhere, even if it is in different forms and identities" (p. 92).

More specifically, audiences of entertainment-education programs, such as the viewers of the 1984–85 Indian television soap opera, *Hum Log*, have read certain educational messages in a far different manner than intended by the program's producers. For instance, the producers of this serial originally intended that a female character Bhagwanti, a "subservient, self-sacrificing, traditional Indian woman," be interpreted as a negative role model for gender equality, designed to inspire Indian women to become more assertive and independent. Instead, many Indian viewers perceived her to be an admirable role model (Brown & Singhal, 1993b, p. 97). In this particular case, the producers of the program might perhaps have benefitted from designing a more ambiguous, less "targeted" character.

The use of ambiguity in entertainment-education programming might be particularly useful in the production of melodramatic serials. The widespread popularity of the soap opera format, the ability of the melodrama to depict the conflict between pro- and anti-social behavior, and its long-running repetitive nature makes the genre especially well-suited to carry messages that appeal to diverse audiences in a variety of cultural contexts (Head, 1985; Lull, 1990; Mowlana & Rad, 1992; Rogers & Antola, 1985; Nariman, 1993; Singhal, Rogers, & Brown, 1993; Singhal & Svenkerud, 1994). The nature of this genre is to search for discourses that carry not only the power of the "mass mediated" but also the force of the popular and local across various cultural contexts (Lozano, 1992; Lozano & Singhal, 1993).

Avoiding ambiguity in entertainment-education programs can be both difficult and ethically questionable, given the inherently ambiguous nature of the genre. For instance, characters or programs which have a distinctive Western bias in their design and message run the risk of being unresponsive to non-Western cultures and concerns. In addition such unresponsiveness can also

lessen the chance that audiences will be able to locate cultural relevance or proximity in imported programs (Straubhaar, 1993). Perhaps one can argue that entertainment-education programs which are less ambiguous, are also less likely to achieve widespread popularity.

9. Archetypes in entertainment-education programs

Clearly, Jungian theory not only gives archetypes an *a priori* force, but also bestows an evolutionary lineage that creates the collective unconscious (Rahoi & Daniels, 1994). As Terrill (1993) puts it, one might encounter "culture-specific archetypal images, but they may resonate cross-culturally as a function of underlying archetypal forms" (p. 321). Lozano (1992) has observed that the dual emphasis on chronological and cyclical time, the narrative logic of myth, and their "cultural and performative power" (p. 207) render *telenovelas*, a popular form of education-development and entertainment, a means of "enculturating discourse" (p. 207). In other words, these programs utilize myth and archetype, and in time develop a mythic force of their own. Although approaches differ, as in rhetorical criticism, the commonalities of soap operas and *telenovelas* are several: they share "qualities of orality, repetitiousness, historicity, intimate stance, and caricaturesque plots" (Lozano & Singhal, 1993, p. 116) concepts that are central to discussions of myth and archetype.

Here, as in rhetorical criticism, the "ordering" nature of Jungian theory is not only vital but advantageous. The purpose of entertainment-education programs, after all, is pro-social (Brown & Singhal, 1990; Singhal, Rogers, & Brown, 1993, Brown, 1992), presenting performances depicting socially desirable, cognitive, affective, or behavioral activities to target audiences. The diffusion of these activities whether they are innovations, programs, or purposes implies that order is necessary, and that some *a priori* truth exists. This is variously the truth of the myth and archetype, which is used to render these strategies appealing across culturally-proximate groups (Straubhaar, 1992) or the truth of the pro-social agenda of the program planners.

Although the use of myth and archetype is somewhat problematic in entertainment-education programs, given the ethno- and androcentric nature of Jungian theory (Liebes, 1988; Pell, 1990) and the tendency of readers to resist a closed text (Fiske, 1987; Solomon & McMullen, 1991), it has still been applied widely. In this genre, then, as well as in rhetorical criticism, the promise of mythic and archetypal approaches seems considerable. The potential limitations posed by the philosophical grounding of Jungian theory for the most part can be overcome. In some cases, as we have illustrated,

this philosophy fits nicely into the identity and theories of the genres themselves.

10. Caveats in using strategic ambiguity and archetypes

Eisenberg & Goodall (1993) discussed certain dangers of applying strategic ambiguity in organizational settings, many of which appear to be equally pertinent in the designing of entertainment-educative messages. They noted: (1) strategic ambiguity can "minimize the importance of ethics," leading planners simultaneously to claim credit and seek alibis, depending on whether or not programs go smoothly or poorly; (2) it can lead to an overemphasis on individual response and control at the expense of the community; and (3) it can lead to misunderstandings of messages and intent. Certainly in the case of entertainment-education programs, planners must ensure that their messages do not get lost in the haze of multiple interpretations and levels of individual meaning.

In addition, program planners must be careful not to operate solely from their own cultural assumptions while deciding whether or not to incorporate ambiguity. Hofstede (1980), in creating his uncertainty avoidance index (UAI), offered a useful measure of assessing whether a given culture is more or less tolerant of, or threatened by, uncertainty and ambiguity. Interestingly, the two most culturally dissimilar countries in which "Oshindrome" took hold Belgium and Japan are both rated as extremely similar on Hofstede's index (Lustig & Koester, 1993). Unfortunately, this measure, as is true of much prior research on ambiguity, does not offer any clearcut explanation of why cultures differ in this tolerance. Perhaps this is an area of future research; in any case, the UAI does offer a baseline measure of cultural tolerance and some means of guidance for entertainment-education program planners.

