

Portland State University

PDXScholar

Communication Faculty Publications and
Presentations

Communication

2021

Entertainment-Education Behind the Scenes: Case Studies for Theory and Practice

Lauren B. Frank

Portland State University, lfrank@pdx.edu

Paul Falzone

Peripheral Vision International

Follow this and additional works at: https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/comm_fac



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Curriculum and Social Inquiry Commons](#), [Mass Communication Commons](#), and the [Social Media Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Citation Details

Frank L.B., Falzone P. (eds) Entertainment-Education Behind the Scenes. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

This Book is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Communication Faculty Publications and Presentations by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. Please contact us if we can make this document more accessible: pdxscholar@pdx.edu.



Entertainment-Education Behind the Scenes

Case Studies for
Theory and Practice

Edited by
Lauren B. Frank
Paul Falzone

OPEN ACCESS

palgrave
macmillan

Entertainment-Education Behind the Scenes

Lauren B. Frank • Paul Falzone
Editors

Entertainment- Education Behind the Scenes

Case Studies for Theory and Practice

palgrave
macmillan

Editors

Lauren B. Frank
Portland State University
Portland, OR, USA

Paul Falzone
Peripheral Vision International
Brooklyn, NY, USA



ISBN 978-3-030-63613-5 ISBN 978-3-030-63614-2 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-63614-2>

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2021. This book is an open access publication.

Open Access This book is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if you modified the licensed material. You do not have permission under this license to share adapted material derived from this book or parts of it.

The images or other third party material in this book are included in the book's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the book's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover illustration: ozgurdonmaz, getty images
Cover design: eStudioCalamar

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG.

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

FOREWORD

I am thrilled and excited to see Drs. Lauren Frank and Paul Falzone complete the next major review on “entertainment-education.” Research in entertainment-education (EE) continues to evolve and grow over decades, and this volume offers an exceptional opportunity to learn about its history, underlying theories and research practices, outcomes, and future directions. This volume is a “must read” for scholars and practitioners who plan to craft their own social change intervention.

I use the term “evolve” strategically in this foreword. While parables, fairy tales, novels (like *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, 1852), dramas like *Philadelphia* (1993), and reality programs like MTV’s *Real World* (Season 3, featuring the HIV-positive Pedro Zamora) can have a significant, if not lasting, impact on the attitudes, beliefs, and values of the viewers, there was previously no systematic theory-based approach to designing entertainment vehicles to ensure cognitive and emotional outcomes.

The first phase of the development of an entertainment-education strategy evolved when an interdisciplinary team was organized to promote family planning around the world. The team included Everett M. Rogers, a sociologist famous for advancing the adoption of innovations in communities, and Albert Bandura, a social psychologist and personality theorist, famous for his work in social learning theory and self-efficacy. They partnered with Miguel Sabido, a theater director and playwright in Mexico, famous for work in the theory of drama (also see Miguel Sabido’s chapter in this volume).

For a number of years Rogers, Bandura, and Sabido collaborated with Bill Ryerson (also included in this volume) and David Poindexter (both

from nonprofit agencies tackling family planning matters) and with scholars from Johns Hopkins University Center for Communication Programs (in particular Phyllis Piotrow, Patrick Coleman, Larry Kincaid, and Suruchi Sood [also contributing to this volume]). It was during these years that the first global meeting on EE and Social Change was hosted by the Annenberg School at USC and Johns Hopkins University. The year was 1989, and scholars in health, communication, and media effects collaborated during seminar sessions to plan future projects. Interested readers can read chapters written by Poindexter, Ryerson, Piotrow, de Fossard, and Sood, reviewing their programmatic lines of research in the 2004 (Routledge) volume edited by Singhal, Cody, Rogers, and Sabido. I should also point out that Martine Bouman also appears in the 2004 volume as well as this volume, a pair of chapters that offer an archetype exemplary illustration of programmatic research spanning decades.

The first academic book on EE was the Singhal and Rogers (1999) book *Entertainment-Education: A Communication Strategy for Social Change* (Routledge). This book won the Distinguished Book Award in Applied Communication at the 2000 National Communication Association. It was clear that the topic of EE was popular, if not theoretically driven, and an important tool in promoting social change globally. I believe it was the first book that had the title “Entertainment-Education” in it. At the time I served as the Editor-in-Chief of *Communication Theory* (1999–2002), and I was determined to add to the growing evolution of EE. I was desperate to assemble the best articles on advancing theory for publication. Ev Rogers invited me to attend the 2001 EE Conference in Amsterdam (organized by Martine Bouman), and I asked Ev Rogers and Arvind Singhal to co-edit a Special Issue on EE. This Special Issue appeared in May 2002. These were some of the most downloaded and cited articles published by the journal at the time. So popular was the topic that we promptly started working on the Singhal, Cody, Sabido, and Rogers (2004) book (reprinted in 2010).

Sensing that the Entertainment-Education strategy is an effective theory-based or evidence-based approach to producing social change, the CDC decided to invest in Hollywood storytelling so that Hollywood writers and producers can provide *accurate* health and safety messages in programs. They created the Office of Hollywood, Health, & Society in the Norman Lear Center at the University of Southern California (in 2005–2007). Also, the establishment of the USC Norman Lear Center’s

Everett M. Rogers Award for Outstanding Contributions to EE further elevated the importance of EE.

The main goal of the Office of Hollywood, Health and Society was to serve as a resource to writers who are interested in gaining advice and knowledge about any health or safety topic. It is important to note that this office does not operate in “Hollywood Lobbying”; they do not “pitch” any specific drug or remedy. However, they will work with groups in Hollywood (such as the Writer’s Guild) to organize guest lectures, dialogues on any number of topics—problems of being under-insured, post-traumatic stress, and so on. Vicki Beck wrote an earlier chapter on the Office of Hollywood, Health & Society for the 2004 volume. Erica Lynn-Rosenthal and Kate Folb provide a more recent review in Chap. 15.

The Office of Hollywood, Health & Society offers an annual award for the best drama, comedy, documentary, children’s program, and a gala event with members of the CDC and other health agencies, has become popular. These changes prompted another evolution in the area: the number of EE programs has increased, and the number of topics has increased. Paralleling changes in American life, there are far more projects on social justice and equality than ever before (see chapters by Caty Borum Chattoo, and by Helen Wang and Arvind Singhal). Further, marketing experts say we are living in an era of “Brand Purpose,” where a brand seeks to confirm its importance to the consumer and seeks to help the consumer achieve his/her goals—gender equality, racial equality, and so on. Wang and Singhal (2016) won the 2017 Editor’s Choice Award from the *American Journal of Public Health* for their work with *East Los High*, a Hulu original program, focusing on sexuality and peer pressure, relationships coping with infidelity and violence, “coming out as gay,” and far more. The following year they won Outstanding Article of the Year from the International Communication Association. Naturally, *East Los High* used references to and materials from several youth advocacy (including LGBTQ) groups, with links to additional helpful information and advice. More brands are getting involved with social issues. For example, *Mary Kay*, concerned that tweens and teens may not be adequately equipped to enter into and maintain a safe and healthy relationship, funds a “love is respect” project, which could serve as an important partner for EE projects.

The editors of this volume have done an exceptional job in introducing the content to the reader and summarizing the different sections of the

book. I end with comments on progress made in two areas: emotional flow and using multiple platforms. In earlier works we look at character identification, social modeling, rewarding positive behaviors, and punishing negative ones. We also used variations of the Health Belief Model and the Theory of Planned Behavior. In this volume, there are several important contributions to emotional feeling states and “flow.” Study this material carefully—it is one of the future lines of publishable work. Second, in 2004 we could only speculate on uses of multiple platforms and/or trans-media engagement. This area is ripe for considerable systematic study.

I focused attention on how EE evolved over years. As the reader studies the content of the chapters that follow, I am confident that as an interdisciplinary group of collaborators reading this book, and sharing ideas and advice offline and in person, that EE will continue to evolve and the next set of published documents will continue to excel over time.

Annenberg School for Communication
University of Southern
California, Lincoln, MA, USA

Michael J. Cody

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to extend our appreciation to the many people who contributed to this project. Our editors at Palgrave Macmillan, Mala Sanghera-Warren, Byrony Burns, and Emily Wood, have been wonderful to work with, as they answered our questions and guided us through the publication process. Sergio Alarcon translated Miguel Sabido's chapter from Spanish to English for this volume. Jennifer Orkis at Johns Hopkins University Center for Communication Programs provided us with great examples of their current entertainment-education projects. Most notably, we thank Michael J. Cody for contributing a foreword and all of the chapter authors who were willing to share their lessons learned from work in entertainment-education.

Publication of this open access book was funded in part by the Portland State University Library's Open Access Fund. Publication of this open access book was also funded in part by the Segal Family Foundation. We offer a very special thanks to Barry Segal, who believes kids need honest information to make good decisions and that information should be delivered in cool ways.

Finally, we thank our colleagues, friends, and family who supported us through the preparation of this volume and reviewed early drafts of our chapters.

CONTENTS

Part I From Then to Now: Historical Perspectives	1
1 Introduction: Entertainment-Education Behind the Scenes Lauren B. Frank and Paul Falzone	3
2 Miguel Sabido's Entertainment-Education Miguel Sabido	15
3 The Impact of Social Change Communication: Lessons Learned from Decades of Media Outreach William N. Ryerson and Negussie Teffera	23
4 Entertainment-Education as Social Justice Activism in the United States: Narrative Strategy in the Participatory Media Era Caty Borum Chattoo	39
5 A Strange Kind of Marriage: The Challenging Journey of Entertainment-Education Collaboration Martine Bouman	61

Part II From Theory to Practice	85
6 Transportation into Narrative Worlds Melanie C. Green	87
7 The Emotional Flow Hypothesis in Entertainment-Education Narratives: Theory, Empirical Evidence, and Open Questions Yotam Ophir, Angeline Sangalang, and Joseph N. Cappella	103
8 Music and Culture in Entertainment-Education Carlos Chirinos-Espin	121
9 Strengthening Integration of Communication Theory into Entertainment-Education Practice: Reflections from the <i>La Peor Novela</i> Case Study Rafael Obregon, Jessica Wendorf Muhamad, and Charlotte Lapsansky	137
Part III From Research to Impact	155
10 Using Audience Research to Understand and Refine a Radio Drama in Myanmar Tackling Social Cohesion Sally Gowland, Anna Colquhoun, Muk Yin Haung Nyoï, and Van Sui Thawng	157
11 Social Norms Theory and Measurement in Entertainment-Education: Insights from Case Studies in Four Countries Amy Henderson Riley, Farren Rodrigues, and Suruchi Sood	175
12 In Search of Entertainment-Education's Effects on Attitudes and Behaviors Donald P. Green	195

13	When Life Gives You Lemons: What to Do When Something Goes Wrong in Your Carefully Planned Research and How to Avoid Disasters in the First Place	211
	Sheila T. Murphy	
14	Mind the Gap! Confronting the Challenges of Translational Communication Research in Entertainment-Education	223
	Hua Wang and Arvind Singhal	
	Part IV From Concept to Implementation	243
15	Entertainment-Education, American Style: Informing and Studying Hollywood's Portrayals of Social Issues	245
	Erica L. Rosenthal and Kate Langrall Folb	
16	Challenging the Forcefield: Crafting Entertainment-Education Transmedia Campaigns	265
	Joyee Shairee Chatterjee, Ragini Pasricha, Radharani Mitra, and Lauren B. Frank	
17	Youth and Entertainment-Education	279
	Sebastián Cole and Jessica Taylor Piotrowski	
18	How to Make a Living Legend: Bibliobandido as Literacy Movement Building	291
	Marisa Morán Jahn	
19	When Your Audience Is Your Channel: Facebook for Behavior Change	311
	Drew Bernard and Sarah Francis	

20	Last Mile Media: A How-To Guide	323
	Paul Falzone and Gosia Lukomska	
21	Epilogue: The Next Reel for Entertainment-Education	339
	Paul Falzone and Lauren B. Frank	
	Index	349

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Drew Bernard is the founding partner for innovation and new initiatives at Upswell. Bernard has been helping nonprofits use new media to drive measurable change for nearly two decades. Prior to Upswell, he was the founding CEO of ActionSprout, where he and his team served thousands of nonprofits on Facebook.

Caty Borum Chattoo is Executive Director of the Center for Media & Social Impact (CMSI) and an assistant professor at the American University School of Communication in Washington, DC. She is an award-winning media producer, scholar, professor, author, and strategist working at the intersection of social change, documentary, and entertainment storytelling.

Martine Bouman is the Scientific Director and Founder of the Center for Media & Health in Gouda, the Netherlands, and holds the Special Chair Entertainment Media and Social Change at the Erasmus University Rotterdam. She is an international award winner and expert in the field of Entertainment-Education.

Joseph N. Cappella is the Gerald R. Miller Professor of Communication in the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania. His research has resulted in more than 165 articles and book chapters and 4 co-authored books in areas of health and political communication, social interaction, nonverbal behavior, media effects, and statistical methods.

Joyce Shairee Chatterjee PhD, is Assistant Professor and Chair of the Gender and Development Studies Program at the Asian Institute of Technology. Her research work focuses on the role of media technologies, development policies, and popular culture in promoting gender-equitable health and social change in Asia.

Carlos Chirinos-Espin PhD, is Associate Professor of Music and Global Health at NYU Steinhardt and School of Global Public Health, and Director of the Music and Social Change Lab at NYU. His research explores the intersection of popular music, behavior change communication, and health in Africa and Latin America.

Michael J. Cody holds a PhD in Communication from Michigan State University in 1978. He taught at SUNY Albany, Texas Tech, and recently retired from the University of Southern California, where he worked for 39 years. He has focused on research methods, interpersonal communication, nonverbal communication, and persuasion. He served as the Editor-in-Chief of both *Communication Theory* and the *Journal of Communication*.

Sebastián Cole is a junior lecturer in the Amsterdam School of Communication Research at the University of Amsterdam. He has a background in sociology and communication science, and his research interests include entertainment, new media and technology, and media effects.

Anna Colquhoun As Country Research Manager for BBC Media Action, Colquhoun has led the design of a wide range of studies to inform, shape and evaluate media produced in Myanmar since 2015. Her background is in social anthropology, and she has worked across brand, political and media campaigns.

Paul Falzone (PhD, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania) writes, lectures, teaches and consults on media and social change. He is the founder and Executive Director of Peripheral Vision International, a nonprofit organization that researches, creates and distributes innovative entertainment-education media in East Africa and beyond.

Kate Langrall Folb is the Director of Hollywood, Health and Society, a program of the USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center. She has worked for over 20 years in the entertainment-education field.

Sarah Francis is the founding partner for campaigns and impact at Upswell. Before founding Upswell, Francis was the Director of Strategy at ActionSprout, where she helped hundreds of organizations learn to use Facebook to achieve their missions.

Lauren B. Frank PhD, is Associate Professor of Communication at Portland State University. Frank specializes in public health communication and mass media research. Particularly focused on how people talk about health campaigns, Frank has collaborated with multiple nonprofit organizations on entertainment-education interventions.

Sally Gowland As senior research manager for the Asia and Europe region at BBC Media Action, Gowland has worked across social, media and audience research for over ten years. She has a keen interest in understanding how drama and edutainment can have an impact on audiences and wider social and behavior change outcomes.

Donald P. Green is J.W. Burgess Professor of Political Science at Columbia University. His research interests include voting behavior, public opinion, and media effects. Much of his current work uses field experimentation to study the ways in which media and political campaigns mobilize and persuade.

Melanie C. Green Green's research examines the power of narrative to change beliefs, including the effects of fictional stories on real-world attitudes. Green has examined narrative persuasion contexts from health communication to social issues, including in two edited books (*Narrative Impact* and *Persuasion: Psychological Insights and Perspectives, Second Edition*).

Marisa Morán Jahn Of Ecuadorian and Chinese descent, Jahn's artwork redistributes power, "exemplifying the possibilities of art as social practice" (ArtForum). A graduate of MIT, Jahn's work has been presented at Obama's White House, United Nations, BBC, CNN, *The New York Times*, Museum of Modern Art, and Tribeca Film Festival.

Charlotte Lapsansky PhD, is a Communication for Development (C4D) specialist in the C4D team at UNICEF Headquarters in New York. She specializes in capacity development initiatives and partnerships to strengthen C4D programming for UNICEF, UNICEF partners, and the larger social and behavior change field.

Gosia Lukomska is the Executive Creative Director at Peripheral Vision International (PVI). She holds an MFA in Integrated Media Arts from University of New York-Hunter College and an MS in Social Psychology from the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Warsaw, Poland, where she was born and raised.

Radharani Mitra is Global Creative Advisor at BBC Media Action, the BBC's independent, international charity that uses media and communication for development. With three decades of experience, Mitra mines insights, shapes strategies, and tells stories using new and legacy media to bring about social and behavior change. Her work has won several Indian and international awards.

Sheila T. Murphy is a full professor in the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California. Trained in social psychology, Murphy specializes in narrative persuasion or using stories to change knowledge, attitudes and practices.

Muk Yin Haung Nyo As a research manager, Nyo has led qualitative and quantitative projects for BBC Media Action in Myanmar since 2013. She previously worked as a freelance reporter and researcher across diverse social research projects.

Rafael Obregon PhD, is the UNICEF Paraguay Representative and former chief of Communication for Development (C4D), UNICEF, New York. As Chief of C4D he provided technical support to UNICEF COs on the design and implementation of Entertainment-Education initiatives. He has provided technical support and advice to global initiatives, including public health emergencies.

Yotam Ophir is Assistant Professor of Communication at the University at Buffalo, State University of New York. Ophir's research focuses on media effects and persuasion, combining methods for computational communication research with experimental and survey designs to study media content and its effects on audiences.

Ragini Pasricha is Director, Content Strategy, at BBC Media Action in India. With over 20 years of experience in public health, she has worked on social and behavior change communication for a wide range of issues, developing theories of change, content across multiple formats and channels, guiding research, and dissemination.

Jessica Taylor Piotrowski PhD, is an associate professor in the Amsterdam School of Communication Research at the University of Amsterdam. She directs the Center for research on Children, Adolescents, & the Media and the Graduate School of Communication. She investigates how users process media and the role of individual differences.

Amy Henderson Riley DrPH, holds a doctorate from the Drexel University Dornsife School of Public Health, where Suruchi Sood was her advisor. She completed a postdoctoral fellowship with Caty Borum Chattoo at American University. She is currently an assistant professor at Thomas Jefferson University's College of Population Health.

Farren Rodrigues MPH, is a research coordinator in the Department of Community Health and Prevention, Dornsife School of Public Health, Drexel University. She assists with research to inform the design, implementation, and evaluation of global social and behavior change communication interventions related to the health of women and children.

Erica L. Rosenthal is the Director of Research at the USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center, where she studies the content of media narratives and their impact on audiences. She has a PhD in Social Psychology from Claremont Graduate University and has 20 years of experience evaluating media and communication initiatives.

William N. Ryerson is president of Population Media Center (www.populationmedia.org), an organization that improves the health and well-being of people around the world through the use of entertainment media. PMC creates long-running serialized dramas on radio and TV, in which characters evolve into role models for the audience on various issues.

Miguel Sabido is a Mexican communication theoretician and practitioner who began his career in theater and moved to television at Televisa. He developed an approach that would become known as the Sabido Method. Recognized as the father of entertainment-education, he has received more than 50 international awards for his work.

Angeline Sangalang (LeeAnn) Sangalang (PhD, University of Southern California) is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Dayton. Sangalang's research explores the intersection of health communication, mass media, and persuasion.

Arvind Singhal is Marston Endowed Professor of Communication and Director of the Social Justice Initiative at the University of Texas at El Paso, USA, and a professor in the Faculty of Business Administration, Inland University of Applied Sciences, Norway. His research interests include entertainment-education, positive deviance, and social change.

Suruchi Sood holds an MA in Communication and Development Studies from Ohio University and a PhD in Intercultural Communication (with a public health minor) from the University of New Mexico. Currently, she is an associate professor in the Department of Community Health and Prevention, School of Public Health at Drexel University.

Negussie Teffera was Population Media Center's Ethiopia Country Representative from 2000 to 2019, where he oversaw the creation of eight radio serial dramas and sixteen books. He is the author of three books and has an MEd in Journalism and PhD in Media and Communication from University of Wales, Cardiff.

Van Sui Thawng has been working as a research assistant for BBC Media Action since 2018. He has worked closely with the Tea Cup Diaries team to gather and share audience feedback to inform programming.

Hua Wang is Associate Professor of Communication and Affiliated Faculty of Community Health & Health Behavior at the University at Buffalo, the State University of New York, USA. She has been an entertainment-education enthusiast since 2005 and hopes to contribute to more innovative research, especially on emerging technologies.

Jessica Wendorf Muhamad PhD, is an assistant professor at Florida State University and Director of the PEAKS Laboratory, which is centered on developing participatory and evidence-based interventions for complex social issues. Her work with hypervulnerable populations seeks the creation of dialogic spaces via the development of culturally relevant, experientially based interventions.

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 2.1	Comprehensive approach to entertainment-education	16
Fig. 5.1	<i>Villa Borghese</i> : Health & Beauty Farm. (Source: CMH with permission of AVRO broadcasting company)	65
Fig. 5.2	Entertainment-Education Media Mapping Model	69
Fig. 5.3	Central and peripheral routes of the Sound Effects campaign	72
Fig. 5.4	<i>SOUND</i> (Source: CMH: Casper Cammeraat)	73
Fig. 5.5	The cast of <i>UP2U</i> . (Source CMH: Casper Cameraat)	77
Fig. 9.1	UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018–2021. Goal Areas and Change Strategies	140
Fig. 9.2	Social-ecological model. (Adapted: UNICEF. (2018). <i>UNICEF 2017 report on Communication for development (CAD). Global progress and country-level highlights across program areas</i>)	141
Fig. 10.1	The <i>Tea Cup Diaries</i> production team recording on location in Yangon. (Credit: BBC Media Action)	160
Fig. 10.2	Recording an episode of the <i>Tea Cup Diaries</i> . (Credit: BBC Media Action)	163
Fig. 10.3	Recording an episode of the <i>Tea Cup Diaries</i> . (Credit: BBC Media Action)	166
Fig. 14.1	Summary of <i>East Los High</i> viewer survey results of structural equation modeling	231
Fig. 14.2	<i>MKBKSH</i> Season 3 viewing sessions among villagers facilitated by Shramik Bharati	235
Fig. 15.1	HH&S Director Folb (left) with former Sec. of Defense William Perry (center) and journalist and filmmaker Eric Schlosser (right) at the nuclear initiative kickoff event	253

Fig. 15.2	Kate Folb, Director of HH&S with former CIA agent Valerie Plame Wilson at the nuclear initiative kickoff event	254
Fig. 16.1	Transmedia axes: age by geography (Pasricha et al., 2018)	272
Fig. 18.1	Bibliobandido riding in El Pital, 2010. (Photo by Marisa Morán Jahn)	292
Fig. 18.2	Bibliobandido's menu, Library Club of El Pital, 2010. (Photo by Marisa Morán Jahn)	295
Fig. 18.3	Bibliobandido Diaspora, 2018. (Graphics by Marisa Morán Jahn)	299
Fig. 18.4	La Inspectora played by Yaquira, 2012. (Photo by Marisa Morán Jahn)	305
Fig. 18.5	Mister Miss Match Cha-Cha-Cha, 2018. A character who craves rhythm and rhyme but can't keep a beat	306
Fig. 18.6	The Jalapeanut, 2016. Half jalapeno, half peanut, this character was used to talk with young kids in New York City about the way that we are all "mixies" coming from different cultures. (Photo by Marisa Morán Jahn)	308
Fig. 20.1	Inside a typical Ugandan video hall (kibanda)	327
Fig. 20.2	Village video in the field	330
Fig. 20.3	Not your stereotypical newscasters. The Newz Beat team	332
Fig. 20.4	Still from the opening credits of N*Gen	334

LIST OF TABLES

Table 9.1	Typology of entertainment-education modalities in UNICEF	143
Table 11.1	Summary of six social norms constructs	177

PART I

From Then to Now: Historical
Perspectives



CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Entertainment-Education Behind the Scenes

Lauren B. Frank and Paul Falzone

I sat down and turned on the television. I was excited to watch a suspenseful drama called *How to Get Away with Murder*. As I watched, one character learned that he had tested positive for HIV. As the story unfolded, he and his provider had a frank conversation about HIV testing, transmission, and prevention. Since I am in the field of entertainment-education (EE), my first question was not about HIV. Instead, I wondered whether the inclusion of this storyline in a popular broadcast television drama was an intentional effort to educate the public. I went online to search whether my hunch was correct; in this case, the Office of Hollywood, Health, & Society at the University of Southern California Norman Lear Center had hosted a roundtable with the show’s writing team and advocacy groups.—Lauren

When we visited the village four years earlier, the only television screen anyone had access to was in a petrol generator powered “video hall” (or *kibanda*). For a few cents, fishermen sat on benches within the mud and

L. B. Frank (✉)
Portland State University, Portland, OR, USA
e-mail: lfrank@pdx.edu

P. Falzone
Peripheral Vision International, Brooklyn, NY, USA
e-mail: director@pvinternational.org

© The Author(s) 2021
L. B. Frank, P. Falzone (eds.), *Entertainment-Education Behind the
Scenes*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-63614-2_1

wattle structure, whiling away the hours between casting and collecting their nets watching DVDs of American action movies dubbed into the local language of Luganda by VJ Jingo, who did all the voices and made jokes about the action onscreen. But as our little boat pulled up this time, I could immediately see that things had changed. Atop the palm frond roofs of many homes were single solar panels with aerial antennae tied to wooden poles above them. For better or for worse, television had come to the Sese Islands. Those screens would now be a window into a larger world for the young people of Lake Victoria. I asked myself how entertainment-education could be used to play a positive role in their lives.—Paul

THE FIELD OF ENTERTAINMENT-EDUCATION

Since before media existed, stories have been used as a tool to change the world. But the first conference establishing entertainment-education as a field only dates back to 1989 in Los Angeles, California; this First International Conference on Entertainment Education and Social Change (EE1) was hosted by the University of Southern California Annenberg School for Communication and Johns Hopkins University Center for Communication Programs (Storey & Sood, 2013). Definitions have become more nuanced over time, but essentially, entertainment-education is a “theory-based communication strategy for purposefully embedding educational and social issues in the creation, production, processing, and dissemination process of an entertainment program, in order to achieve desired individual, community, institutional, and societal changes among the intended media user populations” (Wang & Singhal, 2009, pp. 272–273).

Miguel Sabido (2004; 2021), a director, screenwriter, and telenovela producer, was a pioneer in realizing the social benefit that his shows could have. Drawing from theories about drama and Bandura’s (2004) social cognitive theory, he developed the Sabido methodology for producing entertainment-education programs in the 1970s. For example, his telenovela *Ven Conmigo* (Come with me) in Mexico promoted adult education and literacy by having the primary character be a literate woman who encouraged others to overcome barriers to reading. Sabido’s work provides crucial recommendations for how EE campaigns should be implemented. Educational content is incorporated into the main storylines of entertaining dramas. To encourage social change, the dramas feature positive characters whom audiences can aspire to be like, transitional characters who overcome obstacles and serve as role models for how to change

behavior, and negative characters who demonstrate the consequences of unfavorable lifestyles. After each episode, a respected actor provides an epilogue that repeats the primary messages incorporated that day. More information on the Sabido methodology and its application is included in multiple chapters within this volume, most notably, Sabido (2021), Ryerson and Negussie (2021), and Wang and Singhal (2021).

The process of entertainment-education in the United States, and similarly media-saturated environments, has long looked different from more traditional versions of EE based on the Sabido methodology. Rather than creating entire shows with the goal of promoting social change, shorter facts and storylines are inserted into already popular television programs. The storyline on *How to Get Away with Murder* is one example of this. Occasionally referred to as “consultative social merchandising” (Singhal, Wang, Rogers, Rice, & Atkin, 2013), this technique relies on media producers working with social change and communication experts such as the Office of Hollywood, Health & Society in the University of Southern California Norman Lear Center in the United States and the Centrum Media and Gezondheid in the Netherlands (see Borum Chattoo, 2021; Bouman, 2021; Rosenthal & Folb, 2021). Perhaps because of pushback against the goal of educating viewers, many media producers in the United States don’t like the term “entertainment-education.” Instead, they have established initiatives for “social impact television.”

Embedded within the field of communication, entertainment-education is a rich subfield “that finds itself on the cutting edge of technological development and social change” (Storey & Sood, 2013, p. 11). Although fairly young, EE has grown rapidly and become mature in the broad array of interventions, theoretical perspectives, and research methods employed. For instance, though the term EE originated with long-running serial dramas, typically broadcast on radio or television, it’s also long included a variety of other media and formats, such as photonovelas, community plays, and music.

In recent years, EE has become intertwined with other academic fields, including narrative persuasion. Although social and cognitive theories have long contributed to the development of EE programs, there is now more emphasis on theories about how narratives are processed and can influence social and behavior change. Melanie Green’s (2021b; Green & Brock, 2000) work on transportation shows that a key element of being persuaded by stories stems from being absorbed within the story world. In her entertainment overcoming resistance model, Moyer-Gusé (2008)

posits that transportation, along with involvement with characters and enjoyment, can reduce counterarguing and resistance to persuasion. These processes explain how narrative EE interventions can affect audiences. In this volume, see Ophir, Sangalang, and Cappella (2021) for a thorough review of theories used to develop EE programming. As they note, more work must be done to fully translate these theories into practical advice to craft better EE programs.

Work on narrative persuasion is rooted within the media psychology field, and it often takes an individual-centered approach to how media enact change. The original conception of EE always implied a social change approach, and there have long been calls to move from theorizing at the individual level to theorizing at a social and structural level (Singhal & Rogers, 2004). Some of that theorizing lies in goals to promote collective efficacy in addition to self-efficacy and expand theorizing on social norms (Riley, Rodrigues, & Sood, 2021).

CHANGING MEDIA LANDSCAPE

To understand the recent history of entertainment-education and to begin to assess in which direction it is headed, it is essential to understand the evolution of media technology in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. While technology is always evolving, filmmaking, radio, print, and other mass media were largely the preserve of professional producers until the year 2000. Since then, barriers of entry for media producers have largely disappeared, as digital technology has democratized the production, distribution, and reception of media. Each one of these in itself is a revolution, but together they represent an entirely new media landscape. When the floodwaters of technology broke, they broke quickly and across media. Although basic blogging has existed since the late twentieth century, broadband internet at scale is a twenty-first century innovation. Affordable, accessible cameras, microphones, and editing interfaces became available, and the launch of YouTube in 2005 kickstarted the revolution in shared video and democratized distribution of video media. The launch of the iPod in 2001 helped podcasting emerge as a powerful medium for new voices to reach mass audiences. While social media have existed since the 1990s, Facebook was the company that would make it ubiquitous in our lives when it opened its platform to the general public in mid-2006. The launch of the first iPhone in 2007 heralded the revolution in mobile computing and converged many of the gadgets (audio

recording, video, camera, etc.) that empowered the first wave of twenty-first century content creators.

These technological changes have created new avenues for a variety of EE media, including the use of serious digital games and transmedia (Singhal et al., 2013; Wang & Singhal, 2009). Opportunities provided by streaming platforms decrease barriers to entry, and proliferation of media makes the entertainment and enjoyment aspects all the more important to cut through the noise that emerges when content creation scales.

Communication campaigns (including many EE programs) have often used more than a single mode of communication. However, the mind-set behind transmedia storytelling is centered on art, play, experimentation, cocreation, and collective action. Compared to traditional campaigns, it is rather open-ended, exploratory, nonlinear, process-oriented and fun! (Singhal et al., 2013, p. 330)

The downside of the digital revolution is a deepening digital divide in which marginalized people are left further and further behind, particularly in developing contexts where access to technology that is taken for granted in the West is confined to an expanding but ever divergent middle and upper class. Age, gender, geography, literacy, familiarity with the dominant language, electrification, mobile coverage, and, above all, access to capital are what determine those who have a voice and those who do not, or those who can receive a message and those who are left in the dark.

CURRENT QUESTIONS AND CHALLENGES

Recent review articles summarizing EE have highlighted ongoing questions and challenges within the field including: working with funding organizations and documenting cost-effective impact, negotiating the relationship between research and theory and their implementation, focusing on the art and creativity required for EE to truly be entertaining (Storey & Sood, 2013); incorporating more levels of effect beyond the individual level, taking advantage of interactive digital technologies, and working to create and measure long-term sustainable change (Sood, Riley, & Alarcon, 2017). Our goal is not to provide a single correct answer to any of these questions. Rather, our goal in this volume is to invite leaders in the field to struggle with these questions and suggest possible answers. By doing so, we can move the whole field forward. Thus, we posed the following questions to the authors of each chapter.

*What Are the Boundaries of Entertainment-Education, and How
Much Do They Need to Focus on Narrative Drama Versus Other
Forms of Storytelling?*

As we noted above, the EE field has not been confined to television or radio dramas alone. Many innovations have occurred within the field, as new technologies allow opportunities for serious video games that combine entertainment and education (Wang & Singhal, 2009). With the focus on narrative persuasion, the boundaries of the concept of entertainment-education can become blurred. In this volume, we take an expansive approach to EE genres by inviting scholars and practitioners from a variety of backgrounds to participate in the conversation. Thus, we include work that uses music (Chirinos-Espin, 2021), performance (Jahn, 2021) radio dramas (Ryerson & Negussie, 2021), transmedia (Chatterjee, Pasricha, Mitra, & Frank, 2021; Wang & Singhal, 2021), and more.

We also choose an expansive approach in terms of intended audience. In their encyclopedia review of entertainment-education, Sood et al. (2017) suggest, “a classic successful example of EE is the children’s television program *Sesame Street*” (p. 1). However, in an encyclopedia entry from the same year, Chatterjee, Sangalang, and Cody (2017) question whether *Sesame Street* should count. In this volume, Sabido (2021) highlights *Sesame Street* as an example of an effective intervention worthy of dissemination. This confusion in whether educational media for children and youth count as EE can also be seen in the separate divisions within communication associations and the lack of citations across fields. In this volume, Cole and Piotrowski (2021) trace the theoretical foundations that underlie entertaining media for children and suggest how applying those theories in more traditional EE programming for adults could improve them.

Ultimately, Wang and Singhal (2021) suggest four key features that define the boundaries for the field of entertainment-education: (1) that it is a social and behavioral change communication (SBCC) strategy, (2) that it *intentionally* combines education with entertainment, (3) that it is grounded in theory, and (4) that it aims for long-term change not just at the individual level, but also at the higher levels of community and society.

*How Do Academic Theories in the Field
of Entertainment-Education Relate to Theories of Change That
Practitioners Can Apply in the Field?*

In their systematic review of EE literature published from 2005 through 2016, Sood et al. (2017) found fifty six different explicitly named theories. While many of the theories worked solely at the individual level (e.g. audience reception), others combined individual and social change. Although it is certainly a strength of the field that theory is deeply embedded in its roots, the diverse array of theories can make the field inaccessible to newcomers and suggest that the field has not matured to a point of coherence. Sood et al. (2017) suggest that an overarching “theory of everything” might be called for (p. 25).

Have we reached a point wherein we are ready to consolidate, or are we missing crucial elements that suggest practical implications? In this volume, M. Green (2021b) elaborates on her transportation theory, and Ophir et al. (2021) report their lessons learned from stories designed to create specific sequences of emotions. More such specific recommendations for what story elements actually create effects are crucial.

Importantly, many of the EE theories in the academic literature stem from Western societies and are based on lab studies disconnected from the environment within which EE programs are implemented (Wang & Singhal, 2021). Unsurprisingly, when moved into practice, EE program designers often instead refer to their “theory of change” that employs the concepts that resonate most strongly with local audiences. Gowland, Colquhoun, Nyoï, and Thawng (2021) detail their process in using audience research to iteratively create campaigns; while starting with a theoretical framework, they diverge from it to instead be responsive to what they learn on the ground. Likewise, Chirinos-Espin (2021) uses a critical theory approach to highlight the importance of participatory EE interventions. Chatterjee et al. (2021) apply the critical media effects framework to reconsider the constraints within which EE scholars and practitioners work.

*In the New Media Landscape with Multiple Screens, How Can
Entertainment-Education Reach Audiences and Keep
Them Engaged?*

In earlier eras of EE, there was a divide such that developing countries had more consolidated media, and campaigns could better reach a greater

percentage of the population. However, media are now diverging and audiences fragmenting, resulting in smaller audiences for different media types on a global scale. It may be that smaller interventions with more narrowly defined intended audiences are better able to engage those audiences (Sood et al., 2017). Or it may be that the global village and transnational medias facilitate a new focus on stories that cut across culture and connect to something essentially human. But what matters most for engaging audiences? A key theme throughout the chapters is the importance of EE leading with the entertaining aspects. Notably, Falzone and Lukomska (2021) and Bernard and Francis (2021) highlight the importance of creating content that the audience values and would seek out on its own.

Transmedia interventions integrate a variety of media types that incorporate the same storyline and characters in different ways and provide a variety of touchpoints for audiences to engage and interact. Ryerson and Negussie (2021) suggest that transmedia is the new Hollywood term for an approach that EE has taken for a long time: using multiple different media channels that are selected because they are the best ways to reach the intended audience. But do digital media and transmedia go beyond multi-channel campaigns? Chatterjee et al. (2021) argue that the level of coordination among the differing types is more complicated. These kinds of interventions can be particularly complex to create and coordinate (Bouman, 2021).

In the face of these new media trends and the promise of interactivity, we must not forget that disparities in access to media continue. Falzone and Lukomska (2021) and Jahn (2021) highlight the importance of interventions that don't require digital technologies or literacy.

What Works and What Doesn't Work in the Field of Entertainment-Education?

One key difficulty in the progress of entertainment-education as a field is what information scholars and practitioners can access about existing efforts. "For example, evaluations, project reports, and other nonscholarly sources may have been published or reported locally but not made in the academic literature. Thus, the universe of knowledge about EE is not fully represented in peer-reviewed publications" (Sood et al., 2017, p. 5). This book serves in part as an answer to that critique. The primary question that we asked each author to consider is what works in crafting effective EE:

From its inception, research has been crucial to EE programming. Murphy (2021) highlights the importance of planning ahead and being prepared to adjust research designed for when things go wrong in the field. Don Green (2021a) suggests a model for how to do research in EE and suggests that overall effects are small. Some mass media campaigns deliberately trade small effects for large exposure. But are EE campaigns worth the cost if only small effects can be achieved? Single campaigns may not be sufficient to change strongly held social norms and cultural beliefs. Instead, many campaigns may need to work together to promote social change.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Entertainment-education is expanding and facing a lot of new opportunities, including new digital formats and transmedia. However, making media campaigns can be a chaotic process. Add to that the realities of working in the field and the rigid structures of scholarly evaluation, and you have a recipe for truths half told. This book aspires to tell it like it is through a collection of readable essays in which some of the top names in the entertainment-education field relate how entertainment-education works and tell true accounts about when it didn't. Read along to learn from their successes and mistakes, and get a behind-the-scenes look at entertainment-education.

REFERENCES

- Bandura, A. (2004). Social cognitive theory for personal and social change by enabling media. In A. Singhal, M. J. Cody, E. M. Rogers, & M. Sabido (Eds.), *Entertainment-education and social change* (pp. 75–96). New York: Routledge.
- Bernard, D., & Francis, S. (2021). When your audience is your channel: Facebook for behavior change. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Borum Chattoo, C. (2021). Entertainment-education as social justice activism in the United States: Narrative strategy in the participatory media era. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bouman, M. (2021). A strange kind of marriage: The challenging journey of entertainment-education collaboration. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.

- Chatterjee, J. S., Pasricha, R., Mitra, R., & Frank, L. B. (2021). Challenging the forcefield: Crafting entertainment-education transmedia campaigns. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Chatterjee, J. S., Sangalang, A., & Cody, M. J. (2017). Entertainment-education. In *The international Encyclopedia of media effects* (pp. 1–12). <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118783764.wbieme0067>
- Chirinos-Espin, C. (2021). Music and culture in entertainment-education. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cole, S., & Piotrowski, J. T. (2021). Youth and entertainment-education. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Falzone, P., & Lukomska, G. (2021). Last mile media: A how-to guide. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gowland, S., Colquhoun, A., Nyoï, M. Y. H., & Thawng, V. S. (2021). Using audience research to understand and refine a radio drama in Myanmar tackling social cohesion. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Green, D. P. (2021a). In search of entertainment-education's effects on attitudes and behaviors. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Green, M. C. (2021b). Transportation into narrative worlds. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2000). The role of transportation in the persuasiveness of public narratives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79, 701–721.
- Jahn, M. M. (2021). How to make a living legend: Bibliobandido as literacy movement building. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Moyer-Gusé, E. (2008). Toward a theory of entertainment persuasion: Explaining the persuasive effects of entertainment-education messages. *Communication Theory*, 18(3), 407–425. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2008.00328.x>
- Murphy, S. T. (2021). When life gives you lemons: What to do when something goes wrong in your carefully planned research and how to avoid disasters in the first place. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Obregon, R., Wendorf-Muhamad, J., & Lapsansky, C. (2021). Strengthening integration of communication theory into entertainment-education practice:

- Reflections from the *La Peor Novela* case study. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ophir, Y., Sangalang, A., & Cappella, J. N. (2021). The emotional flow hypothesis in entertainment-education narratives: Theory, empirical evidence, and open questions. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Riley, A. H., Rodrigues, F., & Sood, S. (2021). Social norms theory and measurement in entertainment-education: Insights from case studies in four countries. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rosenthal, E., & Folb, K. (2021). Entertainment-education, American style: Informing and studying Hollywood's portrayals of social issues. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ryerson, W. N., & Negussie, N. (2021). The impact of social change communication: Lessons learned from decades of media outreach. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sabido, M. (2004). The origins of entertainment-education. In A. Singhal, M. J. Cody, E. M. Rogers, & M. Sabido (Eds.), *Entertainment-education and social change* (pp. 61–74). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Sabido, M. (2021). Miguel Sabido's entertainment-education. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Singhal, A., & Rogers, E. (2004). The status of entertainment-education worldwide. In A. Singhal, M. J. Cody, E. M. Rogers, & M. Sabido (Eds.), *Entertainment-education and social change* (pp. 3–20). New York: Routledge.
- Singhal, A., Wang, H., Rogers, E. M., Rice, R. E., & Atkin, C. K. (2013). The rising tide of entertainment-education in communication campaigns. In R. E. Rice & C. Atkins (Eds.), *Public communication campaigns* (4th ed., pp. 321–333). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Sood, S., Riley, A. H., & Alarcon, K. C. (2017). Entertainment-education and health and risk messaging. In R. Parrott (Ed.), *Oxford research encyclopedia of communication*. New York: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.245>
- Storey, D., & Sood, S. (2013). Increasing equity, affirming the power of narrative and expanding dialogue: the evolution of entertainment education over two decades. *Critical Arts*, 27(1), 9–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02560046.2013.767015>

- Wang, H., & Singhal, A. (2009). Entertainment-education through digital games. In U. Ritterfeld, M. J. Cody, & P. Vorderer (Eds.), *Serious games: Mechanisms and effects* (pp. 271–292). New York: Routledge.
- Wang, H., & Singhal, A. (2021). Mind the gap! Confronting the challenges of translational communication research in entertainment-education. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if you modified the licensed material. You do not have permission under this licence to share adapted material derived from this chapter or parts of it.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.





CHAPTER 2

Miguel Sabido's Entertainment-Education

Miguel Sabido

When Lauren Frank and Paul Falzone came to me and asked me what the “principle” of Sabido’s entertainment-education (EE) is, I naturally answered that I come from a theater background and education. My major was theater, and my minor was philosophy. I am a theater and television director, scriptwriter, and producer; in other words, I am a communication practitioner. Additionally, I studied epistemology, which equipped me to create a Theory of the Tone in human communication. This communication theorizing led me to talk with Wilbur Schramm, Everett Rogers, Marshall McLuhan, and other great personalities during the World Encounters in Communication conferences in 1974 and 1979 that I designed and produced for Televisa.

THEORY OF THE TONE

Since I was 18, I have been interested in knowing what effect I had on the audience with my college plays. I started developing a methodology based on the theories of Eric Bentley (1967) to find out what effect melodrama, farce, tragedy, and so on had. My initial attempts toward entertainment-education began with a first column devoted to establishing a theoretical

M. Sabido (✉)
Mexico City, Mexico

© The Author(s) 2021
L. B. Frank, P. Falzone (eds.), *Entertainment-Education Behind the Scenes*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-63614-2_2

framework and posing a testable hypothesis. In the second column, I placed the production and direction procedures that I use in order to achieve the hypothetical effect that I proposed. Finally, the third column highlights the importance of evaluation to test whether I had achieved the effect proposed in the hypothesis. As I have learned from my projects, I have added to this initial framework to create my comprehensive approach to entertainment-education (see Fig. 2.1).

In one of the plays I directed in college theater I discovered that the actress, Martha Zavaleta, changed her energy in her body, thus changing the tone of the scene and for that matter the tone of the whole play. Therefore, she changed the effect on the audience. Described in greater detail in my previous book chapter (Sabido, 2004), I called the points she could take her energy to “nodes” because they were points in which

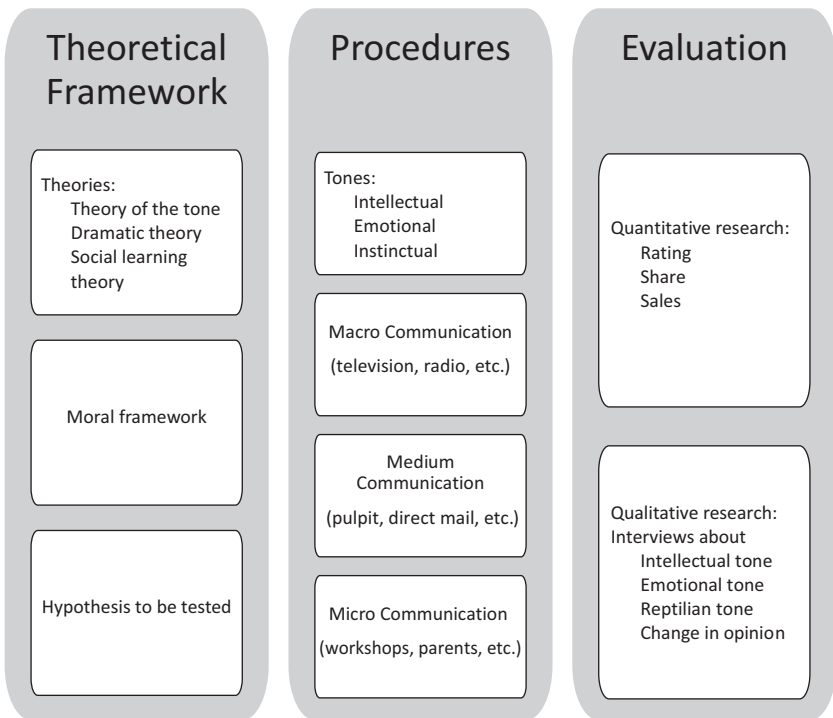


Fig. 2.1 Comprehensive approach to entertainment-education

nerves, veins, arteries, and lymphatic vessels met. For two years we worked together searching for those changes of energy. By using this system, we had great hits like the Grand Honor Prize of the Colombia Theater Festival in 1965.