In terms of archetypal analysis, several caveats must be raised as well. As Chesebro, Bertelsen, and Gencarelli (1990) have observed, by virtue of its power as a symbol, archetype is "based upon a principle of conventionality" (p. 261), adding that "archetypes are the product of cultures; they exist only by virtue of a socially created contract" (p. 261). Whereas given communities might interpret symbols in predictable ways, we must remember that the motif itself does not contain "meaning and emotional impact" but that these qualities reside in the "community using the motif" (p. 261). Therefore, before we attempt to utilize myth and archetype in entertainment-education programs, not to mention potential conflicts over program interpretation, we must thoroughly understand the communities and cultures involved (Svenkerud & Rahoi, in press). Otherwise, we run the risk of referring to symbols from our own interpretive frames, particularly if we adhere too closely to Jungian

interpretations (Macom, 1986, as cited in Pell, 1990)[2]. Wehr (1987) has noted that "analytical psychology, in which the archetypes are the foundation of the psyche and of life, looks for, and finds universals and, according to its critics, excludes the particular, as well as the social context" (p. x–xi). Wehr also clarified, however, that archetypes can be liberated from previous static, culture-bound associations if we are able to maintain openness to alternative perspectives the very purpose of strategic ambiguity.

The changing nature of archetype is also a factor in designing and applying mythic and archetypal approaches to the design of entertainment-education programs. Our cultural knowledge must not only be comprehensive but also up to date. Joseph Campbell noted that in Western civilization alone, the power of the Biblical archetype has lost rhetorical and cultural force; not only are these myths not as powerful as they once were, but they also might need explanation before younger people can even find them accessible (quoted in Pell, 1990, p. 43). These embedded but rarely-retrieved archetypes, if they are not reconstituted and reframed for receivers, become essentially "dead to the psyche" (Pell, 1990, p. 43).

Using the original archetypes identified by Jung without a complete knowledge of the culture one is studying might alienate those who are excluded by gender or culture from realizing a true or useful understanding of these images. For example, Pell (1990), who indicts androcentrism in Jungian theory, explains: "Androcentric myth sentences women to flat, one-dimensional identities" (p. 35). The experience of one of our colleagues when an African-American student protested against her references to light/dark imagery is yet another illustration of the exclusionary power of archetypal imagery. The imagery must be interpreted in light of its underlying theory, which is difficult given the potential conflict over power and order. Ironically, this caution resonates with Eisenberg's warnings about the abuse of power in applying strategic ambiguity. Estes (1992) expressed this precaution most clearly: "In dealing with stories, we are handling archetypal energy, which is a lot like electricity. It can animate and enlighten, but in the wrong place and wrong time and in the wrong amount, like any medicine, it can have no desired effect. . . . Archetype changes us; if there is no change, there has been no real contact with the archetype. The handing down of story is a very big responsibility; we have to make sure people are wired for the stories they tell" (p. 463). In utilizing archetype, then, we stand to gain most if we learn

[2] The point made by the authors referred to is a valuable one—that much of Jung's interpretations were shaped by his Judeo-Christian background and the times in which he lived. Feminists and non-Western critics alike have found that this realization is crucial in referring to Jung's theories and analytic approaches.

as much as possible about archetype, ambiguity, and cultural realities before attempting to employ such powerful myths and motifs.

11. Conclusion

In the present paper, we reviewed entertainment-education initiatives and research, noting that information about the most effective ways to design pro-social programming is still inadequate. We provided a case history of the entertainment-education program *Oshin*; defined the concepts of strategic ambiguity and archetypes; and applied these concepts to *Oshin*. In doing so, we theorized that the use of strategic ambiguity and cultural archetypes in entertainment-education programs has potential in several areas, including:

(1) Movement from a social-scientific approach to studying entertainment-education programs to a qualitative, and humanistic investigation of entertainment-education programs.
(2) Allowing for multiple viewer interpretation and response, and therefore greater influence across cultural boundaries.
(3) Avoidance of counter-reading when media characters are too crudely drawn and "targeted" to specific audience segments.
(4) Better utilization of the inherently ambiguous nature of melodramatic serials.
(5) Use of the power of the *a priori* force of archetypes and myth in entertainment-education programs.
(6) Improved congruence between reader interpretations of specific cultural myths and prosocial messages.

We also delineated several *caveats* about the potential limitations of including the concepts of ambiguity and archetypes in entertainment-education planning. These included:

(1) Ethical concerns about planner responsibility.
(2) Overemphasis on individual reactions rather than on group progress.
(3) Potential misunderstanding of messages and program intent.
(4) The need to account for varying cultural tolerance of ambiguity.
(5) Dangers associated with not thoroughly understanding the communities and cultures involved.
(6) Dangers associated with planners operating from their own interpretive frameworks.
(7) The changing nature of archetypal interpretation and imagery over time.
(8) The potential for gender or andro-centric bias.

Our utilization of information, ideas, and perspectives from other disciplines in analyzing the entertainment-educative program *Oshin* might provide

promise for future development communication study. In fact, Storey (1993) called for what he termed "cross-level theorizing" in the field, arguing that "the need and the opportunity for cross-level theorizing is nowhere greater than in the field of development communication where we are inescapably concerned with continuity and change in international, national, regional and local social systems *as well as* in the individuals who comprise those systems, creating and experiencing change while struggling to maintain a certain degree of continuity" (p. 32–33). What we believe we have proposed is the need to conduct more "cross-level theorizing", by basing our analysis of *Oshin* on research traditions in development communication, literary criticism, psychology, and organizational communication. Specifically, we have proposed a form of "textual" analysis that lends us greater insight into the planning and distribution of entertainment-education messages across diverse audiences.

The entertainment-education strategy in communication, while it has enjoyed some initial success as a means of presenting pro-social messages, must grow and develop as a field of study. Similarly, we as its practitioners and examiners must continue to better understand its limitations as well as its potential for further growth.

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