We discovered that there are “nodes” behind the eyes; when energy was placed there, the tone became intelligent and lucid. Meryl Streep in *The Devil Wears Prada* is a very good example. When energy is placed in the base of the neck, the actor can deeply move the audience, thus giving the scene an emotional tone. Again, Meryl Streep is a good example in *Sophie's Choice*. Third, there are nodes in the lower part of the body, which are more “reptilian.” For instance, a “node” in the pit of the stomach generates a tone of terror when the actor energizes it; an extraordinary example is Janet Leigh in the shower scene of Hitchcock's *Psycho*. Similarly, some actors and actresses can generate a fierce tone using those nodes (Catherine Zeta-Jones in *Chicago*), a sexual tone (Marylin Monroe), or tones of mystic enrapture like those produced by Maria Douglas in my play *The Temptations of Mary of Egypt*.

From this, I deduced that the human body could generate three types of tones: intellectual, emotional, and reptilian. I then set up a theoretical framework composed of all the “schools of theater of the world.” Intellectual tones had been proposed by Diderot and uniquely used by the Comedie Française. I also employed the emotional tone used by Stanislavsky and his followers. Finally, the reptilian tones were used by Grotowski, Barba, and Garcia.

These findings led to my work on the Theory of the Tone in human communication (Sabido, 2004). It has a core hypothesis: it is possible to arrange the elements of the flow to intensify, weaken, degrade, highlight, amplify, and/or diminish the tone of the communication. Using this theory, I was able to establish the main premise of my work: it is possible to use entertainment to achieve a proven social benefit without losing the audience.

Over time, I have adapted my theory. I was able to create a 3 by 3 grid of nine items. The grid features micro (interpersonal), medium (gatherings of 50-500 attendees), and macro (broadcast television or radio, streaming video, public transit, etc.) communication crossed with the three tones (intellectual, emotional, and reptilian). In this grid any communication media accessible to any human being can be located.

ENTERTAINMENT-EDUCATION PROJECTS

In February 1967 under the sponsorship of the Mexican Institute of Social Security, I devised a project using the first of my models of tonal communication. In this project, I used a supermarket-rack magazine with a predominantly reptilian tone to convey intellectual data to inner-city audiences. My goal was to have the audience read the magazines and then go to the clinics of the Social Security System to get service. I used my “three-column method” and was able to support my hypothesis, as attendance for health services (my desired outcome) significantly increased.

Following that, with the backing of TV producer, Ernesto Alonso, I devised a second project to heighten the tone of the underrated format, the telenovela. I gave a virile and epic tone to historical telenovelas in *La Tormenta* (The Storm) in 1967, *La Constitución* (The Constitution) in 1970, and *El Carruaje* (The Carriage) in 1972 and *Senda de Gloria* (Path of Glory) in 1987.

Having successfully created my desired tone in these telenovelas, I embarked on a project in which I combined my theory of the tone with Wilbur Schramm’s (1955) theory of communication, Eric Bentley’s (1967) drama theory, and Albert Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory. I collaborated with Emilo Azcárraga Milmo, Televisa’s CEO. For the first time I was able to control production procedures, and I found that I needed to add a moral framework to the theoretical framework. In my entertainment-education projects, that moral framework was the most difficult task.

Mr. Azcárraga provided the means to research, not only the quantitative but also the qualitative results. His sponsorship was absolutely revolutionary in the history of entertainment-education. My model requires knowing all elements of the problem to be solved. An efficient infrastructure to solve the problems must exist. Additionally, we track quantitative research on the ratings (viewership), share (percent of television viewing audience), and sales, and qualitative results on the change in audience attitudes, opinions, and behaviors.

Obviously, it is an expensive and complex model, but the results can be totally spectacular. In the case of the telenovela *Ven Conmigo* (Come with me) in 1974, results were indeed spectacular. More than half a million people enrolled in the National Plan of Adult Education. All stakeholders involved accepted the goal value “it is good that adults go back to school” that was the foundation of the theoretical framework. This telenovela—280 episodes of 30 minutes had 31 points of rating—was one of the most watched in the history of Mexican television.

Encouraged by this success, I proposed an additional project to Mr. Azcárraga featuring three commercial telenovelas, a radionovela, intellectual brochures and a daily segment in a miscellaneous TV show devoted to life/family planning. This is an extremely powerful model employing several means of communication from the micro to macro levels. The three telenovelas were born: *Acompáñame* (Come Along with Me) in 1976, *Caminemos* (Let's Walk Together) in 1978, and *Vamos Juntos* (Let's Go Together) in 1979. Each reached world notoriety. They had successful qualitative results, and the research carried out by my team confirmed that the intended value ("it is good that families plan their lives") was accepted, reinforced, and enacted. The big surprise came when David Poindexter (2004), President of Population Communication International (PCI) approached me, jointly with the United Nations. Later known as the Mexican Demographic Miracle, the growth rate in Mexico decreased from 3.7 to 2.4 over a five-year span.

David Poindexter took Sergio Alarcon, President of the World Entertainment-Education Foundation, and me to India. We met with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi who asked me to teach a workshop to her top television producers (Poindexter, 2004). The outcome was a telenovela on family planning, *Hum Log*, described in detail by Arvind Singhal and Everett Rogers (1999) in their now-classic book, *Entertainment-Education: A Communication Strategy for Social Change*. The news spread around the world.

In 1997 Mr. Azcárraga passed away. I submitted three telenovelas based on my model that were refused by the new management at Televisa. I voluntarily submitted my resignation. Two years later, Mr. Guillermo Cañedo White sponsored my next entertainment-education project on his online platform. With the change in technology, I gave up the telenovela and designed the backbone for a "webnovela" using the resources the Internet allowed at that time.

In 2011, I designed a model for remote education to train teachers to use the Educational Reform generated by UNESCO upon request of the World Bank. Again, this model had a telenovela *Aprender a Vivir* (Learn to Live). This model made me get acquainted with the challenges of remote education. Now I am designing online workshops. I will be commissioned by the World Entertainment-Education Foundation and Inter-Congress-International LLC, to present my models and hold interactive workshops for those persons, agencies, and countries actively engaged in EE efforts around the world. For the record, I want to state that even

though millions of dollars have been raised around the world to implement my methodologies, read my books, I have never received, nor even offered, a single cent for it.

LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

It has to be understood that my model can only be implemented in a tight collaboration with the government that provides infrastructure services and with the private sector. Coordination is key for the entertainment-education project to actually yield behavior change.

Many a time, I have been told that fashion runways, documentaries, or masquerades touching upon social problems are considered entertainment-education. I respect all of them and believe that they are full of good faith. But to me, the essence of an EE effort should have a solid, viable hypothesis that can be quantitatively and qualitatively tested. Without this proof, and I say it affectionately and respectfully, EE efforts are just good intentions or wishful thinking.

Throughout my career, I have adapted my model to new technologies and new social problems. Eight years ago, I explored and developed a model for remote education. Now, the COVID-19 pandemic has made this model common and fundamental. More recently, my work on web-novelas has allowed me to reach new audiences.

The most serious problem that I have found in my 50 years of work is setting up a moral framework accepted by all society stakeholders. The easiest one was adult education; no one opposed the idea of older adults going back to school and learning how to read. The most difficult one was family planning, especially in countries colonized by Spain or with specific religious beliefs that did not allow family planning. Unfortunately, this problem is being solved in a single and terrifying way: mankind is about to perish, and if all of the seven billion inhabitants of the planet do not unite efforts, the human race is on a serious impending path to disappearance. How can we unite efforts? Countries with colonial backgrounds could organize service infrastructures that are efficient, familiar, and not corrupt. Large organizations like the World Bank could set up information centers and data redistribution to all countries that need it. These organizations could share lessons from all EE efforts that have actual proof of results and clear information on how to use them (like my models and those of *Sesame Street*). We must work together so that all inhabitants of the planet plan the life of their family; awaken their spirit to fight against poverty; plant a

tree or a hydroponic orchard; prevent teen pregnancy; dignify the role of women in society; and, above all, create an awareness that all humans are one, a humankind, and that there is only one possible home: the womb of mother nature in our beautiful blue planet. Let us hope that the terrible COVID experience will unite mankind and save the planet.

REFERENCES

- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Bentley, E. (1967). *The life of drama*. New York: Atheneum.
- Poindexter, D. (2004). *A history of entertainment-education, 1958–2000*. In A. Singhal, M. J. Cody, E. M. Rogers, & M. Sabido (Eds.), *Entertainment-education and social change: History, research, and practice* (pp. 21–37). New York: Routledge.
- Sabido, M. (2004). The origins of entertainment-education. In A. Singhal, M. J. Cody, E. M. Rogers, & M. Sabido (Eds.), *Entertainment-education and social change: History, research, and practice* (pp. 61–74). New York: Routledge.
- Schramm, W. (1955). Information theory and mass communication. *Journalism Quarterly*, 32(2), 131–146.
- Singhal, A., & Rogers, E. (1999). *Entertainment-education: A communication strategy for social change*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if you modified the licensed material. You do not have permission under this licence to share adapted material derived from this chapter or parts of it.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.





CHAPTER 3

The Impact of Social Change Communication: Lessons Learned from Decades of Media Outreach

William N. Ryerson and Negussie Teffera

In East Los Angeles, Jessie Martinez is in love with the football star Jacob Aguilar. But Jacob is dating the prom queen, Vanessa de la Cruz, and Jessie does not think she has a chance. However, Vanessa leaves the prom to have sex in the back of a car with another student, and Jacob finds out. Eventually, he finds Jessie is much nicer to be with, and they become a couple. But Jessie is trying to stay on the dance team and has sex with the dance coach, Christian Vasquez, after he gives her “private lessons” in his apartment. Pretty soon, Jessie discovers she is pregnant. Thus begins the first season of the US TV show, *East Los High*, created by Population Media Center (PMC) and broadcast on Hulu for five seasons. With the help of her hip aunt, Paulina Martinez, Jessie ends up seeing a Planned Parenthood counselor, and by the end of season 1, she decides to

W. N. Ryerson (✉)
Population Media Center, South Burlington, VT, USA
e-mail: ryerson@populationmedia.org

Negussie Teffera
Former Resident Representative of PMC in Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

© The Author(s) 2021
L. B. Frank, P. Falzone (eds.), *Entertainment-Education Behind the
Scenes*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-63614-2_3

terminate the pregnancy and the planned marriage with Jacob in order to go to college. Vanessa ends up being HIV positive and becomes a safe sex counselor for students.

Teens do not go home from school to read health messages. PMC created the show in 2013 to reach youth in the US, especially Latinx youth, who have the highest rates of teen pregnancy and parenthood of any group in the US. Through PMC's then West Coast Representative, Sonny Fox, PMC President Bill Ryerson met with Nely Galan, the former President of Telemundo, to seek her advice on how to develop such a show. She connected PMC with Carlos Portugal, who at our first meeting became Head Writer and Director of what became *East Los High*. He gathered a team of writers from the Latinx community, and we trained them in the "Sabido methodology of entertainment-education" and how it could be adapted and applied to an online program with transmedia elements. Virginia Carter, former Head of Drama for producer Norman Lear, took part in the training and then became a volunteer reviewer of scripts throughout the production of the show. PMC's Vice President for Communications and Programs, Katie Elmore, moved from PMC's Vermont headquarters to Los Angeles to oversee the show and, after season 1, formed Wise Entertainment, which continued to produce the show for PMC for the remaining seasons. *East Los High* was PMC's first application of the Sabido methodology in the US, which followed many applications in the developing world, where it originated.

ENTERTAINMENT-EDUCATION AND THE SABIDO METHODOLOGY

The Sabido methodology is based on the pioneering work of Miguel Sabido of Mexico (Sabido, 2004). The methodology is unique in that it is founded on various psychological principles related to behavior adoption and behavior modification. Sabido was Vice President for Research of Televisa, the largest TV network in Mexico, from the 1960s through 1998. During the 1970s he pioneered a new social-content communication model, using entertainment telenovelas to promote literacy, family planning, and other social development goals. In the early 1970s, he interviewed Stanford University psychologist Albert Bandura and incorporated

Bandura's Social Learning Theory into the design of characters. Sabido also read the writings of other theoreticians on behavioral modification. During 1976–77, the first novela to promote family planning, named *Acompáñame* (“Accompany Me”), showed in dramatic terms over the course of the nine-month serial the personal benefits of planning one's family, by focusing on the issue of family harmony. This occurred a few years after contraception was legalized in Mexico, and it led to a dramatic increase in the use of family planning, as outlined below.

The results of *Acompáñame*, as reported by the Mexican government's national population council, included the fact that inquiries for family planning information increased from zero to an average of 500 a month. Many of those making inquiries said they did so after watching the telenovela. More than 2000 women registered as voluntary workers in the national program of family planning. This was an idea suggested and role modeled in *Acompáñame*. Contraceptive sales increased 23 percent in one year, compared to a 7 percent increase in the preceding year. More than 560,000 women visited family planning clinics, an increase of 33 percent (compared to a 1 percent decrease in the previous year; Sabido, 1982).

Sabido produced four additional family planning telenovelas in the 1970s and 1980s. They were *Vamos Juntos* (“We Go Together”), *Caminemos* (“Let's Walk”), *Nosotros las Mujeres* (“We the Women”), and *Por Amor* (“For Love”). During the decade when these Mexican programs were on the air, the country underwent a 34 percent decline in its population growth rate. As a result, in May 1986, the United Nations Population Prize was presented to Mexico as the foremost population success story in the world.

Thomas Donnelly (personal communication), then with USAID in Mexico, wrote, “Throughout Mexico, wherever one travels, when people are asked where they heard about family planning, or what made them decide to practice family planning, the response is universally attributed to one of the soap operas that Televisa has done. The Televisa family planning soap operas have made the single most powerful contribution to the Mexican population success story.”

The effects of *East Los High* were also notable. It became the most popular program among Latinx viewers of Hulu and was in the top five in ratings during its five-year run. It received five Emmy nominations. In the first month of broadcast, more than 27,000 viewers linked from the show's website to a Planned Parenthood widget to get information on reproductive health services. Planned Parenthood and many other reproductive

health service providers were partners for the initiative. Among viewers, 60 percent said they referred *East Los High*'s resources to a friend (Wang & Singhal, 2016).

Can media outreach create lasting change? For certain it can be an uphill climb. At the end of a long day of work, whether sitting in an office, standing in a factory, or laboring on a farm, many individuals want to simply relax and engage in some form of passive entertainment. That desire is where the Population Media Center (PMC) has seen success. In fact, the work of PMC started in the developing world—first in Ethiopia, Africa's second most populous country—and only later arrived in the US.

PMC AND THE WHOLE SOCIETY STRATEGY

In Ethiopia, as in *East Los High*, PMC applied what it terms the *Whole Society Strategy*, in order to have maximum effects on the behavioral issues addressed. The *Whole Society Strategy* approach to positive behavior change encompasses multiple forms of media and entertainment, focusing on delivering educational messages in the form of entertainment as opposed to straightforward behavior change messages. In Ethiopia, PMC developed serialized dramas, supplemented by talk shows, call-in programs, print materials, and other formats. In Hollywood, this strategy is often called transmedia storytelling. *East Los High* utilized multiple websites with various supportive information related to the content of the serial drama, many with links to partner NGOs. Some of these sites included entertainment elements, like backgrounds on various characters, while others contained more educational content related to the issues being addressed in the show. In Ethiopia, the media mix was different, based on our analysis of media consumption patterns in that country. Over time, the media mix in each country is changing, with increased use of social media and television, so it is important to keep the media analysis up to date (Negussie, 2017).

PMC combines a society's desire for entertainment with educational content designed for the public good. In the book, *Education-Entertainment and Social Change: History, Research, and Practice*, we provided details of what is involved in creating entertainment-education (Ryerson & Negussie, 2004). Dr. Negussie Teffera, the former director of the National Office of Population in Ethiopia, worked as the Resident Representative of PMC-Ethiopia from 2000 to 2019 to develop a series of soap opera-like radio programs, each designed to positively influence

public health behaviors. Using similar program strategies, PMC has worked in over 50 countries and has reached over 500 million people with its programs. PMC's programs in each country address the high-priority issues of specific relevance to each country. These issues may include educating people about the benefits of small families, encouraging the use of effective family planning methods, elevating the status of women and girls, promoting gender equality, promoting girls' education, stopping violence against women and girls, including child marriage, preventing exploitation of children, encouraging avoidance of HIV infections, promoting child nutrition, and promoting positive environmental behaviors. The overriding mission of PMC is to bring about a sustainable planet with equal rights for all. In many countries, its programs are the top-rated shows on the air. Characters on these serialized dramas become topics of so-called water cooler discussions. Some, over time, evolve into role models for the audience on social, health, environmental, and human rights issues.

In Ethiopia, PMC created serial dramas that were broadcast on radio, distributed on cassette tape, and available over the Internet. These were often supported by numerous talk shows, stage plays, capacity-building workshops for leadership groups, and other communication activities (such as discussion groups to spread messages throughout the society), ultimately reaching a huge audience and effecting substantial changes in how citizens think and conduct themselves with respect to the list of societal issues mentioned above.

Some of the widely successful programs addressing HIV/AIDS and family planning included the radio series *Yeken Knight* ("Looking Over One's Daily Life"), which was performed in the Amharic language over 257 episodes; and *Dhimbibba* ("Getting the Best Out of Life"), broadcast over 140 episodes in the Oromiffa language. A serial story, *Maleda* ("Dawn") was recorded on cassette tapes and distributed to truck drivers. A stage play, *Yesak Jember* ("Laughter at Dusk"), was performed for six months in 14 cities (Negussie, 2008).

PMC's serial dramas are culturally and linguistically sensitive to people's needs and appeal to audiences by portraying real-life situations. They help create positive attitudes and encourage the adoption of behaviors displayed by characters that gradually evolve into positive role models. Unlike documentaries or single-episode dramas, serial dramas allow the audience to form bonds with the characters over time as the characters evolve in their thinking and behavior at a gradual and believable pace in

response to problems that have been well-defined in the storyline (Barker & Sabido, 2005; Nariman, 1993).

Storylines have proven to be compelling. For example, in one story of *Yeken Kignit*, listeners learn that plans for a wedding and reception are moving forward, invitations have been distributed, and a shop owner promises to deliver food for several hundred guests. But Zinabu, the truck driver charged with the delivery, is a day late. A known drug dealer has accompanied him on his trip, and no one can find him. A phone call hints that there has been some terrible tragedy on the highway. These and other story lines keep audiences coming back week after week, creating a forum to deliver important messages benefiting the whole society.

In Ethiopia and other countries, the programs have led to changes in norms such as a tripling of self-reported family planning use among married women who were listening to the first program and a quadrupling of HIV testing among male listeners—all in a two-year period. Since almost half of Ethiopia's population was listening to each program, the impacts have been measurable on a national basis both by PMC and by the independent Demographic and Health Survey. The post-broadcast survey of about 3000 people following *Yeken Kignit* demonstrated the impact of Demlew's storyline. Demlew married Anguach, who is a wonderful partner for him, but Demlew's mother does not like his choice of brides. So, she conspires with the neighbor to have the neighbor get Demlew drunk and seduce him, with the hope of breaking up the marriage (remember, this is a soap opera). When Demlew sobers up, he comes back to Anguach and begs for forgiveness. She takes him back, but after some months, he becomes sick, and they get him tested for HIV. He finds out that his one night with the neighbor resulted in his becoming HIV positive. Anguach then gets tested and finds out she is negative. Going forward, the couple takes steps to protect Anguach from infection, by using condoms (Negussie, 2008).

The post-broadcast quantitative survey found that male listeners of *Yeken Kignit* reported seeking an HIV test at four times the rate of non-listeners (Negussie, 2008). Female listeners reported seeking a test at three times the rate of non-listeners (Negussie, 2008). And after controlling the data for variables that might have influenced the outcome, like income, education, and place of residence, a listener was two and a half times as likely to have been tested as a non-listener. Additionally, the post-broadcast nationwide survey also showed that 46 percent of the population (age 15–59) reported listening to the Amharic program, and 25

percent reported listening to the Oromiffa program. At 48 clinics across the country, 14,400 client interviews conducted during the broadcast found that 63 percent of new clients seeking reproductive health services reported that they were listening to one of the PMC serial dramas. Importantly, 18 percent of new clients named one of PMC's programs by name as the primary motivating factor for seeking services. Of new clients who cited radio programs as a motivation for seeking services, 96 percent said that they were motivated by one of PMC's programs. During the program, the PMC office in Addis Ababa received over 25,000 letters of appreciation from loyal listeners (Negussie, 2008).

One of these letters, from the Oromia region, thanked PMC for addressing the issue of marriage by abduction. The woman who wrote the letter stated that one of her daughters had been abducted on her way to school at age 14 and ended up married as a result. She said she was afraid to send her twin 12-year-old girls to school for fear that the same thing would happen to them. When PMC's program addressed the country's law against marriage by abduction through the character Wubalem, the mother wrote that the villagers, many of whom listened to the show, came together to discuss the situation. The villagers agreed to enforce the law which they had not known existed and now, she wrote, it was safe to send their daughters to school (Negussie, 2017).

PMC has also conducted training for Ethiopian journalists in how to effectively cover reproductive health issues. An outgrowth of this work is the publication of 14 books with selected short stories, fiction and non-fiction. Many of the stories have been read over radio stations where they have been listened to by more than 40 million people across Ethiopia. The books are now considered essential reading in most Ethiopian universities for those studying Ethiopian literature and short story writing. All books have been distributed to the libraries of Ethiopian government agencies, UN organizations, professional associations, schools, and other organizations throughout the country.

The success of PMC's *Whole Society Strategy* can be explained under the umbrella of three broad categories: A wide "buy-in" to the approach by governments, grassroots level community organizations, and multiple nongovernmental organizations; an approach to create content that is cost-effective and based on an independently proven approach; and an implementation and measurement system that is flexible and adjusts to the specific audiences.

Wide Buy-In to the Concept

A society such as Ethiopia is an important location to implement a *Whole Society Strategy*. Women's health in Ethiopia is undermined by a combination of social, cultural, and economic factors that determine their longstanding low status in society. The country is one of the poorest in the world, with a low life expectancy (66 years), and shockingly high illiteracy rates. Changing any aspect of the culture in Ethiopia would take agreement from the highest levels of government to the most remote villagers, but equally important, grassroots advocacy organizations.

As we previously wrote (Ryerson & Negussie, 2004), implementing a nationwide entertainment-education program and associated materials (brochures, books, formal and informal discussion events, to name a few) requires the hearts and minds of all key players in a country. This includes governmental and nongovernmental organizations. In PMC's experience, the participants have included the Ethiopian National Office of Population, the Ministry of Health, the HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office's Secretariat, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, UNAIDS, the Family Guidance Association of Ethiopia (the national affiliate of Planned Parenthood), and the Organization for Social Services for AIDS. Additional partners have included the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Hughes Memorial Foundation, the Flora L. Thornton Foundation, CARE-Ethiopia, UN Women, USAID, US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Norwegian Embassy, the World Bank, Save the Children, the Ethiopian Public Health Association, Brown University, Jimma University, Bayer Corporation, private business leaders, and 35 individual contributors.

Involvement goes far beyond participants like those just cited. In preparation for its media outreach, PMC worked with more than 3000 individuals representing religious leaders, youth and women's association leaders, journalists and media practitioners, writers, and health program coordinators. All were given training on communication skills, advocacy, and social mobilization approaches to address specific issues and meet the *Whole Society Strategy* goals. All parties agreed on the goals, which included reducing family size, increasing the ideal age for marriage and childbearing, growing the use of contraceptives and helping the population understand contraceptives' relative safety, and accepting women as part of the workforce (Negussie, 2017).

Script and story line development for the various programs was conducted in partnership with the Ministry of Health and the national broadcast service. In addition, a large collection of NGOs, government ministries, and UN agencies were involved as part of the program, as were technical advisory committees for the production and writing teams. A team of technical advisors was tasked with reviewing every script before production of each episode to make sure the information being provided was accurate and reflected the cultural realities of the listening audience. The program advisory committee worked to make sure the clinical services that were portrayed in the storyline would be available when the program generated demand. They also participated in independent surveys of new clients. Many writers spent extensive time various in communities, embedding themselves to better understand the audiences.

Leveraging Available Resources and Using Proven Methodologies

Deep-seated, ingrained behavior does not change overnight. The *Whole Society Strategy* involves ongoing collaboration with all of the aforementioned government and NGO organizations, conducting extensive research to identify audience segments, media formats, and a commitment to involving *all* key parties in the development of solutions. Along with obtaining a broad-based buy-in, PMC leveraged local resources to produce content. The Drama Department of the University of Addis Ababa participated in learning the methodology of social-content serial dramas during a PMC workshop conducted by Miguel Sabido and then began teaching it to students. The leading demographer in the country, Dr. Assefa Hailemariam, oversaw the research to measure the effects of the program and worked in collaboration with American sociologist Dr. Earl Babbie in the design of the research instruments.

The writing team was chosen from the top writers in the country, both from the National Theatre and the University of Addis Ababa. The writing and production team were given five weeks of training in the methodology of entertainment-education, including personal training by Miguel Sabido, Virginia Carter, former Head of Drama for Norman Lear in Hollywood, and Tom Kazungu of Kenya, the first radio professional to use the Sabido methodology in Africa (Negussie, 2017).

The training included presentation of the results of extensive qualitative formative research into the cultural realities in the country, knowledge and attitudes regarding the issues to be presented, the availability of

reproductive health services in the country, the official policies of the country with regard to each of the issues to be addressed, and the methodology to be used in addressing the issues in the context of a long-running serialized drama.

A key factor in the success of the programs in Ethiopia is following a proven methodology. In addition, PMC leveraged extensive use of formative research, sophisticated audience research methods, pretesting and use of multiple media to target the message, plus monitoring and evaluation.

Being Flexible to Adjust Formats, Platforms, and Content

In each country, PMC analyzes media consumption patterns and languages spoken across the country. Ethiopia has 84 languages. The national language of Amharic is the one most widely spoken. The second most common language is Oromiffa. As a result, these two languages were chosen for PMC's first two programs. The media analysis showed Radio Ethiopia is the only broadcaster with nationwide coverage, so Radio Ethiopia was selected for reaching the largest possible audience (Negussie, 2017). However, PMC chose to use its own studio to produce the program to avoid control of its content that might have happened if the program were produced at Radio Ethiopia. Having our own studio also ensured that it was available whenever we needed it, and the quality of a private studio was superior. We engaged our own studio technicians, producers, scriptwriters, and actors in order to ensure that the program met PMCs' standards for quality. We contracted with the National Service of Radio Ethiopia for the airtime to ensure it was broadcast during peak listening hours. Because the project was being done in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, PMC was able to secure airtime at a discounted rate.

PMC wrote and produced each episode 15 weeks in advance of the broadcast date, ensuring we never missed an episode. By writing and producing the program during broadcast, we were able to make modifications based on audience feedback. We sought feedback via on-air quizzes, focus group discussions among listeners, and encouraging letters and electronic communications from listeners.

Following PMC's first two programs, we continued producing and broadcasting another seven programs as of this writing. Each of them has a significantly measurable impact. For example, the production and distribution of a serial drama on audiocassettes called *Maleda* ("Dawn") was designed for play by truck drivers at high risk for HIV along the Addis

Ababa-Djibouti highway corridor. The evaluation of the drama showed major changes in self-reported behavior by those who listened to the program. PMC later broadcast a modified version on Radio Ethiopia. Among other findings, the evaluation showed that listeners were 4.3 times more likely than non-listeners to know where to go for HIV counseling and testing services. Listeners to another program (*Menta Menged* or “Crossroads”) were 1.8 times more likely to take measures to protect themselves from HIV infection than non-listeners (Negussie, 2017).

Johns Hopkins University’s *Population Report* (Cho, 2008) showed that the foundations for the success of the Ethiopian program were PMC’s following of a systematic process of program planning, thorough analysis of Ethiopia’s socio-cultural situation, use of a strategic design for establishing the communication channel and objectives, PMC’s use of theory and evidence in its strategy development, pretesting to ensure relevance and sensitivity, effective implementation and monitoring for improving storylines, and rigorous evaluation to find out improved reproductive health behaviors.

The objectives of PMCs programs are mainly to create awareness and to equip the participants with knowledge about social issues of national concern. The capacity-building awareness creation program is largely concerned with the reinforcement of and changes in community norms. It also seeks to empower audiences and subsequently community members through their health actions. The capacity-building programs also seek to provide opportunities for participants to share experiences on those issues and reach consensus on how to resolve problems. All the capacity-building components have been successful in producing trained professionals and change agents drawn from relevant government and nongovernment organizations.

The outpouring of emotion in Ethiopia, in response to PMC’s work, has been overwhelming. From all over the country—and beyond the borders of Ethiopia—over 40,000 letters have poured into PMC’s office in Addis Ababa. Ethiopia’s news media have run about 100 stories on the soap opera phenomenon PMC has created. One woman from the Southern Region of Ethiopia wrote: “I have five children and all of them are girls. My husband, however, insisted that I continue to bear children for him. As you know, bringing up one child is a big problem nowadays, let alone five children. In the *Yeken Kignit* drama, I heard how a couple ought to discuss such matters and that there are medicines to control childbirth. I invited my husband to listen to your program and repeatedly talked to him

about family planning. After that, we agreed that henceforth we would have no more children and we would do our best to give proper care to those we have. Based on the advice you gave us in the radio drama, I went to the nearby clinic and received counseling services. Now I am using birth control. Your program, therefore, has benefited my husband and me and the family. There are many families who face the same problem. I think that your program would be helpful to them and should be continued” (Negussie, 2008).

In 2005, the two authors of this chapter were together in the city of Gondar, the capital of Ethiopia from 1632 to 1855. We were approached by a group of young boys seeking funding for their football team. Dr. Negussie asked them if they knew who Ryerson was. When they said they did not, he told them Ryerson was the global president of Population Media Center. Wide eyed, one of them asked Ryerson, “Please tell us, what happens to Damtew?” Ryerson responded, “You will just have to stay tuned to find out.”

LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

Traveling by car from the northwestern Ethiopian town of Bahir Dar, the capital city of Amhara Regional State, for 90 minutes one reaches the small town of Awra Amba, a farming village of 500 residents with a weaving mill. The founder of that town, Mr. Zumra, a man in his late 60s, has been there for nearly 40 years. Mr. Zumra stipulates that others may live in the village on the condition that they agree to absolute gender equality and absolute non-violence and implement those principles in their daily lives. At first, men from neighboring villages objected to this requirement, saying they owned their wives, so they had the right to beat them. Mr. Zumra held his ground and only admitted people who agreed to the principles.

Since Awra Amba’s founding, men and women have done the housework together, plowed the fields together, and worked in the weaving mill together. Today, the town is thriving. Almost all high school graduates attend university in Addis Ababa. The townspeople are comfortable financially, and the town is even giving financial aid to neighboring villages. During our time in the village, we met many residents. All seem happy with their lives.

Awra Amba demonstrates that gender equality and non-violence are not only human rights imperatives. They are also key elements in economic welfare and human happiness. UN Women in Ethiopia, the

organization that informed the authors of the story of Awra Amba, sees the benefit of the town serving as a role model for the entire nation—indeed, the entire world.

But most people in Ethiopia have never heard of Awra Amba or of Mr. Zumra. There is a huge chasm in communications between UN offices in Addis Ababa and the living rooms of people throughout the nation. And outside of Ethiopia, very few know of Mr. Zumra's bold experiment.

An infrastructure exists to deliver Mr. Zumra's success story to the population of Ethiopia. His story is but one of many that exist in that country. Thanks to the work of the PMC, his and other culturally relevant stories can be shared, populations can be positively influenced, and changes for the betterment of society can be made.

PMC knows from its experiences in Ethiopia that meaningful changes in the attitude and behavior of people can be obtained when the issues under consideration have the support of influential people in the community. In Ethiopia, religious and community leaders like Mr. Zumra have unique positions through which they can influence people and impose sanctions in matters that directly or indirectly affect the wellbeing of community members. Capacity building and awareness creation on harmful traditional practices or, in the case of Mr. Zumra, innovative and new ways of thinking, are indispensable steps toward social change.

Entertainment-education is a proven tool to capture large audiences and move them to adopt healthful behaviors. It is most effective when it is used to role model positive behaviors and show positive consequences, rather than telling the audience what to do. Lecturing risks losing audiences and causing controversy. Use of a methodology like the one created by Miguel Sabido that is based on sound social science theory and evidence of effectiveness is key to having an impact.

How can communicators decide what behaviors to promote? Certainly, public health experts are useful advisors to creative writing teams. But working in many countries, it is important to have the values of any program based on official policies. PMC uses UN agreements to which the host country is a signatory and policies and laws of the host country if they do not counter UN agreements or human rights accords. This prevents anyone from claiming that an outside organization is trying to determine how other people should live. This also helps to ensure that in-country program designers are ethical in providing correct information to the audience, rather than trying to manipulate audiences for some unethical end. Having broad representation of expert advisors is a key element in

ensuring program accuracy and fidelity to the cultural realities of each country.

To ensure such programs can successfully compete with other forms of entertainment programming, it is important to train creative teams in strategies for developing suspenseful storylines with cliffhangers and designing characters that people in the audience can relate to. It is also useful to design evolution of identification characters at a believable pace and as a result of key triggering events.

Equally important in design of characters, settings, and storylines is having extensive formative qualitative research underlying all aspects of the program. This implies that programs are most effective when they are culturally specific, which is why PMC does unique programs for each country or language group. It is a rare program that can be dubbed into other languages and used in other countries with any expectation of significant effects.

In Ethiopia, another principle employed by PMC is the use of its *Whole Society Strategy*. This makes sure that various elements of the campaign complement the serialized drama and that these are distributed via numerous media outlets in many time slots and using many different formats in order to reach the broadest swath of the population possible. All age groups, socio-economic groups, men and women, rural and urban, and other segments of the population are included, to change norms throughout the entire society.

PMC has shown that the use of effective methodologies of entertainment-education can accelerate lasting changes in social norms cost effectively compared to traditional social and health messaging. The Sabido methodology of entertainment-education started in a developing country and has mostly been used in developing countries across the globe. After 15 years of working in the developing world, Population Media Center decided to bring that methodology to the US—in a sort of reverse form of foreign aid—since the US has a serious teen pregnancy problem, not to mention other issues, and because the US exports its entertainment media all over the world. *East Los High* was PMC's first such US program, and it is now being seen in many other countries where it has been exported by Hulu. One can even watch it on some airlines. Meanwhile, PMC is creating new such programs in the US.

The same principles were used in Ethiopia and in the US—as well as the other countries where PMC has worked. One of those was to adapt to the local media situation and media consumption patterns. Another was to

base the positive values modeled for the audience on the policies in the host country. Another was the involvement of expert advisors in both the cultural realities of the audience and the issues being addressed, plus service agencies to whom the audience can be referred. Another was use of extensive formative research that helps the writers capture the reality of the audience with a compelling drama. Another was to use multiple platforms and formats to get aspects of the story and the call to action across to the audience—what PMC calls the *Whole Society Strategy* and what Hollywood calls *transmedia storytelling*. Most important was use of a proven methodology that results in programs with high entertainment value to attract large audiences, so that many people in the society can benefit from the program.

REFERENCES

- Barker, K., & Sabido, M. (2005). Soap operas for social change to prevent HIV/AIDS: A training guide for journalists and media personnel. Population Media Center. Retrieved from <https://www.populationmedia.org/2005/01/06/soap-operas-for-social-change-to-prevent-hiv-aids/>
- Cho, N. (2008). Ethiopian radio serial drama follows process to success. *Population Reports*, 16, 6–7.
- Nariman, H. N. (1993). *Soap operas for social change: Toward a methodology for entertainment-education television*. Praeger Publishers.
- Negussie, T. (2008, March–April). Hearing is believing. *Communication World Magazine*, pp. 33–36.
- (2017). *Innovative media and communication strategy for development: Ethiopia's experience*. Rehobot Printers.
- Ryerson, W. N., & Negussie, T. (2004). Organizing a comprehensive national plan for entertainment-education in Ethiopia. In A. Singhal, M. J. Cody, E. M. Rogers, & M. Sabido (Eds.), *Entertainment-education and social change: History, research, and practice* (pp. 177–190). Routledge.
- Sabido, M. (1982). *Handbook for reinforcing social values through day-time T.V. serials*. Televisa Communications Research Department.
- Sabido, M. (2004). The origins of entertainment-education. In A. Singhal, M. J. Cody, E. M. Rogers, & M. Sabido (Eds.), *Entertainment-education and social change: History, research, and practice* (pp. 61–74). Routledge.
- Wang, H., & Singhal, A. (2016). *East Los High*: Transmedia edutainment to promote the sexual and reproductive health of young Latina/o Americans. *American Journal of Public Health*, 106(6), 1002–1010.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if you modified the licensed material. You do not have permission under this licence to share adapted material derived from this chapter or parts of it.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.





Entertainment-Education as Social Justice Activism in the United States: Narrative Strategy in the Participatory Media Era

Caty Borum Chattoo

Mateo, a character on NBC's hit sitcom *Superstore*, had an unexpected problem. In the fictional world of a popular scripted episodic comedy—a story that gleefully finds the absurdity in the daily mundanity at a large retail store—employee Mateo is drawn as a funny, energetic young person. As the series' creator Justin Spitzer wrote him, Mateo is a gay Filipino immigrant on an ambitious path at the Cloud 9 megastore, part of a quirky ensemble of diverse co-workers whose only evident commonality is a shared workplace (“Superstore,” n.d.; “‘Superstore’ Actor Relishes,” 2019).

But in the show's second season premiere in 2016, Mateo learns a shocking truth. He realizes that a childhood visit with his grandma to what he calls “the green card store”—a place that sells “you know, green cards and knock-off handbags,” as he relays to his colleague—was not the formal path to presumed US citizenship (Conti, 2016; “Olympics,” 2016). He is undocumented and was brought to the United States as a young child. Mateo's discovery established an ongoing episodic storyline

C. Borum Chattoo (✉)
Center for Media & Social Impact, American University School of
Communication, Washington, DC, USA
e-mail: chattoo@american.edu

that would prove rich with opportunities to build awareness and empathy about the lives of undocumented immigrants in the United States, particularly the experience of DREAM-ers, named for the DREAM Act that would allow many such young people to remain in the country (National Immigration Law Center, 2017).

Often vilified and dehumanized in news coverage (Farris & Mohamed, 2018) and partisan politics (Romero, 2018), undocumented immigrants are rarely depicted in the US entertainment marketplace as fully embodied individuals, much less as aspirational primary recurring characters who visit viewers' living rooms week after week. In the season that follows, Mateo's life takes a complicating turn when he needs to produce a Social Security card; in a panic, he asks his co-workers to beat him up. As the episode's storyline reveals, Mateo has learned about an obscure policy that allows undocumented immigrants to apply for a "U Visa" if they are victims of violent assault ("Mateo's Last Day Transcript," n.d.). Directed by actress America Ferrera, a vocal immigration activist (Betancourt, 2019) who also plays a character on the show, the episode spotlights the complexities of undocumented life in a hilariously accessible way, humanizing Mateo's plight and demonstrating the care and solidarity of his workplace friends, who ultimately aren't able to fulfill his request but look for other ways to help.

Mateo's undocumented storyline and pivotal 2017 episode were not simply dramatic creative ideas set in motion by the show's creator and writers, but instead were shaped behind the scenes in large part through ideation and consultation with Define American (Borum Chattoo & Feldman, 2020, p. 165), a social justice activism group deemed by *Fast Company* in 2019 and 2020 as one of the "World's Most Innovative Companies" for its work to soften hardened political and public perspectives about undocumented immigrants in the United States (Darwish, 2016; Define American, 2020). The Define American team sees its "narrative change" efforts—working with Hollywood to shape storylines and produce original entertainment content—as core to advancing equitable public policy bolstered by supportive public opinion (Define American, 2020). Define American takes real-life immigrant experiences and counsels Hollywood about how to incorporate them into mainstream entertainment storytelling, across scripted drama, comedy, and reality genres. The 2017 U Visa episode, "Mateo's Last Day," is a prime example of this collaboration.

Define American exemplifies the practices of contemporary creative nonprofit organizations in the United States that consider entertainment-based *narrative strategy* as mission-critical to their work in equity and justice, alongside policy advocacy efforts. The work is constructed and led by leading social justice groups whose origins were shaped in the networked participatory era of YouTube, social media, and streaming entertainment—a juncture that has conferred new creative power to traditionally marginalized voices. Not only are Define American and other cultural strategy organizations effective, trusted allies to Hollywood’s creators—working to shape humanizing, sympathetic empowering portrayals of social issues that span from immigration to racial justice—but they also act as high-level creative entertainment producers through original web series and other entertainment programming of their own.

This chapter introduces the practices of an expanding cadre of leading post-millennial US-based nonprofit social justice organizations that leverage narrative strategy and entertainment storytelling projects to advance social change in key topical areas. The ideas and analysis presented here are informed directly by my contemporary work as a producer and engaged scholar who actively collaborates with, and studies, this professional network, alongside my parallel research and creative production projects in documentary and comedy as social change strategy (Borum Chattoo, 2020; Borum Chattoo & Feldman, 2020), two narrative genres that show promising evidence of persuasive influence and audience mobilization beyond entertainment-education’s frequent focus on scripted drama. This vantage point also is informed by my formative professional background and expertise—in the late 1990s, as a researcher and program manager in formalized US-based Entertainment-Education (EE) initiatives with the Kaiser Family Foundation and its efforts with MTV and BET around HIV and reproductive health; and in the 2000s, as a media producer and philanthropy executive with TV legend Norman Lear, focused on leveraging entertainment to encourage youth voting.

From my perspective, molded by experience with multiple narrative genres in entertainment storytelling for social change—scripted and non-scripted, dramatic and comedic—contemporary narrative strategy efforts unquestionably evolve from, and incorporate, original EE principles and theoretical underpinnings, even while they deviate in meaningful ways explored here. Alongside the continued progression of the digital participatory media era and rise of creative activism, these social justice organizations shape and distribute persuasive, enlightening mediated storytelling

through approaches that depart from the precision of producer and researcher Miguel Sabido's original EE model of entertainment for social change (Sabido, 2004), and yet, they function with the shared understanding of stories' uniquely persuasive, engaging, emotional characteristics. We can see in their efforts the broad mission and goal of Entertainment-Education as a narrative production approach to foster positive societal outcomes, and yet, this contemporary community of practice uses divergent semantics to reference social change through entertainment—"narrative strategy" and/or "cultural strategy," alternately used—and philosophies, facilitated in part by their network collaborations with one another.

This contingent of post-millennial organizations has developed distinct norms and ways of collaborating with entertainment media producers to create influential stories, deeply grounded within a multi-platform media system that has changed dramatically over the decades since Miguel Sabido first pioneered his formal EE model. At the same time, these groups are creating their own entertainment media, empowered by the participatory production tools and distribution platforms of the social media age, employing high-level production practices to engage audiences with stories they might not see elsewhere on the mainstream entertainment menu. This chapter introduces this dynamic evolution of EE in the United States at a time of media transition, social upheaval, and creatively empowered civil society.

NARRATIVE STRATEGY IN THE PARTICIPATORY MEDIA AGE: EVOLUTION AND COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The entertainment media industry in the United States (and indeed, the world) is undergoing a seismic revolution in business practices and audience behavior. As the new millennium's early years progressed, platforms for generating and sharing self-produced media—Facebook in 2004, YouTube in 2005, Twitter in 2006—radically opened the playing field for creative expression outside the ranks of professional entertainment and information media gatekeepers, blurring the lines of amusement and information, and between self-produced and professionally made content (Borum Chattoo, 2020, pp. 56–58).

In 2007, Netflix, the ultimate entertainment industry upstart, offered streaming programming for the first time, followed by its first original

dramatic episodic series in 2013 (Hosch, 2020). It was followed by a new cohort of streaming networks—Amazon Prime, Apple TV, and others. The amount and range of content now produced by a converged entertainment media system—that is, media makers outside the confines of the legacy entertainment companies that make and distribute material alongside big-budget programming for multiple platforms—is staggering (Bridge, 2020; Cunningham & Craig, 2019). With the introduction of short-form narrative storytelling on social platforms like Instagram, quality entertainment content that appeals to diverse audiences is in demand and available anytime and everywhere.

The ability for grassroots organizations to fully engage in this converged, networked entertainment environment is powerful. As scholar Henry Jenkins and his co-authors write, “new hybrid systems of media-content circulation can bring unprecedented power to the voices of individuals and groups without access to mainstream forms of distribution” (Jenkins, Shresthova, Gamber-Thompson, Kligler-Vilenchik, & Zimmerman, 2016, p. 17). Jenkins’ thoughtful presentation and analysis of “participatory culture” is meaningful here in the context of a radically changing entertainment media business. Audiences are able to interact with media creators and one another in the streaming, social media age, engaging in civic and entertainment audience behaviors with increasing efficacy (Borum Chattoo & Feldman, 2020, p. 156).

Positioned squarely within participatory culture and the backdrop of a disrupted entertainment industry, grassroots social justice organizations have quickly recognized and embraced their new creative power. They have diligently honed their ability to shape mainstream entertainment media stories by working with Hollywood producers and writers—and crafting and distributing their own—to include lived experiences and social challenges often still invisible or overlooked in TV and film. Given their cultural muscle and access to media-making in the participatory media age, along with collaboration with entertainment industry players who require insatiable amounts of fresh content to compete in the discombobulated new media industry world order (Bridge, 2020), new professional practices have evolved.

“Narrative strategy” or “cultural strategy” (often used interchangeably by the professional groups that employ this approach) is increasingly codified in terms of normative values, practices, and a growing community of practice. The concept is articulated in influential practitioner white papers, bolstered by robust investment from leading foundations and

collaborative support from facets of the US entertainment industry. In the absence of one existing shared definition, despite many expressions about the underlying ideas, I offer this one: *Narrative strategy* is a cultural and communication practice by which social justice practitioners collaborate with entertainment industry executives, writers, and producers to shape positive portrayals of marginalized communities and social issues in scripted and non-scripted entertaining narratives, critique negative portrayals, and produce and disseminate their own entertainment storytelling content. This practice is directly enabled by the post-millennial participatory media age. The core belief embedded in narrative strategy holds that entertainment storytelling is meaningful to foster social change by shifting public opinion and perceptions—and fostering cultural conversation and public participation—all of which is necessary, ultimately, for supportive policy that expands equity and justice.

Contemporary narrative strategy practitioners diligently strive to enable a wide-ranging cultural shift in how particular social justice challenges and traditionally marginalized communities are portrayed through entertainment, and thus understood by those communities and broader audiences. In this way, narrative strategists focus well beyond shaping one singular story (or episodic series, as the case may be) as a site of intervention, as in an EE model, but instead value a wide constellation of entertainment narratives that accumulate to create composite pluralistic cultural portraits of people and their lived experiences.

As articulated in a position paper created and shared by leading practitioners within this expanding community of practice:

Cultural strategy is a field of practice that centers artists, storytellers, media makers and cultural influencers as agents of social change. Cultural strategy speaks to our broadest visions and highest hopes. In the realm of social justice, this means forging and preserving equitable, inclusive and just societies. Over the long term, cultural strategy cracks open, reimagines and rewrites fiercely-held narratives, transforming the shared spaces and norms that make up culture. (Chang, Manne, & Potts, 2018)

Entertainment narratives are seen as stories that can reinforce or disrupt troubling social norms or portrayals—and thus, narrative strategists work to create enlightening and diverse portrayals, and to dismantle damaging ones. Indeed, the narrative strategy approach is a contemporary practitioner- and activism-led evolution that is parallel—and yet not precisely the same in its implementation and practices—to the original definition of EE provided by Singhal and Rogers (2004) as the “process of purposely

designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate, in order to increase audience members' knowledge about an educational issue, create favorable attitudes, shift social norms, and change overt behavior" (p. 9).

Several seminal public reports and convenings have helped to solidify professional semantics and build a network of narrative change practitioners who leverage entertainment for social change. Activist Tracy Van Slyke published the pathbreaking *Spoiler Alert* report in 2014, funded by social justice group Opportunity Agenda (Van Slyke, 2014), which called for producers and social change strategists to center entertainment and pop culture in social justice work. Two years later, the extensive multi-part *#PopJustice* research report series and convening in 2016, commissioned by two philanthropies—Nathan Cummings Foundation and Unbound Philanthropy—explored evidence for entertainment's persuasive, mobilizing characteristics to help launch a contemporary practice of entertainment for social change (Liz Manne Strategy, 2016). In 2016, following the ideas advanced in the *#PopJustice* research report series, the Pop Culture Collaborative launched as an unprecedented new grant-giving and network-building organization devoted to funding narrative change initiatives, combining millions of funding dollars from a consortium of global foundations (Borum Chattoo & Feldman, 2020, p. 158). Several years later, the group hosts network convenings, *Entertain Change*, where dozens of practitioners share experiences and case studies, and forge ways to collaborate. In 2018, the MacArthur Foundation awarded its inaugural Participatory Civic Storytelling grantees, creating a cohesive cohort of organizations across research, production, and social justice who leverage storytelling for social influence and civic empowerment.¹

With these investments and convenings, organizational networks continue to expand, fueling opportunities for new research and exploration. The contemporary community of practice in narrative and culture change includes social impact executives at major media companies and entertainment industry organizations, including MTV, Univision, Comedy Central, and Participant Media; specialized for-profit consulting agencies like Proper Daley, or nonprofit research-based consulting entities like the Hollywood, Health & Society program based at the USC Annenberg

¹The innovation lab and research center I direct, the Center for Media & Social Impact (CMSI), is a member of this inaugural grantee cohort for Participatory Civic Storytelling at the MacArthur Foundation. CMSI also has received funding from the Pop Culture Collaborative.

School's Norman Lear Center (see the chapter by Rosenthal and Folb in this book); and philanthropic networks like the Pop Culture Collaborative and its grantees.

The nucleus of this contemporary entertainment-based social change work, however, and a focused area of innovation at the heart of this chapter, resides in the stand-alone social justice advocacy organizations that have honed this practice within their broader missions, which are largely focused on advocating for traditionally marginalized groups on the basis of race, ethnicity, religious practice, socioeconomic status, physical ability, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender, and gender identification. A growing cadre of practitioners uses the “cultural strategist” or “narrative strategist” title, in departments within some of the most effective, award-winning contemporary social justice groups. Notably, with only a few exceptions, these organizations launched within the new millennium, which helps to explain their innate embrace of entertainment collaboration and creativity in the participatory digital era. This network includes Define American, Color of Change, Muslim Public Affairs Council, Pillars Fund, Caring Across Generations, National Domestic Workers Alliance, IllumiNative, the Storyline Partners collective (representing many groups in this list), Wise Entertainment, and Harness, to name exemplars that are particularly active, visible and successful, critically recognized in press coverage, and respected in entertainment ranks. They work individually and collectively, shaping and sharing norms, ideas, and experiences with one another, thus evolving their efforts to respond to each new enterprise or development that arises in the shifting realities of the streaming entertainment industry and attention economy of the contemporary mediascape. Four of these organizations are profiled later in this chapter.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS AND PRACTICES IN ENTERTAINMENT-BASED NARRATIVE STRATEGY

In contemporary narrative change practice in the participatory media era, we see EE's seminal foundations, theoretical underpinnings, and values, even if narrative change practitioners are not traditional scholars trained in the Sabido model with its explicit theoretical foundations—that is, social cognitive theory, emotional appeals, parasocial relationships with characters, and a call to action of some kind (Singhal & Rogers, 2004, pp. 58, 70–71). The *#PopJustice* public research and strategy report series

references Entertainment-Education as a contributing model, along with shared theoretical underpinnings, broadly focused on emotional response, relationship with characters, and entertainment value over didactic messaging. Narrative transportation, a widely adopted academic theory developed, tested, and published first by scholars Melanie Green and Timothy Brock (2000), holds that narrative storytelling is persuasive as viewers are deeply absorbed into a story world, often forgetting the real world around them. This theory also is known in this space. Even though narrative transportation was not yet identified in the Sabido model of the early 1970s, it has been incorporated in many peer-reviewed studies about narrative persuasion. Evidence of EE's focus on interpersonal and cultural conversations—sparked by storytelling—is apparent in narrative strategy by social justice organizations, which amplify and share messages and stories through social media networks to millions of followers, inviting their participation.

Ultimately, however, EE's focus on the unit of one individual entertainment story (or even a storyline carried over multiple episodes), attuned to shifting attitudes and behaviors of audiences that are explicitly targeted for intervention, is not the full focus of narrative strategy work. Instead, narrative strategists aim to create and distribute many entertainment narratives, through both formalized storytelling collaborations with Hollywood decision-makers along with self-produced and -distributed material, with the aim of shifting over time the balance of public perception and social norms about traditionally marginalized groups and social issues toward the goal of equity. The community of practice ultimately sees power in representation and positive portrayals of marginalized communities, in my own analysis advancing the concept that scholars William Flores and Rina Benmayor call "cultural citizenship," partially enabled through the pathways of media and culture: "Culture provides, then, a sense of belonging to a community, a feeling of entitlement, the energy to face everyday adversaries, and a rationale for resistance to a larger world in which members of minority groups feel like aliens in spite of being citizens" (Flores & Benmayor, 1997, p. 43).

Notably, the commercial nature and political economy of the US entertainment industry influences EE-like content and approaches in this country. Unlike present-day international EE programs, by which entertainment designed for social change often arises through funded relationships between government agencies or civil society organizations and media networks, the narrative strategy social justice organizations in the United

States operate from an understanding of their country's commercial entertainment system business model. They know that collaborations with the Hollywood community must be based on voluntary goodwill and relationships, a process that takes place through shared motivations of producers and activists, not through financial arrangements for compulsory content. What results is not entertainment storytelling produced within the explicit boundaries of the original Sabido EE model and its requirements for role-model protagonists and villains to be drawn in precise ways, but rather, broad opportunities to shape characters and stories that can promote positive new narratives and disrupt negative portrayals of people and social issues. Indeed, in their chapter within this volume, Erica Rosenthal and Kate Langrall Folb detail the processes by which this reality manifests in their work at Hollywood, Health & Society, a successful EE consultancy in the United States (Rosenthal & Folb, 2021).

Narrative strategy centers particular norms and values, some of which correspond with EE's underlying premises as a formalized methodology, while some are areas of expansion in the hands of practitioners leveraging the digital participatory media era, such as "shifting the power dynamics to ensure that members of traditionally marginalized communities are able to find seats at the decision-making table in the business of entertainment and culture; and the practice of social justice organizations self-producing and distributing original entertainment products" (Borum Chattoo & Feldman, 2020, pp. 157–158). Guiding values and principles of contemporary narrative strategy include the following: (1) embracing multiple genres of entertainment narrative, working across scripted drama, comedy, and reality programming; (2) working in multiple formats and media platforms, from short-form to formal entertainment vehicles of hour-long dramas or half-hour comedies, from webisodes and social media content to mainstream entertainment outlets; (3) serving multiple audiences for different purposes, from targeting broad audiences to shift views of traditionally marginalized people and issues, but also making media to build representation and solidarity for in-group marginalized populations; (4) expanding beyond individual and explicit attitude and behavior change from targeted viewers, toward broad cultural norm shifts that undergird supportive public policy; (5) centering ethics strongly around representation and the accuracy of lived experiences, favoring story creators who come from the diverse communities we see on screen; and (6) valuing the role of participatory culture, publics, and entertainment fans.

Social justice organizations that practice narrative strategy carry out one or more—sometimes all—of the following activities. They endeavor to:

Change the pipeline of culture creators. Contemporary cultural-change organizations aim to change the composition of entertainment industry storytellers to reflect a diverse group of makers and creators, understanding that the stories from these creators will be distinct from the reflections from white, male creatives who still dominate Hollywood. This activity also manifests in the form of diversity-based research reports used as industry advocacy, described below.

Influence existing storylines in big entertainment industry programming. Narrative and culture strategists work collaboratively in partnership with Hollywood writers, producers, and executives to positively shape storylines about marginalized people and social issues, from immigration to police procedure as it applies to African Americans to stereotypes of Muslims in entertainment. Groups like Color of Change, Define American, National Domestic Workers Alliance, Caring Across Generations, Muslim Public Affairs Council, and Storyline Partners all work in this fashion, with both dramatic series and comedies.

Develop and pitch new entertainment for mainstream entertainment industry distribution. Organizations including Color of Change and Define American develop and pitch new entertainment programming projects—like TV and web series—to be co-produced and distributed by mainstream entertainment industry companies and networks. These programs are developed with research produced inside the organizations themselves, or in collaboration with scholar researchers, with a keen eye toward ensuring the lived experiences of on-screen characters are deeply embedded and accurately reflected.

Create self-produced content for distribution on digital platforms, including social media. Creatively empowered social justice organizations also self-produce and distribute their own entertainment content as part of their narrative strategy work. Short-form web series, scripted and non-scripted, are made available to the organizations' wide-ranging constituents through their own YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook channels. Notably, these are explicitly produced as entertaining narratives, not didactic public service announcements.

Mobilize and pressure Hollywood to change damaging portrayals of people and social problems. Beyond their collaborative stance with the entertainment industry, many social justice organizations in the burgeoning narrative and culture change networks also shine a critical

spotlight on areas that need changing. Several groups—including IllumiNative, Color of Change, and Define American—have commissioned and produced high-level research projects to reveal underrepresented voices in entertainment, as well as damaging portrayals of issues that affect the real lives of diverse communities. They distribute these reports to entertainment industry executives and news media to generate reporting that amplifies their messages.

Act as visible thought-leaders in entertainment industry spaces. Narrative change strategy also means visibility in entertainment industry spaces, to talk publicly and privately about the need to showcase and hear underrepresented voices in entertainment. Industry showcases of diverse storytellers, as well as major industry gatherings like the Sundance Film Festival, serve as public sites of cultural intervention for narrative strategy as a practice. It's not enough, according to this premise, to change storylines one project at a time; rather, it's also vital to be part of the entertainment industry's ongoing conversations.

Four highlighted organizations, selected for inclusion here based on cultural recognition for their effective approach to social change, help to illustrate narrative change practices in greater depth: National Domestic Workers Alliance and Caring Across Generations, Color of Change, and Define American.

National Domestic Workers Alliance and Caring Across Generations

Activist Ai-jen Poo co-founded Caring Across Generations (CAG) as a campaign in 2011; by then, her steady vision and leadership had resulted in state-level policy protections for vulnerable domestic workers through the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA), which she launched more than a decade ago and continues to direct (Borum Chattoo & Feldman, 2020, p. 167; Newton-Small, 2017). Poo openly places narrative and cultural strategy at the center of these efforts to provide legal rights and protections for paid and unpaid caregivers in the United States. As she relayed in a media interview, building “narrative power” is vitally important: “I think of it in terms of different forms of power to create social change. There is political power, organizing and voter engagement are part of it. There is also narrative power—the ability to tell the story of why things are the way they are and shape the public narrative,” which

points a society to “a new way of being that we want to move forward” (Dubb, 2014).

Caring Across Generations and the National Domestic Workers Alliance both employ cultural strategists to direct their narrative strategy work in collaboration with Hollywood and as self-distributing entertainment producers. For instance, NDWA collaborated with Hollywood for a social change campaign focused on domestic workers as depicted through the 2018 Academy-Award-winning film “Roma” (Poo, 2019). Caring Across Generations produces entertainment programming about caregiving and caregivers, which it distributes on YouTube (Caring Across Generations, n.d.) and amplifies through social media. The team also actively pitches entertainment projects to Hollywood for full production and distribution. As a resource to Hollywood writers and producers, National Domestic Workers Alliance and Caring Across Generations participate as organizational members of Storyline Partners, a collaborative network that counsels the entertainment industry to help generate accurate, positive portrayals of marginalized groups or complex issues often rendered invisible or reduced to negative stereotypes in TV and film (Storyline Partners, n.d.).

Color of Change

Launched in 2005 in the wake of Hurricane Katrina’s disproportionate devastation of African American neighborhoods and families (“Rashad Robinson, President,” 2018) Color of Change bills itself as “the nation’s largest online racial justice organization.... As a national online force driven by 1.7 million members, we move decision-makers in corporations and government to create a more human and less hostile world for Black people in America” (Color of Change, n.d.). Notably, Color of Change centers “Culture Change and Media Justice” as a guiding premise that not only shapes its work as a Hollywood collaborator, critic, and media producer intent on changing lives through policy but also showcases and inspires “Black joy” through entertainment (Color of Change, n.d.). Color of Change was recognized, along with Define American, as one of *Fast Company’s* “50 Most Innovative Companies” in 2020 (Farley, 2020). As executive director Rashad Robinson wrote of the organization’s guiding philosophy: “Narrative infrastructure is singularly about equipping a tight network of people organizing on the ground and working within various sectors to develop strategic and powerful narrative ideas, and then,

against the odds of the imbalanced resources stacked against us, immerse people in a sustained series of narrative experiences required to enduringly change hearts, minds, behaviors, and relationships” (Robinson, 2019).

As part of its efforts, Color of Change produces its own narrative programming through its filmed podcast, *#TellBlackStories*, also distributed on YouTube and Instagram (Color of Change YouTube Channel, n.d.), pitches original entertainment storytelling content for Hollywood distribution, and partners with Hollywood producers to create and direct social change campaigns around entertainment, such as Ava DuVernay’s award-winning Netflix series, *When They See Us* (Farley, 2020). The organization’s Hollywood-based team not only works with mainstream entertainment producers and writers to ensure positive and accurate portrayals of Black characters across narrative storylines, but also collaborates with scholars to produce research that reveals, most recently, systematic underrepresentation of Black writers in entertainment writers’ rooms (Hunt, 2017), and negative portrayals of African American characters in the popular “crime shows” genre (e.g. *Law & Order: SVU* and *Blue Bloods*) (“Normalizing Injustice,” 2020). By advocating for Black communities and amplifying critical messages through news coverage (Obenson, 2020) and social media channels, the Color of Change team works to implement social change through entertainment by acting as a force for advocacy and new entertainment narratives.

Define American

Define American’s origin story as an immigrant rights advocacy group begins with its founder, journalist Jose Antonio Vargas, who revealed his undocumented status in 2011 through his writing in the *New York Times* (Vargas, 2011) and in a documentary called *Documented*, which aired on CNN as part of its documentary series, CNN Films (“Documented,” n.d.). The organization notably positions entertainment media engagement as its core tactic, with narrative change positioned in its mission statement: “Define American is a narrative and culture change organization that uses media and the power of storytelling to transcend politics and shift the conversation about immigrants, identity, and citizenship in a changing America” (Define American, n.d.). As the organization’s managing director of creative initiatives, Elizabeth Grizzle Voorhees, explained in an interview: “In order to create public policy change, you have to change the hearts and minds of people in our country first. You can’t have

effective policy change without changing culture first” (Borum Chattoo and Feldman, p. 165).

Tactically, Define American is deeply engaged with Hollywood and entertainment narratives, not only through ongoing collaborations with writers and producers to create and shape immigrant storylines—and undocumented storylines—in top entertainment media outlets, but also by creating and distributing its own entertainment stories through YouTube and social media. With a robust in-house creative team, Define American’s original short-form entertainment productions feature humanizing stories and portrayals of immigrants, including through comedy, with titles like “UndocuJoy,” “The Good Immigrant,” and “What Would L.A. Be Like Without Immigrants?” (“Original Productions,” n.d.). Notably, Define American is represented by an entertainment industry talent agency, and thus truly works in the core engine of Hollywood. Like Color of Change, Define American also respects and leverages research in narrative strategy. Its “Immigration on Television” study, which examined immigrant storylines in top scripted entertainment TV programming, also serves as a conversation point with the industry (“Immigrant Nation,” n.d.). Perhaps owed to its visible work, Define American has become a go-to group for media on all things immigration, which extends the group’s narrative power far beyond the bounds of any one individual entertainment story.

BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The primary mission of present-day narrative change strategy as employed in the United States shares EE’s original premise—that is, the desire to engage audiences in positive, entertaining messages to which they might not otherwise be exposed. Entertainment-based narrative strategists empowered by the participatory media age approach this challenge through projects that endeavor to reach audiences and invite them to participate across many media platforms and types of screens, across formats from short-form programming on Facebook and Instagram to longer traditional Hollywood-distributed programming. They work in a range of genres, including comedy, reality, and drama. By determining—through research and practice—damaging cultural narratives to change, and creating positive narratives as corrective storytelling and representation, narrative strategists aim to immerse their own communities and broader audiences in storylines that gradually help contribute to social change on

issues that center justice and equity, from racial justice to immigration policy. For narrative change strategists, engaging audiences is not about one story or episode at a time, but a constellation of consistent stories—short and long—that can help drive a shifted, broader cultural shift through public opinion and supportive public policy, aided by participating publics.

Notably, while the original stalwart academic theories in Entertainment-Education are crucial and meaningful in this work, they may not be sufficient to provide evidence for narrative change strategy's effectiveness. Because cultural-change practitioners work so deeply to amplify messages and mobilize audiences through activism and social movement models as their theories of change, in addition to their innate understanding of, and belief in, story-based influence, an opportunity exists for expanded scholarship to work alongside this community of practice—indeed, perhaps in a similar fashion as Sabido's early work, which crossed and merged lines of professional production, community deliberation practices, and social science. Narrative change strategists posit that cultural narratives disseminated through popular culture help shape public opinion that can undergird structural social change, such as public policy and corporate practices. And yet, we do not yet know through rigorous scholarly research the extent to which this premise is fully realized, at least along the lines of these particular professional endeavors. However, given learnings from cultivation theory, a seminal body of work that helps us to understand the ways in which consistent media portrayals of people and issues can impact public perception over time—alongside studies in participatory culture—research directions are promising and exciting. Traditional EE theories alone, then, with an audience effects orientation at the unit of the individual story, do not necessarily account for this broader question, even as academic EE scholarship continues to provide evidence for the uniquely persuasive influence of entertainment stories. Tackling this complicated set of questions points to future innovation and collaboration between practitioners and researchers (and those of us who work across both arenas as engaged scholars).

In related fashion, additional research can help us to explore and develop new insights and evidence about the relative influence of particular narrative genres, and of stories produced outside the precise confines of a Sabido model approach. Ideally, scholarly journals and reviewers will more readily embrace a mix of qualitative and quantitative research about this kind of programming, accepting the limitations that naturally exist for

experimental design when two narrative approaches are not precisely equivalent. Otherwise, this dynamic body of contemporary entertainment strategy practice will be unexamined in academic research, and formal Entertainment-Education scholarship will continue in its original path while this promising area of social change activism continues, leaving many assumptions untested and questions unanswered.

As practices evolve in the continuing evolution of the participatory media age, entertainment-based narrative strategy in the United States points to imperatives about what works, and what is promising, in this body of work. Successful narrative strategy implementation requires ongoing, deep, strong collaborative relationships with entertainment industry decision-makers. Narrative strategists act as both creative producers and allies to entertainment industry executives who share their interest in reflecting diverse social change stories. This matters for developing individual storylines embedded in existing programs and also for having the ready access to co-create, distribute, and promote new programming together. For emerging professionals who hope to work in this arena, a sophisticated understanding of the transforming entertainment industry is crucial. Research and activism can be optimally put to work for social change through entertainment storytelling when narrative change practitioners understand the protocol and norms of the industry's creative development, production, distribution, and marketing practices, along with a willingness and ability to pay close attention to topic trends and leverage them opportunistically. True collaboration and a positive trajectory for narrative change strategy and research emerge through shared respect across disparate sectors with distinct missions and ways of doing business, building upon the foundation of Entertainment-Education while opening the space for necessary innovation and creativity in a wildly transforming networked media age.

REFERENCES

- 'Superstore' Actor Relishes True-to-Life Gay Filipino Role. (2019, January 29). Associated Press. Retrieved from <https://apnews.com/0e20da1a0b7243ce9c91697c7396cbfe>
- Betancourt, M. (2019, March 18). *America Ferrera brought a group of actors to visit immigrant shelters in Tijuana*. Remezcla. Retrieved from <https://remezcla.com/film/america-ferrera-visits-tijuana-immigrant-shelter/>

- Borum Chattoo, C. (2020). *Story movements: How documentaries empower people and inspire social change*. Oxford University Press.
- Borum Chattoo, C., & Feldman, L. (2020). *A comedian and an activist walk into a bar: The serious role of comedy in social justice*. University of California Press.
- Bridge, G. (2020, January 6). *Entertainment companies spend \$121 billion on original content in 2019*. Variety. Retrieved from <https://variety.com/2020/biz/news/2019-original-content-spend-121-billion-1203457940/>
- Caring Across Generations YouTube Channel. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/user/carexgens>
- Chang, J., Manne, L., & Potts, E. (2018, June 15). *A conversation about cultural strategy*. Medium. Retrieved from <https://medium.com/a-more-perfect-story/a-conversation-about-cultural-strategy-9e2a28802160>
- Color of Change. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://colorofchange.org/about/>
- Color of Change YouTube Channel. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLtsktHeFUJfS9cOXwwprz-jHt_ZI98DQY
- Conti, M. (2016, August 21). *“Superstore’s” Mateo comes out as undocumented*. Define American. Retrieved from <https://www.defineamerican.com/blog/nbcs-superstore-reveals-that-one-character-is-undocumented>
- Cunningham, S., & Craig, D. (2019). *Social media entertainment: The new intersection of Hollywood and Silicon Valley*. New York University Press.
- Darwish, M. (2016, May 19). *‘Superstore’ creator Justin Spitzer breaks down the shocking season finale*. TV Insider. Retrieved from <https://www.tvinsider.com/778481/superstore-season-4-finale-mateo-deported-justin-spitzer/>
- Define American. (2020, March 10). *Innovative nonprofits: Define American honored as one of Fast Company’s “World’s Most Innovative Companies” for second year running*. Define American. Retrieved from <https://www.defineamerican.com/blog/define-american-honored-as-one-of-fast-company-worlds-most-innovative-companies-for-second-year-running>
- Define American. (n.d.). *Mission*. Define American. Retrieved from <https://www.defineamerican.com/about>
- Documented. (n.d.). *Documented* documentary. Retrieved from <https://documentedthefilm.com/>
- Dream Act 2017: Summary and Answers to Frequently Asked Questions*. (2017, November 28). National Immigration Law Center. Retrieved from <https://www.nilc.org/issues/immigration-reform-and-executive-actions/dream-act-2017-summary-and-faq/>
- Dubb, S. (2014, May). *Interview of Ai-jen Poo, director, National Domestic Workers Alliance*. Democracy Collaborative. Retrieved from <https://democracycollaborative.org/content/ai-jen-poo>
- Farley, A. (2020, March 7). *This activist organization wants to transform the criminal justice system-starting with prosecutors*. Fast Company. Retrieved from <https://www.fastcompany.com/90457513/color-of-change-most-innovative-companies-2020>

- Farris, E. M., & Mohamed, H. S. (2018). Picturing immigration: How the media criminalizes Immigrants. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 6(4), 814–824. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2018.1484375>
- Flores, W. V., & Benmayor, R. (1997). *Latino cultural citizenship: Claiming identity, space and rights*. Beacon Press.
- Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2000). The role of transportation in the persuasiveness of public narratives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79(5), 701–721. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.79.5.701>
- Hosch, W. L. (2020, March 18). Netflix. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Netflix-Inc>
- Hunt, D. (2017). *Race in the writer's room*. Color of Change. Retrieved from <https://hollywood.colorofchange.org/writers-room-report/>
- Immigrant Nation*. (n.d.). Define American. Retrieved from <https://www.defineamerican.com/tvstudy>
- Jenkins, H., Shresthova, S., Gamber-Thompson, L., Kligler-Vilenchik, N., & Zimmerman, A. M. (2016). *By any media necessary: The new youth activism*. New York University Press.
- Liz Manne Strategy. (2016). *#PopJustice: Social justice and the promise of pop culture strategies*. Unbound Philanthropy. Retrieved from https://www.unbound-philanthropy.org/sites/default/files/%23PopJustice%20Executive%20Brief_FINAL%20with%20full%20credits%20%287%29_0.pdf
- Mateo's Last Day/Transcript. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://superstore-nbc.fandom.com/wiki/Mateo%27s_Last_Day/Transcript
- Newton-Small, J. (2017, December 18). Caregivers support: Investing in the American family. *Time*. Retrieved from <https://time.com/collection/american-voices-2017/4402890/ai-jen-poo-national-domestic-workers-alliance/>
- Normalizing Injustice*. (2020). Color of Change. Retrieved from <https://hollywood.colorofchange.org/crime-tv-report/>
- Obenson, T. (2020, January 22). *New study reveals how crime TV series distort understanding of race and criminal justice system*. Retrieved from <https://www.indiewire.com/2020/01/color-of-change-normalizing-injustice-1202204758/>
- “Olympics,” Superstor, 2016
- Original Productions*. (n.d.). Define American. Retrieved from <https://www.defineamerican.com/video>
- Poo, A. (2019, January 2). How ‘Roma’ reveals the complex reality of domestic work (guest column). *Hollywood Reporter*. Retrieved from <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/ai-jen-poo-how-roma-reveals-complex-reality-domestic-work-1169349>
- Rashad Robinson, President, Color of Change*. (2018, June 20). Philanthropy News Digest. Retrieved from <https://philanthropynewsdigest.org/5-questions-for/rashad-robinson-president-color-of-change>

- Robinson, R. (2019, January 30). *Changing our narrative about narrative: The infrastructure required for building narrative power*. Nonprofit Quarterly. Retrieved from <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/2019/01/30/changing-our-narrative-about-narrative-the-infrastructure-required-for-building-narrative-power/>.
- Romero, M. (2018). Trump's immigration attacks, in brief. *Contexts*, 17(1), 34–41. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1536504218766549>
- Rosenthal, E., & Folb, K. (2021). Entertainment-education, American style: Informing and studying Hollywood's portrayals of social issues. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sabido, M. (2004). The origins of entertainment-education. In A. Singhal, M. J. Cody, E. M. Rogers, & M. Sabido (Eds.), *Entertainment-education and social change* (pp. 61–74). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Singhal, A., & Rogers, E.M. (Eds.). (2004). *Entertainment-education and social change*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Storyline Partners. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.storylinepartners.com/>
- Superstore. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.nbc.com/superstore>
- Van Slyke, T. (2014). Spoiler alert: How progressives will break through with pop culture. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/8882619/Spoiler_Alert_How_Progressives_Will_Break_Through_With_Pop_Culture
- Vargas, J. A. (2011, June 22). *My life as an undocumented immigrant*. The New York Times. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/26/magazine/my-life-as-an-undocumented-immigrant.html>

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if you modified the licensed material. You do not have permission under this licence to share adapted material derived from this chapter or parts of it.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.





A Strange Kind of Marriage: The Challenging Journey of Entertainment-Education Collaboration

Martine Bouman

In the early days of entertainment-education (EE), the focus was on theatre, music, film, radio, and television. Nowadays the media landscape offers a rich variety of linear, as well as online and digital media, culminating in transmedia formats. What does this mean for EE collaboration partnerships? Which facilitating or hindering factors play a role in the collaboration between health communication and other professionals when making an EE media program? What are theoretical and creative elements for the design of stories for social change? What new skills do entertainment-education professionals need in a digital era? These are challenging questions for EE researchers and practitioners. In this chapter, the different stages of my challenging journey in EE collaboration will be illustrated.

M. Bouman (✉)
Center for Media & Health, Gouda, The Netherlands
e-mail: bouman@media-gezondheid.nl

© The Author(s) 2021
L. B. Frank, P. Falzone (eds.), *Entertainment-Education Behind the
Scenes*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-63614-2_5

INTRODUCTION

I remember my own first steps in the field of entertainment-education. In the mid-1980s, I watched the popular prime time television sitcom *Zeg eens A*, which was broadcast in the Netherlands.¹ The series took place in a general practitioner's office and portrayed the daily lives of a doctor and her patients. I had just started to work as a health communication professional at the Netherlands Heart Foundation (NHF). Health communication was a fairly new discipline, and often social scientists like me were appointed to develop new health promotion policies. Soon after my start at the NHF, I discovered that epidemiological studies in the Netherlands (and in other countries) showed that people with a lower socioeconomic status (meaning those with lower income, education, and job status) lived an average of seven years less and experienced health problems twelve years earlier than higher socioeconomic status groups (Mackenbach, 1994). I found this data shocking. These enormous health inequalities made me realize that we often do not effectively reach the people who need our health information most, not because they are difficult to reach, but because our traditional communication methods are not attuned to their culture and preferences. This was a wake-up call for me. I understood that it was no longer sufficient to rely solely on a cognitive approach and the rationality of the health message; other, more emotionally appealing and popular communication methods also needed to be brought into play. I started watching *Zeg eens A* with new eyes. I realized that embedding storylines in a popular drama series could be an excellent way to introduce and discuss health issues. I became intrigued by the power of storytelling for health communication, and at the NHF I had the opportunity to experiment with the entertainment-education communication strategy on television. Many years later, in 1999, I founded the independent research institute Center for Media & Health (CMH) to further develop the EE field in the Netherlands, which resulted in several award-winning projects. Since 2015 I combine my work at CMH with teaching at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam as holder of the special chair *Entertainment Media and Social Change* (Bouman, 2016). Over my thirty five years of working in EE, I have learned many lessons, and I am happy to share some of them in this chapter.

¹*Zeg eens A* was broadcasted by the VARA from 1981 to 1993 and was watched by an average of four million viewers (out of a total population of 15 million) until 1991.

ENTERTAINMENT-EDUCATION COLLABORATION

While working for the NHF on a nationally broadcast heart health game show, Joop van den Ende, head of the production company, took me aside after a discussion with the director of the show, and told me, “Please Martine, you have to remember, scriptwriters are very sensitive people.” It took me several years to find out what he really meant. When I studied the EE collaboration process in more depth, I found that media professionals eschew scholarly oversight of their work when displaying their artistry (like peacocks), while the content-driven health professionals are steeped in scientific and slow bureaucratic procedures (like turtles).

As described in my book, *The Turtle and the Peacock*, “Entertainment-education strategy is the process of purposively designing and implementing a mediating communication form with the potential of entertaining and educating people, in order to enhance and facilitate different stages of prosocial (behavior) change” (Bouman, 1999, p. 25). The word ‘process’ in this definition is very important. It reflects the time, energy, and ‘process way of thinking’ that is needed when the EE communication strategy is applied. An EE collaboration is a strange kind of marriage. I have learned that it’s a matter of careful balancing between content and form, and between different stakeholders and collaboration partners. Several facilitating and hindering factors play a role in the collaboration, such as differences in work culture and professional standards, as well as personal traits and preferences. I remember a conversation between a health communication professional and a scriptwriter. The health communicator had a lot of ideas, but also wanted to distinguish himself from the ‘lesser’ world of soap series. So he started his meeting with the scriptwriter by announcing, “I am not a fan of soap series, and I never watch this genre myself” (Bouman, 2016, p. 23). His slight but unmistakable disdain immediately set the tone. When there is no genuine interest and respect for each other’s professional domain, the EE collaboration is doomed to fail. At that time, collaborating with scriptwriters of popular television programs was still a challenging and problematic issue, due to the fact that health organizations had great initial reservations about using a popular medium for their health communication. Tabloids, soap operas, or drama series were considered to be too profane for the serious and important health messages of the highly esteemed health organizations. Apart from their unfamiliarity with popular culture, health organizations feared losing their respectable image and, as an ultimate consequence, their funding.

Although understandable, this shows an explicit tension between the goals of health communication and the goals of public relations and fundraising.

Villa Borghese

The NHF, however, was daring and innovative enough, and despite its unfamiliarity with popular media, it gave the green light for the design and implementation of a new EE drama series to stimulate a healthy lifestyle for the prevention of cardiovascular diseases. In 1992, this resulted in an EE co-production²; the NHF collaborated with a producer and broadcasting company, for the creation of a new prime time drama series called *Villa Borghese (VB)*. Villa Borghese was a fictitious Dutch health farm that included a restaurant, swimming pool, and fitness center. In this setting, heart patients and regular customers were offered advice, training, and therapy, to better understand the importance of regular exercises, a balanced diet, non-smoking, and dealing sensibly with stress. The aim of the series was to move social norms in the direction of a healthy lifestyle. The main characters of the series, primarily staff and customers at the health farm, had to be on the ‘winning side’ and attractive to identify with (Fig. 5.1).

By designing a new series, it was possible to apply the theoretical framework and guidelines of EE soap series (such as using positive, transitional and negative role models) as formulated by Miguel Sabido (Nariman, 1993). The co-production arrangement in *Villa Borghese* involved a joint decision-making process in all stages of the production, from reading the first scripts to directing the last cuts. The main challenge in this collaboration process was how to frame and integrate the issue of cardiovascular diseases into a compelling story and how to create a good balance between entertainment and education. Difficult as it was, this was not the only challenge I met. As a newcomer in the EE field, I had to make sense of particular situations (Louis, 1980; Weick, 1995). I was not yet equipped to immediately understand what the creative professionals were doing. I had to understand the puzzles and uncertainties in the creative process of making an EE drama series and find ways to cope with different professional backgrounds and attitudes.

²In an EE co-production partners collectively design, produce, and broadcast/launch a new entertainment program for social change purposes (Bouman, 1999).



Fig. 5.1 *Villa Borghese*: Health & Beauty Farm. (Source: CMH with permission of AVRO broadcasting company)

DIFFERENT WAYS OF THINKING

Later, during my own research into EE collaboration processes, I learned that the creative process to design an entertaining media format calls for a different way of thinking than that of the scientifically trained health professional (Bouman, 1999, p. 189). As a health communication professional, I was trained in a verbal, analytic, and logical way of thinking where objective information, truth, balancing of values, and standardized protocols are most important. Creative media professionals tend to have a more nonverbal, synthetic, and intuitive way of thinking, in which creativity, originality, spontaneity, and authorship are important. A health communication professional that I once interviewed illustrated this with the remark, “Brainstorming for television professionals often means creating all kinds of ideas and acting out every wild fantasy, although there is a limited budget, that allows for only so much of the expressed ideas. Then we had to sober them up and calculate the possibilities. Often enough it appeared that some of the ideas were not at all feasible, for example, that the stars they had in mind were never available” (Bouman, 1999, p. 188). This interviewee found that television professionals indulged in fantasies, and

they let their imagination run away with them. With my scientific background, I also often felt the urge to pull the creative team back to earth. We all enter the process with our own professional standards and frames of references. I recognized on many occasions that I had to learn to build bridges between the two different modes of thinking, and in order to do that, I had to explore the creative realm of the media professional. *Villa Borghese* made me fully realize the importance of familiarizing myself with the field of the media professional. The experience contributed to the ‘The Turtle and the Peacock’ effect that I described in my book.

For *Villa Borghese*, however, this insight came too late. Despite good intentions, the health messages that were incorporated in the drama proved to be too explicit and overly didactic. The storyline lacked enough suspense and developed too slowly. Apart from lack of experience in designing EE drama, this was due to the fact that the educational content was brought into play too quickly. The series suffered from imbalances between entertainment and education. This outcome led to an important insight for the developing EE strategy: when writing drama for educational purposes, the entertainment comes first. With *Villa Borghese*, we were too keen to bring our message. That didn’t help. We gained only half of the viewer ratings that we hoped for; the time to gain rapport with our audience and create a fan base proved to be too short (Bouman & Wieberdink, 1993; ResCon, 1992). Due to the low ratings, there was no second season of the series.

Medisch Centrum West (MCW)

Our interest in the EE strategy, however, hadn’t wavered. On the contrary, it was a ‘failing forward,’ making it worthwhile to explore the power of storytelling for social change on entertainment media. To avoid the risk of failing again in winning an audience for a new series, the NHF chose to incorporate heart health storylines into an already existing series. This resulted in a formal arrangement (so called in-script participation) with the producer of the very popular prime time hospital series *Medisch Centrum West* (MCW).

MCW was based on realistic medical themes and was written around romances and intrigues between doctors and nurses (similar to the series *Greys Anatomy* in the USA). Many families sat together watching this series. The observation that audiences become ‘medical voyeurs’ makes such series very appealing and attractive (Karpf, 1988; Turow, 1989).

As a health communication professional and delegate producer of the NHF, I briefed the scriptwriting team of MCW and checked the content of the cardiovascular health message for its medical soundness and educational value. In this way, several cardiovascular health themes were incorporated in different episodes. That wasn't always easy. The collaboration showed what I had noticed before: the professional way of thinking of the health professional and that of the scriptwriter aren't a natural match. I remember a discussion with the scriptwriter of MCW about a specific storyline around nutrition and heart health risk. From the start, he wasn't very happy about the whole idea of incorporating a heart health message in his storyline. At some point, in a heated discussion about how to bring the concept of a healthy diet after a heart attack, he told me rather desperately: "Hey Martine, I can't dramatize a meatball, you know!" But after a few drinks our conversation mellowed, he accepted the challenge, and later on even started to enjoy it. This particular collaboration also taught me that certain terms and words, such as *education* and *target group*, have a negative connotation for the scriptwriter, illustrated by his remark, "I'm not an educator. I am a storyteller."

Our participation in MCW gave us the opportunity to do some research. For the evaluation, we developed a novel research design. Because of practical problems in relation to baseline studies (it is a nationally broadcast series and you can't exclude people from watching it), a post-test only design with non-equivalent groups was used. This design is often used in media effect research, despite its methodological limitations. Without a baseline test, it is more difficult to measure possible changes in knowledge, attitude, or behavior. To compensate for this, we selected and interviewed three subsamples: (1) regular MCW viewers who saw the specific cardiovascular health episode, (2) regular MCW viewers who normally watch the series but missed the specific cardiovascular health episode, and (3) non-MCW viewers. Comparison of the first two groups is of special interest here, and not often found in other media research. The evaluation showed that respondents who had watched this specific storyline in MCW scored significantly higher on knowledge items than regular viewers who had missed that specific episode (Bouman, 1999; Bouman, Maas, & Kok, 1998). Although the viewers were well aware that the specific episodes in MCW included health messages, they didn't find that intrusive for their enjoyment. And, most importantly, more viewers from lower socioeconomic groups had watched MCW than higher socioeconomic groups, suggesting we reached our intended audience.

FIELDS OF PRACTICE

I learned from my first EE experiments with *Villa Borghese* and *Medisch Centrum West* that the use of the EE strategy in health communication can only be successful if all involved parties work collaboratively. As described in *The Turtle and the Peacock* (Bouman, 1999), designing and implementing EE projects means sitting together to negotiate, brainstorming, creating ideas, and putting them into practice. This is an ‘inter-cultural’ EE collaboration process where all professionals involved have to make sense of their collaboration. Bridging different cultures, work rhythms, and professional dilemmas play an important role. Often notions of power and control convert the arrangement into a negotiated agreement. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1993) offers an interesting perspective on the struggles between different fields of practice; in this case the health communication field and entertainment media field. For example, a health organization may lose its symbolic capital (goodwill) among its donors and stakeholders by collaborating in a popular media format, while media professionals may gain prestige by collaborating with a respected health organization. When different professional domains want to collaborate, they have to have a feel for the game and know the mode of life (*habitus*) of that specific field. That is an investment that needs to come from both sides. Health communication professionals indicated that they always felt a natural tension during the collaboration, due to the different aims, goals, professional standards, and perspectives that had to be reconciled. They were aware that, in general, television professionals did not like outside influence on the program. Television professionals said that they were willing to listen to health communication professionals, so long as they could benefit from their expertise. They liked to collaborate with competent professionals. As one television professional said, “The more competent and intelligent the player, the more interesting the game” (Bouman, 1999, p. 170). They found it difficult to collaborate with health communication professionals who believed that they were competent players, but who in their eyes were not.

EE MEDIA MAPPING MODEL

Although the result of a creative process cannot be predicted in detail, because both EE partners influence the final product, there are certain logical steps in every EE collaboration process. Based on my previous experience in *Villa Borghese* and *Medisch Centrum West*, I developed a

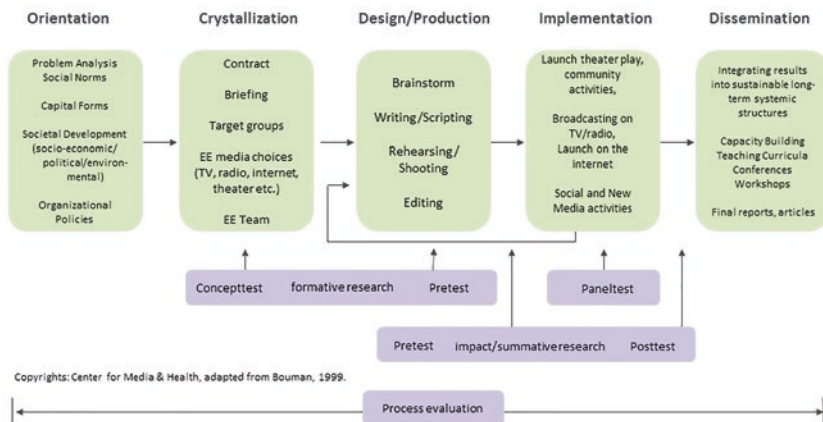


Fig. 5.2 Entertainment-Education Media Mapping Model

mapping model for the design and production of an EE program (see Fig. 5.2). This EE Media Mapping Model makes it possible for collaboration partners to follow the design stages of an EE project in a transparent way. In every stage, all collaboration partners are engaged in a ‘give and take’ kind of interaction as the members of the EE team clearly do not collaborate in a vacuum. They are tied to several other reference groups and important others (colleagues, board of directors within the organization, other professionals in the sector, the press). By nature, such a framework is rather static and linear. In practice the stages sometimes overlap and are more dynamic. For analytical reasons however, and for a better understanding of the collaboration process, the different stages are defined and distinguished. In the first stages (orientation, crystallization) the health organization is more in the lead. As soon as the production stage starts, the media organization takes over. In the dissemination stage, the health organization comes to the fore again.

EE IN THE NEW MEDIA LANDSCAPE

Medisch Centrum West and *Villa Borghese* were both based on linear storylines, meant for broadcasting on television. Since the introduction of the Internet, the media landscape offers a much richer variety of digital media formats (blogs, vlogs, web series), and transmedia formats with 360 degree storytelling. Transmedia storytelling is a promising new EE format (Wang

& Singhal, 2016, 2018) and orchestrates elements of a story across multiple platforms, thereby providing entry points through various channels (Jenkins, 2006). Characters that play a role in the narrative can post blogs or video diaries about their own experiences and can include links to public health services and reliable information sources. The storyline can also transcend the media environment and unfold at real-life events (e.g., organizing a ‘meet and greet’ of the main characters of a series in a real-life restaurant or nightclub).

There has been a shift from the age of the *broadcasting schedule*, where audiences adapt to the timetables of television broadcasters to see their favorite series and shows, such as *Medisch Centrum West* and *Villa Borghese*, to the age of the *stream*, where audiences choose from a continuous stream of media content whenever they choose (Lutkenhaus, Jansz, & Bouman, 2019). What does this mean for EE collaboration partnerships?

SOUND

My first collaboration experience in designing an EE format in the new media landscape was in 2008. In order to persuade youth to protect their hearing by wearing earplugs while clubbing, we designed and launched³ the campaign *Sound Effects*. The average sound level in discotheques ranges from 104 to 112 decibels, a range that exceeds all international statutory safety standards for occupational settings. Exposure to dangerously loud music at concerts, discotheques, and dance events has caused a lot of hearing loss among Netherland’s youth. Such a loss approaches the qualification for a social handicap, as it prevents those who suffer from following conversations in large groups.

Our challenge was to combine theory, research, and practice in an integral approach. *Sound Effects* involved online and offline media, peer education, and collaborative partnerships with discotheques, the music sector, and media partners. Our main media partner was Endemol Productions, an international Dutch production company. In designing the *Sound Effects* campaign, we used principles from the field of health communication, entertainment-education, social psychology, celebrity endorsement, and social marketing.

In order to effectively design the *Sound Effects* campaign, we executed online chat session interviews as part of the extensive formative research

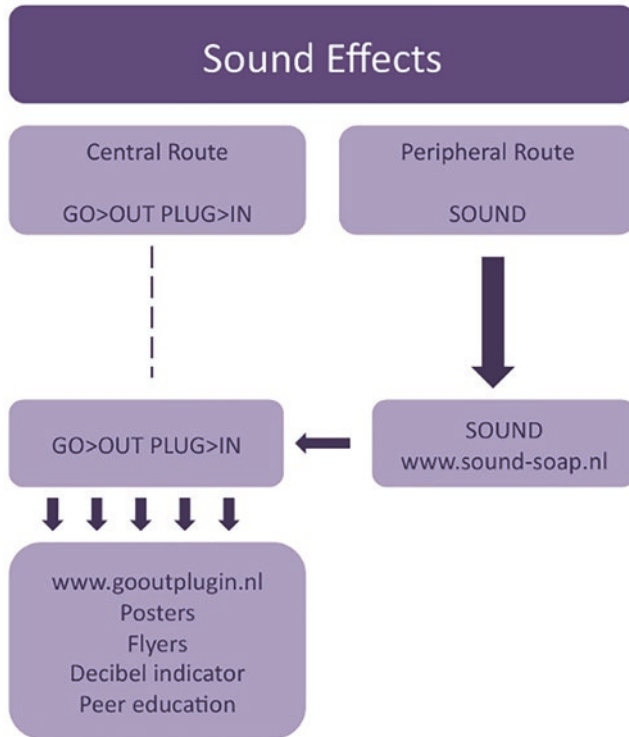
³In collaboration with the Municipal Health Service of Amsterdam.

among youth aged 16-30 (Bouman & Jurg, 2006; Rijs, Meeuse, Jurg, & Bouman, 2007). These chat sessions with members of the target group were of great value, because they delivered several quotes that we could literally use in the drama and other parts of the campaign.

To tailor the campaign, we looked closely to our research data. They showed that some youth were not interested or engaged in the issue of hearing loss, while others were already contemplating taking preventive measures.⁴ This meant that we needed to diversify our communication strategy. We decided to experiment with the design of a ‘central route’ and a ‘peripheral route’ for the persuasion process, as described in the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Slater & Rouner, 2002). Although the two routes of persuasion were closely linked, we gave them a totally different look and feel, in order to create a different approach for youth who were not yet interested in hearing loss prevention and youth who were already motivated to take preventive measures while clubbing. The overall *Sound Effects* campaign consisted, therefore, of two separate campaign tracks (see Fig. 5.3): the SOUND track (peripheral route) and the GoOut PlugIn track (central route). We designed an online mini soap *SOUND* and website for the peripheral route, using an affective approach with heuristic cues to attract the attention of youngsters who were not yet interested. At the end of each episode of the *Sound* series, youth could link to the GoOut PlugIn track for more information. GoOut PlugIn was based on a cognitive approach where youth could find factual information on hearing loss (website flyers, posters, decibel indicators, and peer education at music venues). For each track, unique materials were designed, and communication to the press was carefully channeled in separate press releases.

A key element of this strategic communication campaign was the nine-episode web series (2.5 minutes per episode) *SOUND*, about ‘love, ambition and decibels,’ that we designed in collaboration with the Endemol media professionals. The script was based on the ideas, wishes, misconceptions, and experiences of the target group. Before writing the first synopsis of the *SOUND* series, I shared a briefing document with the scriptwriters of Endemol Productions, containing a description of the aims, target group, behavior change goals, and value grid for the series. This briefing

⁴ (1) to wear earplugs with filters, (2) maintain a distance of at least two meters from loudspeakers, and (3) reduce the duration of exposure by taking regular ‘ear breaks’ in chill-out rooms.



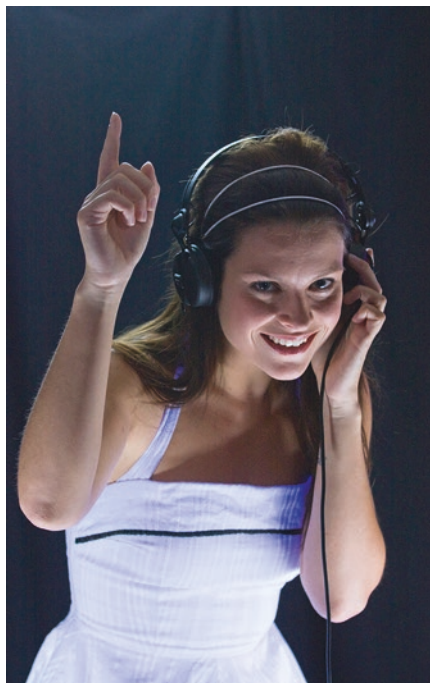
Source: Center for Media & Health 2009

Fig. 5.3 Central and peripheral routes of the *Sound Effects* campaign

document also addressed some theoretical elements of the EE strategy, such as the use of Sabido's positive, transitional, and negative role model in the series (Nariman, 1993) (Fig. 5.4).

SOUND was the first EE online drama series in the Netherlands. What did we learn from this project in the new media landscape? It was a challenging process for all of us for many reasons. The production company Endemol had no previous experience writing and producing an online web series. They were very good writing daily soap series with 25-minute episodes. The *SOUND* series, however, consisted of much shorter episodes. This meant they had to create very short spans, with cliff-hangers after every 2-3 minutes, instead of 25 minutes. Still, they used the same

Fig. 5.4 *SOUND*
(Source: CMH: Casper
Cammeraat)



high-quality level for the production of *SOUND* as for their wide screen drama series. It was only after the series launch that they realized that youth watched *SOUND* on small computer screens via YouTube. In their opinion, this did not do justice to the high quality of their professional sound and image editing. For the campaign, however, the high quality was a big positive.

Our original idea was to upload a new episode of *SOUND* every week to create a tension arc during the whole nine-week campaign period. However, during the pre-test sessions, youth said they preferred to wait until all nine episodes were available online. They wanted to postpone watching in order to have immediate gratification. We changed our plans, and instead of launching one new episode weekly for nine weeks, we decided to upload three new episodes for three weeks in a row. It was interesting to see that we still used a linear way of thinking, as we were used to.

A challenging part of going digital was creating an audience for the series. How could we inform youth that there was a new series online? In 2008, social media were still in their infancy. Twitter didn't exist, and Hyves (a popular Dutch Social Network) and Facebook were not yet widely used. CMH created both online and offline press releases and held a press meeting with Endemol Productions. To seed the new series, we posted a trailer on YouTube and various online social communities. This trailer raised the attention of the tabloid press, because the main characters of *SOUND* were popular actors in other well-known Dutch series. Journalists wanted to know whether the actors had quit the other series to start appearing in this new, mysterious *SOUND* series. When CMH and Endemol Productions held a press conference, my biggest challenge was to answer the questions of the press as honestly as possible, without disclosing the educational part of the series and putting too much emphasis on the hearing loss issue. It was important that youngsters would watch the series for its entertainment value. If they knew beforehand that the series also had an educational component, they might lose their spontaneous desire to watch. Forewarning is still an intrinsic dilemma of the entertainment-education strategy (Bouman, 1999, 2002).

With the *Sound Effects* campaign, we learned that an internet drama series needs a different type of publicity and launch than a television drama series. This requires a great deal of social media communication, ideally with viral content. We had underestimated the necessary budget for this type of social media campaigning. In the production of *SOUND*, most of the budget was spent on the high production quality of the drama; only a small budget was allocated for social media publicity (banners, trailers, chat sessions on web communities, etc.).

SndBites

The experiences and lessons learned in the *Sound Effects* campaign created a solid foundation for the exploration of another new EE format. Based on the experience of *SOUND*,⁵ CMH developed and launched a new interactive EE web series in 2011 called *SndBites* (SoundBites), targeted at lower-educated youth aged 15–18 (Bouman & Hollemans, 2012). The setting of *SndBites* was a nightclub, and the storyline dealt with several health issues (moderate alcohol consumption, hearing loss prevention, and safe

⁵In collaboration with Soa Aids Netherlands and the Trimbos Institute.

sex). *SndBites* emphasized interactivity, gamification, and interconnectivity. As a new web-based media format with sophisticated game principles, *SndBites* offered great potential. While the *SOUND* series was still based on a linear storyline, in *SndBites* four main characters narrated the storyline from different perspectives. Youth could follow the storyline from the perspective of their character of choice by a simple mouse click, and switch at any time to the perspective of another main character. In this way they could (almost simultaneously) engage themselves in different perspectives of the narrative. *SndBites* also included game elements (e.g., discover the hidden codes in the storyline and win a prize).

MARK MY WORDS

While we were working on the *SndBites* series, we started the Mark My Words research project. The aim of Mark My Words was to design a new research method to analyze interpersonal conversations on social media (Bouman, Drossaert, & Pieterse, 2012). We used the Mark My Words methodology to create ‘markers’ in the storyline of *SndBites*. Markers are “distinctive and identifiable message elements.” When these markers are powerful (in order to be remembered by the audiences), they can be a potential trigger for conversations (Singhal & Rogers, 2002). We designed multiple markers and proactively incorporated these markers in the script of the *SndBites* series. Designing specific markers around health issues (safe sex, hearing loss prevention, moderate alcohol use) is a challenging process. The markers have to be unique to the series and attractive enough to serve as a potential conversation topic. They also have to be attuned to the target group, and last but not least, they need to fit organically into the storyline. Based on these four criteria, we created several *SndBites* markers: ‘Double Dutch’ (meaning ‘protected sex by using both birth control pill and a condom’); ‘Crispy Hot’ (meaning ‘sexually aroused’); ‘Go Out, Plug In’ (meaning ‘enjoy clubbing and use ear plugs’); ‘Nocktails’ (meaning ‘non-alcoholic cocktails’); and ‘Happy Drinks’ (meaning ‘a drink without alcohol’). Apart from these specific health-related markers, the series name (*SndBites*) and the character names in the series (DJ Kozmoz, Eltjo, Sjarda, Mariset, and Tiejo) were used as markers. The fact that these markers needed to be integrated into the storyline puts pressure on the scriptwriting process. Additionally, the actors/actresses had to voice the markers fluently in their dialogues. For this reason, I informed the actors and the film crew about the Mark My Words research project and the

importance of the markers. This facilitated the process; for example, in one scene, the actors enjoyed the marker *crispy hot* and succeeded in making it an organic part of the scene.

The goal of markers is two-fold: through uptake of practice, markers directly contribute to attaining an intervention's goals, but they also provide EE researchers with a tool to follow the uptake in online conversations which—because of the uniqueness of the word—are directly attributable to the intervention. In the digital age, these markers can easily be retrieved and/or isolated, to follow their diffusion and to analyze the course of the conversations around them. Markers can include digital stickers, animations, or augmented reality via Facebook Filters, Frames, or Snapchat Effects, appealing to the playfulness of the target audiences (Lutkenhaus, Jansz, & Bouman, 2020).

UP2U

SndBites provided part of the motivation to develop our next interactive EE project in 2012, called *UP2U*. This project aimed to address the issue of sexual boundaries and sexual harassment, specifically targeting youth aged 15-19 (Fig. 5.5).

The outline of the drama was based on input of the target group and pre-tested before production. Through focus group research we selected three situations in which sexual boundaries were most likely overstepped. The first situation was sexting, especially in private online conversations where young people feel relatively safe. The second situation was the combination of alcohol use and sex. And the last situation was 'gold digging': grooming someone with attention and gifts, in order to establish a sexual 'quid pro quo.' The question in all situations was: how far will you go? While watching the drama, youth could influence the story by making choices for the different characters. The 'backside' of every story contains a decision tree with different paths in which the story may continue. For example: does she show her breasts? Yes or no? The story continues in a different direction, depending on the viewers' choice. Through experiencing different results of their choices and the consequences of various behaviors, youth can develop skills to assert themselves. They can become empowered to show others where their boundaries lie and become more sensitized to identify the boundaries of others. *UP2U* is integrated in a national sexual education platform that is used by most schools in the Netherlands. The interactive drama lines are part of specific lessons on



Fig. 5.5 The cast of *UP2U*. (Source CMH: Casper Cameraat)

sexual boundaries and are accompanied by assignments, group discussion, and teacher information.

Parallel to changes in the media landscape, storytelling formats and narrative approaches gradually shifted over the years from linear stories on television, such as in *Villa Borghese*, *Medisch Centrum West*, to web-based, non-linear, and interactive stories, as in *SOUND*, *Sndbites*, and *UP2U*. I experienced a steep learning curve, and there is always more to learn.

I remember how someone from the audience, during one of my presentations on EE and digital storytelling, asked me what I thought would be an ideal level of interactivity. He remarked, “Although the technical design in *SndBites* and *UP2U* allowed a certain level of interactivity, the stories were still designed by a single source from a more or less sender’s perspective, weren’t they?” I needed some time to answer and was pleasantly puzzled by his question. Then I realized that he was right. Although the storylines were based on extensive formative research and pre-tested among the intended audience, the interactivity was indeed more of a technological nature than of a social nature. Youngsters could switch the narrative perspectives in *SndBites* and could choose in *UP2U* how the stories

evolved based on a decision tree, but they could not create new plots or add alternative stories. His question was an eye-opener, and made me want to explore even bolder ways of introducing EE narratives in the new media landscape.

Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon *Transmedia Series*

In 2019, we had a chance to experience and research how transmedia storytelling works in practice, in the Indian series *Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon* (MKBKSH) ('I, a woman, can achieve everything'). CMH⁶ was invited to become a collaborative research partner in the third season of *MKBKSH*. The series addresses sociocultural norms around family planning, gender equality, and sanitation. The social media team of Population Foundation India (PFI) set up story circles around these key issues, following a four-step cycle: *Inspire*, *Enable*, *Activate*, and *Aggregate*⁷ (Lutkenhaus et al., 2020). Seeking to promote gender equality early, the TV series depicted the practice of families celebrating the birthdays of their daughters (*Inspire*). Online, this practice was coined as celebrating *Laadli Din*—literally meaning 'girls day'—which is a marker for a practice that can easily be adopted (*Enable*). On the show's Facebook page, audiences were asked to share pictures of their loved ones (*Activate*), that were in turn combined into Facebook posts amplifying the support for this practice among the community (*Aggregate*). This led to a series of posts and comments with audiences showing how they have adopted *Laadli Din* in their lives, and to conversations about the role of girls and women in the family. The *Laadli Din* example shows that stories can not only challenge existing norms but also provide audiences with a new and uniquely labeled alternative that can easily be adopted (Lutkenhaus et al., 2020).

NEW PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS

What does the new media landscape with many more online, multi-platform developments and less linear formats mean for EE collaboration? In the early examples of *Villa Borghese* and *Medisch Centrum West*, the

⁶CMH (Roel Lutkenhaus and Martine Bouman) was responsible for the social media research and joined Arvind Singhal and Helen Wang in the research team.

⁷<https://www.facebook.com/mainkuchbhikarsaktihood/>

collaboration partners were television professionals and health professionals. In the late nineties when I studied these strategies for EE collaboration in television formats (Bouman, 1999, 2002; Reinermann, Lubjuhn, Bouman, & Singhal, 2014), I concluded that if different professional domains want to collaborate, they have to have a feel for the game and know the *habitus* of each other's fields. Nowadays an EE collaboration requires a collaborative partnership that includes new media professionals, such as social influencers and their managing agencies, interaction designers, content strategists, programmers, and data analysts. All have unique professional and educational backgrounds (e.g., information technology, human-computer interaction, online marketing) (Lutkenhaus et al., 2020). To get a feel for the game in this environment, and to know the *habitus* of each other's fields, thus becomes even more challenging. This has severe consequences for health organizations. EE collaboration is a strange kind of marriage, of a somewhat promiscuous nature even, as it involves getting intimately acquainted with a lot of new and different partners over time. Health organizations have to realize that for successful EE, in every new project they have to engage themselves from scratch with new expertise; and create a new common frame of reference, accounting for different professional backgrounds, role sets, standards, professional norms, values, and ethics. As new technologies are evolving quickly, health organizations need to create a flexible and dynamic organizational structure to profit from the developments and chances for EE in the new media landscape. In this sense, an up-to-date health communicator also needs to be an up-to-date and involved media aficionado. That may prove a bigger challenge that meets the eye.

LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

To effectively apply the entertainment-education strategy, knowledge and skills of both the academic and the applied setting are valuable and essential. The academic world has its own rhythm and working culture. In the media world, new technological developments arrive quickly. In order to keep from being overrun by the dynamic world of the creative media sector, it is important to design experiments that are closely linked to practice. This will allow us to take our results and lessons learned into the future.

Invest in partnerships. The health communication and media field demonstrate differences that in some respects make collaboration challenging. The design and implementation of EE programs demand close

collaboration between different partners. The making of an EE program is the result of a negotiated agreement in which all partners have to give and take, and have to be willing to cross boundaries in order to create win-win options. It is important to start the collaboration by first creating a joint frame of reference and organizing a workshop or ‘briefing retreat.’

Create a good balance between entertainment and education. The balance between entertainment and education is one of the most delicate and vulnerable aspects of the EE strategy. There are no cut and dried answers about the right balance. It is good to pre-test among intended audiences the framing and the educational value of the information given. It is generally agreed that too blatant a selling of the educational message kills the entertainment.

Adapt to new media to meet audiences where they are. New developments in media technology create opportunities for designing innovative entertainment media formats to meet audiences where they are. To tap the potential of the new media landscape for EE programs, an innovative and experimental mindset is key. However, the use of new technological devices, although interesting, also needs some reflections. Daan Roosegaarde (a Dutch designer) uses the term *MAYA* in his work, meaning *Most Advanced Yet Acceptable*. I like this expression. It is good to invent new things and experiment with out of the box EE concepts, but always within the reach of acceptability and adoptability. New media technologies can be of great help but only if they are accepted by and useful for the target audiences.

Acknowledgements I would like to thank the team at CMH (especially Hester Hollemans, Merlin Jurg, Sarah Lubjuhn, and Roel Lutkenhaus) for their collaboration on EE projects. Also thanks to AVRO/TROS broadcasting for collaboration and photos of *Villa Borghese* and *MCW* and to Casper Cammeraat for photos of *SOUND*, *SndBites*, and *UP2U*.

REFERENCES

- Bouman, M. (1999). *The turtle and the peacock: Collaboration for prosocial change: The entertainment-education strategy on television*. Netherlands: Landbouwniversiteit Wageningen.
- Bouman, M. (2002). Turtles and peacocks: Collaboration in entertainment-education television. *Communication Theory*, 12(2), 225–244.

- Bouman, M. P. A. (2016). *Amusing Ourselves to Health and Happiness*” Inaugural Lecture, Entertainment Media and Social Change aan het Erasmus Research Centre for Media, Communication and Culture (ERMeCC) van de Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam (EUR).
- Bouman, M., Drossaert, C. H. C., & Pieterse, M. E. (2012). Mark my words: The design of an innovative methodology to detect and analyze interpersonal health conversations in web and social media. *Journal of Technology in Human Services*, 30(3-4), 312–326.
- Bouman, M., Hollemans, H. (2012). Sndbites. Formatief Onderzoek. Centrum Media & Gezondheid.
- Bouman, M. P. A., & Jurg, M. E. (2006). *Sound Effects, een pilotvoorlichtingscampagne ter preventie van gehoorschade bij jongeren*. Grant proposal ZonMW project nr. 24500001.
- Bouman, M. P. A., Maas, L., & Kok, G. J. (1998). Health education in television entertainment: A Dutch drama serial. *Health Education Research*, 13(4), 503–518.
- Bouman, M. P. A., & Wieberdink, E. A. M. (1993). Villa Borghese: A soapseries on heart health. *Canadian Journal of Cardiology*, 9, 145D–146D.
- Bourdieu, P. (1993). *The field of cultural production: Essays on art and literature*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York: New York University Press.
- Karpf, A. (1988). *Doctoring the media*. Routledge.
- Louis, M. R. (1980). Surprise and sense making: What newcomers experience in entering unfamiliar organizational settings. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 25, 226–251.
- Lutkenhaus, R. O., Jansz, J., & Bouman, M. P. A. (2019). Toward spreadable entertainment-education: Leveraging social influence in online networks. *Health Promotion International*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/daz104>
- Lutkenhaus, R. O., Jansz, J., & Bouman, M. P. A. (2020). Extending entertainment-education to the internet: Setting up story circles to stimulate conversations about social and behavioral change. [*Doctoral dissertation*]
- Mackenbach, J. P. (1994). *Ongezonde verschillen; over stratificatie en gezondheid in Nederland*. Assen: Van Gorcum.
- Nariman, N. (1993). *Soap operas for social change: Toward a methodology for entertainment-education television*. Westport: Praeger Publishers.
- Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 19, 123–205.
- Reinermann, J. L., Lubjuhn, S., Bouman, M., & Singhal, A. (2014). Entertainment-education: storytelling for the greater, greener good. *International Journal of Sustainable Development*, 17(2), 176–191.

- ResCon. (1992). *Dramaserie Villa Borghese; resultaten van een effectmeting*. Den Haag: Nederladnse Hartstichting.
- Rijs, K., Meeuse, J., Jurg, J., & Bouman, M. (2007). *Deelrapport 1: formatief onderzoek uitgaanspubliek: Meningen van jongeren over uitgaan en harde muziek: Rapport van 94 chat-interviews onder uitgaande Nederlandse jongeren in de leeftijd van 16 tot 30 jaar*. Boston: Center for Media & Health.
- Singhal, A., & Rogers, E. M. (2002). A theoretical agenda for entertainment-education. *Communication Theory*, 12(2), 117–135.
- Slater, M. D., & Rouner, D. (2002). Entertainment-education and elaboration likelihood: Understanding the processing of narrative persuasion. *Communication Theory*, 12(2), 173–191.
- Turov, J. (1989). *Playing doctor: Television, storytelling, and medical power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wang, H., & Singhal, A. (2018). Audience-centered discourses in communication and social change: The “Voicebook” of Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon, an entertainment-education initiative in India. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 13(2), 176–191.
- Wang, H., & Singhal, A. (2016). East Los High: Transmedia edutainment to promote the sexual and reproductive health of young Latina/o Americans. *American Journal of Public Health*, 106(6), 1002–1010.
- Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if you modified the licensed material. You do not have permission under this licence to share adapted material derived from this chapter or parts of it.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.



PART II

From Theory to Practice



Transportation into Narrative Worlds

Melanie C. Green

From centuries-old fables to modern television series, entertainment-education often involves telling stories. And stories work best when audiences are immersed in them: readers or viewers leave the real world behind and step into the world created by the authors. When people are transported to these narrative worlds and their interest is captivated, they may experience strong emotions and have vivid mental images. They may not notice their immediate surroundings or the passage of time. This feeling of being “lost in a story” is the core of narrative transportation theory.

Narrative transportation has been defined as a combination of attention, imagery, and feelings, in which an individual becomes immersed in a narrative world (Green & Brock, 2000; Green & Brock, 2002). Individuals who are more transported are more likely to adopt beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that are implied by the story (e.g., Murphy et al., 2013). Even though stories typically show specific people and events, audiences tend to generalize the lessons from the stories and apply them to real-life situations. These effects have been demonstrated across a variety of different topics and issues, including health, consumer products, and social issues. A recent meta-analysis has summarized these effects (Van Laer, de Ruyter,

M. C. Green (✉)

University at Buffalo, The State University of New York, Buffalo, NY, USA
e-mail: mcgreen2@buffalo.edu

© The Author(s) 2021

L. B. Frank, P. Falzone (eds.), *Entertainment-Education Behind the Scenes*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-63614-2_6

Visconti, & Wetzels, 2014; see also Braddock & Dillard, 2016 for a meta-analysis of narrative effects more broadly).

Transportation can also occur across different media. Individuals can be transported into books, movies, spoken stories, or even virtual reality. Research thus far does not indicate a consistent advantage for any particular medium (Braddock & Dillard, 2016; De Graaf, Hoeken, Sanders, & Beentjes, 2012). These results may imply that the content of the story itself is the most important element, so entertainment-education professionals can choose the medium that is most appropriate or practical for their audience or that they believe will convey their story in the most effective way. For example, production costs are often much lower for print narratives than video narratives, and some forms of media are easier to distribute than others, especially if audience members may not have particular devices (e.g., they do not have computers or televisions). However, it is also possible that even if the outcomes across media are similar, the psychological processes evoked by different media may be somewhat different. Walter, Murphy, Frank, and Baezconde-Garbanati (2017) found that a video version of a narrative created higher levels of cognitive and emotional involvement than a print version, but also led to higher reactance. Individual differences among audience members may also make one format more or less effective than another. For instance, people who enjoy exerting cognitive effort (those who are high in need for cognition) may be more transported into texts versus films, whereas those who prefer to put in less effort may be more transported into video narratives (Green et al., 2008).

Similarly, transportation can happen whether a story is about actual events (such as a documentary) or whether it is the creation of an author's imagination. Transportation and persuasion can occur in both factual and fictional narratives. For fictional narratives, psychological plausibility appears to be important—even if the characters do not actually exist, audiences should believe that they could exist or that these situations could occur. Fictional narratives do not have to be strictly realistic, however; a story could take place in outer space or a fantasy world, as long as the events develop in a way that is consistent with the rules established within that narrative world and the characters act the way real people would act. For example, fantasy stories such as *Harry Potter* have shown promise in reducing prejudice (Vezzali, Stathi, Giovannini, Capozza, & Trifiletti, 2015).

Furthermore, although longer stories may provide more opportunity for audiences to become deeply transported, research suggests that even relatively brief and simple narratives, such as one-page advertisements or short stories, can be transporting (e.g., Escalas, 2004; Mazzocco, Green, Sasota, & Jones, 2010). These shorter stories may benefit from drawing on more universal themes or well-known story structures (e.g., success at overcoming an obstacle; the power of love). In practice, the length of an entertainment-education intervention may be determined in part by the context in which the intervention will be delivered. For example, our team developed a heart attack awareness intervention game that was originally intended to be delivered in waiting rooms at doctors' offices; this constraint meant that it needed to be quite short to ensure that individuals could complete it. When we changed our delivery platform to the Internet, we were able to expand the length of the game. Similarly, in online research studies, our participants do not generally want to read lengthy narratives; however, there are many examples of successful web, television, and radio series that capture audience attention for hours or even across years.

Narrative transportation shares some similarities with other types of immersive experiences. For example, identification and transportation are both mechanisms through which a narrative can change reader's attitudes and beliefs. However, identification occurs when readers are able to experience the narrative through the perspective of a story character (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009; Cohen, 2001), whereas transportation is a more general immersion in the story world. Identification can be conceptualized as the reader adopting the goals and motivations of the character. Identification and transportation are often, but not always, highly correlated. Indeed, a challenge for entertainment-education is that in narratives with multiple characters, some audience members may identify with characters that are "bad" role models or who engage in negative behaviors.

HOW DOES TRANSPORTATION LEAD TO CHANGE?

There are several ways that transportation may lead to attitude and behavior change. These mechanisms include reduced counterarguing, connections with characters, increases in perceived realism, mental imagery of story events, and emotional engagement.

Reduced Counterarguing

One barrier to attitude or behavior change is that individuals may resist or argue against a message. Because they may seem less threatening or more accessible than traditional educational messages, stories or entertainment-education can help overcome this resistance. Transporting stories seem to create a more open, accepting mindset for individuals.

In some cases, transported individuals may not be aware that a narrative is persuasive. Due to the entertaining nature of some narratives, readers do not expect to be influenced and thus spend less time actively considering the embedded message of the story. Attitudes and behaviors depicted in the narrative may thus be accepted by the reader without much attention. Furthermore, transportation may reduce the motivation to counterargue or argue against the message or implications of a story. When readers are transported in an entertaining narrative, they may not want to interrupt their enjoyment to argue with the story (i.e., the story's events, claims, or overall message). Counterarguing can therefore be reduced even in cases where the persuasive intent is more obvious (e.g., the story of a cancer survivor urging others to quit smoking).

However, depending on the type of story, sometimes counterarguing can be a sign of engagement: individuals may argue against the claims or actions of villains or negative role models, thus supporting the main message or moral of the narrative.

Connections with Characters

Individuals may see themselves in story characters, may come to see story characters as friends, or may admire the characters. Through these types of connections, audience members may also change their attitudes and beliefs in accordance with those of a narrative character, or story protagonist. Audience members see and relate to the experiences of the characters, and those experiences may influence how the audience thinks or acts.

Identification with, and liking of, story characters has been shown to increase the adoption of beliefs advocated by the character (De Graaf et al., 2012). Readers may even alter their self-concept to become more similar to characters they liked or identified with, at least temporarily. Although transportation is distinct from identification, transportation is often correlated with identification and liking for protagonists. Additionally, even negative characters (villains) may also lead to attitude change by

inspiring readers or viewers to reject the views or actions of such characters. For example, in our initial development of a story to increase children's physical activity through active video games (Lu, Green, & Thompson, 2019), most participants said they would be inspired to be active by running, jumping, and playing like the story's heroes (twins with superpowers), but a small number said they would be motivated for physical activity by the villain—to be able to defeat him!

One related way in which a narrative might prompt self-examination and change is by reminding readers of experiences in their own lives that relate to those in the narrative. Strange and Leung (1999) highlighted the role of “reminders”—links between story content and the reader's past personal or media-based experiences—in narrative impact. Individuals who were more immersed in a story showed greater generalization of the beliefs implied by the story, but additionally, whether or not the story brought to mind events from the readers' real lives seemed to be important in determining narrative impact.

Mental Imagery

The transportation-imagery model (Green & Brock, 2002) highlights the role of visual imagery in transportation-based belief change. The experience of being transported into a story links the vivid images with beliefs implied by the story (e.g., the image of a person with a smoking-related illness may be linked with beliefs about the importance of quitting smoking). This connection between images and beliefs may be one basis for the power of narrative persuasion. Additionally, over time, the memory or use of the image may remind people of the story as a whole, thus reinforcing the story-related beliefs. Thus, narratives that inspire the formation of rich mental images can increase the persuasive power of a story. This imagery can be created by descriptions in a text or presented visually. For example, in one of our studies using manga comics to encourage more fruit consumption, the illustrations showed the main character appearing noticeably stronger and more energetic after eating fruit (Leung, Green, Tate, Cai, & Ammerman, 2017).

Emotional Engagement

The core of many stories is the feelings they inspire: stories can make us cheer, laugh, or cry. Narratives are particularly powerful when they evoke

strong emotions. Current research is exploring not only the actual emotions evoked by a narrative, but also the pattern of emotional experience that may occur as readers progress through a story (emotional flow; Nabi and Green, 2015). A change from one emotional tone to another across the course of a story can help maintain interest for audiences, particularly for longer narratives. For example, stories can create and then resolve suspense about the outcomes. However, recent research suggests that emotional shifts may be less effective in some kinds of shorter narratives, perhaps particularly when the emotions are expressed by the character or narrator rather than implied by the events in the story (Ophir, Sangalang, & Cappella, 2021).

Story Structure/Causality

Research by Dahlstrom (2012) suggests that events that are part of the cause-and-effect structure of the story are better recalled and more persuasive, even over time, than less-central story elements. Thus, it may be most effective to have the intended persuasive or educational message as part of the main plot of a story, rather than as a digression or something merely mentioned by the characters.

However, one possible consideration is that stories that appear too manipulative may inspire reactance; audiences may feel as though they are being pushed too hard to accept a particular position, and therefore they may reject the message. In some cases, then, a subtler approach such as including the persuasive message as a less central part of the story may have benefits. Indeed, early theorizing promoted narratives as a way to disguise or minimize persuasive intent. However, although stories can reduce resistance to persuasion in this way, there are many examples of entertainment-education that are effective even though the persuasive intent is obvious, particularly if the message is one that the audiences would generally support (e.g., disease prevention).

HOW IS TRANSPORTATION MEASURED AND MANIPULATED?

In research contexts, transportation is typically measured with a self-report scale. After reading a story, individuals are given a set of statements such as, “The narrative affected me emotionally.” The scale includes items about emotional involvement in the story, cognitive attention to the story, feelings of suspense, lack of awareness of surroundings, and mental

imagery. The original scale included 15 items, including 11 general transportation items and 4 imagery items all relating to a specific narrative, measured on a seven-point scale ranging from “not at all” to “very much.”

The 15-item transportation scale was refined to a short form scale with six items (Appel, Gnambs, Richter, & Green, 2015). The short form may be especially useful for field settings or other contexts where questionnaire brevity is important. The six-item Transportation Scale–Short Form (TS–SF) is as sensitive as the long form and is available in English and German.

A closely related measure is Busselle and Bilandzic’s (2009) narrative engagement scale, which measures four dimensions of engagement in narratives: narrative understanding, attentional focus, emotional engagement, and narrative presence. This scale tends to be highly correlated with measures of transportation, but it is useful in cases where researchers want to focus on specific dimensions of the narrative experience.

Entertainment-education practitioners may not usually have the opportunity to manipulate transportation, but studies suggest that transportation can also be manipulated through pre-narrative instructions (e.g., to relax and enjoy the narrative) or information (e.g., a positive vs. a negative review of the story). One implication is that creating positive expectations for the story may be helpful. However, narrative quality seems to be the strongest determinant of transportation (see Tukachinsky, 2014, for a review).

WHAT DETERMINES WHETHER INDIVIDUALS WILL BE TRANSPORTED?

Features of the Story

Some stories are better than others. In general, a high-quality story will be more transporting than a low-quality story. Kreuter et al. (2007) suggested a list of features that might contribute to high-quality narratives. One feature is the coherence of the story, where a story provides clear and sensible links between story events, character actions, and other elements of the narrative. Others included character development, the emotional intensity or range of the story, suspense or dramatic tension, and psychological realism (e.g., the plot and characters should be plausible even if the story takes place within a fantasy world). According to Kreuter et al. (2007), features of high-quality narratives could also include cultural

appropriateness (use of conventions and language familiar to the intended audience) and strong production values (particularly for visual narratives such as movies or television programs).

Busselle and Bilandzic's theory of narrative engagement (a concept very similar to transportation) suggests that immersion or engagement in a narrative arises from the process of mentally simulating or imagining the narrative events (see also Mar and Oatley, 2008). If the flow of this simulation is interrupted by an error or a lack of realism in the text, then the feeling of immersion is lost (and indeed, individuals may become skeptical of the story's claims). The implication for message design is that stories should avoid elements that would be inconsistent with users' knowledge of either the real world or the established rules of a fictional or narrative world.

Match Between the Audience and the Story

The more familiar a reader is with the material in a narrative, the easier it is for him or her to be transported in it. For example, in one study, readers who were members of fraternities or sororities (social clubs at universities in the United States) were more transported into a story that was set at a fraternity (Green, 2004). There is also some evidence that greater feelings of mental fluency or ease of processing may lead to greater transportation (Vaughn, Childs, Maschinski, Nino, and Ellsworth, 2010). For example, individuals who read a story set in winter during the winter were more transported into it than people who read the same story in the springtime. The idea is that concepts related to winter were more accessible in people's minds in the wintertime, thus making the story easier to imagine. Therefore, creating points of similarity between the audience and the story can be helpful in creating transportation.

Reader preferences can also affect responses. Individuals often have preferences for different genres and types of stories: some individuals may love romance stories whereas others prefer science fiction. People are more likely to enjoy and become transported into their preferred genres.

Features of the Audience

Some individuals are more likely to become immersed in stories than others, an individual difference that has been called transportability. Highly transportable individuals can become easily immersed in stories, even brief

ones. Additionally, an individual difference called need for affect (how much people want to experience strong emotions) may also affect story immersion. People who are high in need for affect tend to enjoy and seek out emotion-evoking experiences. They enjoy feeling extremes of happiness, sadness, and other emotions. Because stories tend to show emotion-inducing events, such people are also more likely to become transported into (and persuaded by) stories.

Need for cognition is an individual difference in how much people enjoy exerting cognitive effort (Cacioppo, Petty, and Kao, 1984). In other words, people who are high in need for cognition like to think about things, even issues that do not directly affect them. For instance, they might like solving puzzles or debating social issues. People high in need for cognition are more likely to enjoy media that requires more mental effort (e.g., reading a book compared to watching a television show). Such individuals also may be more likely to enjoy interactive narratives, which allow (or require) the reader to make choices to determine which way the story will go (Green & Jenkins, 2014). Interactive narratives require a higher degree of thinking or engagement.

Thus, although stories and games can be a very effective method of communication, even the best stories may not work for everyone.

ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF USING STORIES

Stories can be a powerful and beneficial tool for change. However, like any form of persuasion, stories can promote negative messages as well as positive ones. Creators should be careful about the unintended messages their stories might send. For example, people are very sensitive to descriptive norms—what they believe other people are doing. Therefore, in their efforts to discourage particular behaviors, entertainment-education programs should not make it appear as if most people are engaging in those undesired behaviors (e.g., “everyone” is having unsafe sex and texting while driving).

Additionally, particularly in health contexts, care should be taken so that individuals are not unduly influenced by a story that may not be as relevant to their own situation. In our work, for example, individuals making a hypothetical treatment decision were influenced not only by relevant story content (the match of the patient’s risk factors with a story they read) but also by irrelevant details (whether the person in the story had similar hobbies to the target patient; Simons & Green, 2013). More

broadly, audience members may have difficulty separating out which parts of the story should be generalized and which should not, or may be distracted by elements of the story which are not relevant to the intended message.

Finally, there may be some contexts where stories are less appropriate; individuals may need or prefer straightforward information rather than an entertainment-education approach. In some cases, a story may be viewed as less credible or may not be able to present all of the necessary facts.

LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

Every theory has boundary conditions. Interventions have the best chance of succeeding when they are guided by theory. Theory can help provide an understanding of the psychological processes that audience members experience. It can help message designers focus on important elements of their messages. However, every theory has boundary conditions—circumstances in which they may not work. So, some theories may be more useful than others for particular topics or situations. For example, our informal observations have been that transportation does not seem to be the main influence on persuasion for stories where the persuasive message is conveyed simply by the statements of the characters, rather than implied by the story events. Transportation works better when stories “show, not tell.”

Similarly, although stories can be very powerful, there are some cases where simple informational messages may be preferred. Stories may be misunderstood by the audience, or the main educational point may be overlooked due to audience focus on other aspects of the story.

Many paths to transportation. There are a variety of features that can make stories transporting. A story might have an exciting, suspenseful plot. It might provide deep insights into characters. Or it might have beautiful animation or impressive special effects. Stories do not necessarily have to have each of these elements—stories can be transporting in different ways. For example, the show *South Park* was very popular despite not having a sophisticated animation style. There are different pathways to reach the same goal of immersing the audience.

Similarly, there are multiple paths to allow audiences to connect with characters. In one game intervention that our team developed, we created a variety of characters to match our target audience on race and gender (e.g., one character was a white woman, one was a Hispanic man, and one

was an African-American man). Of course, representation is important, especially when one is trying to reach an under-represented target audience. However, it turned out that one character was the clear favorite among the majority of our players: an older, African-American character named Big Joe. Big Joe ran a pizza shop, and his dialogue showed that he had a strong sense of responsibility and deeply cared for his customers. The voice actor who played the role also did a fantastic job of conveying a sense of kindness and warmth. Many of our players noted that Big Joe reminded them of their fathers or grandfathers. The similarity in values and priorities outweighed the similarities or differences in demographic variables such as age, gender, or race.

Narrative quality. Because the quality of the story is a major influence on transportation, it is often helpful for researchers or health professionals to work with professional writers, animators, or other types of content creators. In our experience, these partnerships work best when the creative side of the team has at least some knowledge about behavioral science principles, and even more importantly, when the creative side is open to feedback and revision from the research side of the team. Writers or other professionals who hold too firmly to their artistic vision at the expense of communicating the educational message are not ideal collaborators; similarly, the more research or health side of the team should also be open to learning from the experience of the experts on the creative side. For example, sometimes researchers may need to adapt or modify their theories to create an intervention that is plausible or resonates with a particular audience, and the creative team may have valuable insights about what will or will not work for creating audience engagement. Clear discussions at the start of the project about expectations for both sides may help avoid problems later. Additionally, keeping in mind the primary purpose of the project may help guide decision-making: if the main goal is theory-testing, the research side of the team should make the final decisions, whereas if the goal is to maintain television ratings or other more entertainment-focused outcomes, the creative team may take priority. If the goal is to create as much attitude or behavior change as possible, there may be more flexibility about trying new creative directions while keeping in mind principles from communication research. A strong partnership can help create the appropriate balance of entertainment and education.

Amount of exposure. It is certainly possible for a single story, even a short one, to change individuals' attitudes and behaviors. This type of change may be especially likely if the story gives the audience new

information, as opposed to trying to change an existing attitude. However, it is a challenge for one single story to have a large impact on people, especially given the crowded media environment that many people experience today. Therefore, stories that allow for repeated exposure in some way (e.g., multiple episodes of a series; story-based commercials shown more than once; posters that remind people of key episodes or messages from a narrative) may be helpful for longer-term impact.

Importance of pretesting or formative research. Not all stories will work for all audiences. Therefore, it is important to do some preliminary testing of potential entertainment-education storylines or drafts with members of the intended audience or target population. (This may be especially necessary if members of the research or creative team do not come from that population, such as adults writing for children.) This pretesting might involve focus groups or a pilot test with a smaller group of participants. For example, in a recent project examining whether narratives could increase the use of active video games among children, our team tested four potential stories. Just for fun, the members of the team each guessed which story would be the favorite among the children—and we were mostly wrong! Similarly, in the first draft of a narrative game aimed at older adults to promote awareness of heart attack symptoms, we had created a fantasy world complete with magic and wizards. Our focus groups did not care for this approach—they felt that it trivialized the serious issue of heart attacks—and the final version of the game used more realistic, everyday stories instead. The feedback from the target audience at an early stage of the project was essential in shaping the final product and increasing chances of success.

Coherence of story. Although there are many ways to help increase transportation into a story, breaks in the coherence of the story seem to be a primary way of reducing transportation. When a story stops making sense in some way, the audience becomes annoyed or confused. If a character acts in a way that is very different from the way readers expect or if a story takes a completely implausible turn, it is hard for readers to stay immersed in the story. Making sure the plot is coherent is an important way of supporting transportation.

Keep the message central to the plot. As noted above, events that are central to the cause-and-effect structure of the plot are better remembered by audiences. Therefore, the key educational messages may be best delivered by being part of events in the core plot of the story. The story should show the behaviors, consequences, and/or the recommended courses of

action, rather than relegating them to a less central role in the story. However, creators should be careful to do this in a way that does not evoke reactance from the audience.

REFERENCES

- Appel, M., Gnambs, T., Richter, T., & Green, M. C. (2015). The transportation scale—short form (TS—SF). *Media Psychology, 18*(2), 243–266.
- Braddock, K., & Dillard, J. P. (2016). Meta-analytic evidence for the persuasive effect of narratives on beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors. *Communication Monographs, 83*(4), 446–467. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2015.1128555>
- Busselle, R., & Bilandzic, H. (2009). Measuring narrative engagement. *Media Psychology, 12*(4), 321–347.
- Cacioppo, J. T., Petty, R. E., & Feng Kao, C. (1984). The efficient assessment of need for cognition. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 48*(3), 306–307.
- Cohen, J. (2001). Defining identification: A theoretical look at the identification of audiences with media characters. *Mass communication & society, 4*(3), 245–264.
- Dahlstrom, M. F. (2012). The persuasive influence of narrative causality: Psychological mechanism, strength in overcoming resistance, and persistence over time. *Media Psychology, 15*(3), 303–326. <https://doi.org/10.1080/015213269.2012.702604>
- De Graaf, A., Hoeken, H., Sanders, J., & Beentjes, J. W. (2012). Identification as a mechanism of narrative persuasion. *Communication Research, 39*(6), 802–823. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650211408594>
- Escalas, J. E. (2004). Imagine yourself in the product: Mental simulation, narrative transportation, and persuasion. *Journal of Advertising, 33*(2), 37–48.
- Green, M. C. (2004). Transportation into narrative worlds: The role of prior knowledge and perceived realism. *Discourse Processes, 38*(2), 247–266.
- Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2000). The role of transportation in the persuasiveness of public narratives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 79*, 701–721.
- Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2002). In the mind's eye: Imagery and transportation into narrative worlds. In M. C. Green, J. J. Strange, & T. C. Brock (Eds.), *Narrative impact: Social and cognitive foundations* (pp. 315–341). Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Green, M. C., & Jenkins, K. M. (2014). Interactive Narratives: Processes and Outcomes in User-Directed Stories. *Journal of Communication, 64*(3), 479–500.
- Green, M. C., Kass, S., Carrey, J., Feeney, R., Herzig, B., & Sabini, J. (2008). Transportation across media: Print versus film comparisons. *Media Psychology, 11*(4), 512–539.

- Kreuter, M. W., Green, M. C., Cappella, J. N., Slater, M. D., Wise, M. E., Storey, D., et al. (2007). Narrative communication in cancer prevention and control: A framework to guide research and application. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 33(3), 221–235.
- Leung, M. M., Green, M. C., Tate, D. F., Cai, J., & Ammerman, A. (2017). Fight for Your Right to Fruit©: Psychosocial outcomes of a manga comic promoting fruit consumption in middle-school youth. *Health Communication*, 32(5), 533–540.
- Lu, A. S., Green, M. C., & Thompson, D. (2019). How to increase children's physical activity through narrative game design: An exploratory thematic analysis. *Journal of Medical Internet Research: Serious Games*, 7(4), e16031. <https://doi.org/10.2196/16031>
- Mar, R. A., & Oatley, K. (2008). The function of fiction is the abstraction and simulation of social experience. *Perspectives on psychological science*, 3(3), 173–192.
- Mazzocco, P. M., Green, M. C., Sasota, J. A., & Jones, N. W. (2010). This story is not for everyone: Transportability and narrative persuasion. *Social Psychology and Personality Science*, 1(4), 361–368.
- Murphy, S. T., Frank, L. B., Chatterjee, J. S., & Baezconde-Garbanati, L. (2013). Narrative versus nonnarrative: The role of identification, transportation, and emotion in reducing health disparities. *Journal of Communication*, 63(1), 116–137.
- Nabi, R. L., & Green, M. C. (2015). The role of a narrative's emotional flow in promoting persuasive outcomes. *Media Psychology*, 18(2), 137–162.
- Ophir, Y., Sangalang, A., & Cappella, J. N. (2021). The emotional flow hypothesis in entertainment-education narratives: Theory, empirical evidence, and open questions. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Simons, J. J. P., & Green, M. C. (2013). Distracted by details: Narrative influence following conflicting stories. *Media Psychology*, 16(2), 221–243.
- Strange, J. J., & Leung, C. C. (1999). How anecdotal accounts in news and in fiction can influence judgments of a social problem's urgency, causes, and cures. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 25(4), 436–449.
- Tukachinsky, R. (2014). Experimental manipulation of psychological involvement with media. *Communication Methods and Measures*, 8(1), 1–33.
- Van Laer, T., de Ruyter, K., Visconti, L. M., & Wetzels, M. (2014). The extended transportation-imagery model: A meta-analysis of the antecedents and consequences of consumers' narrative transportation. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40(5), 797–817.
- Vaughn, L. A., Childs, K. E., Maschinski, C., Paul Niño, N., & Ellsworth, R. (2010). Regulatory fit, processing fluency, and narrative persuasion. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 4(12), 1181–1192.

- Vezzali, L., Stathi, S., Giovannini, D., Capozza, D., & Trifiletti, E. (2015). The greatest magic of Harry Potter: Reducing prejudice. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 45*(2), 105–121.
- Walter, N., Murphy, S. T., Frank, L. B., & Baezconde-Garbanati, L. (2017). Each medium tells a different story: the effect of message channel on narrative persuasion. *Communication Research Reports, 34*(2), 161–170.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if you modified the licensed material. You do not have permission under this license to share adapted material derived from this chapter or parts of it.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.





The Emotional Flow Hypothesis in Entertainment-Education Narratives: Theory, Empirical Evidence, and Open Questions

Yotam Ophir, Angeline Sangalang, and Joseph N. Cappella

Pixar's 2009 animation hit *Up* began with a touching collage of scenes portraying different stages in the long-lasting, loving relationship between the shy Carl and the extroverted Ellie. The first ten minutes of the movie are an emotional rollercoaster. We witness their hilarious first encounter as two eight-year-old kids, when Carl is shocked by the energetic Ellie.

Y. Ophir (✉)

University at Buffalo, The State University of New York, Buffalo, NY, USA

e-mail: yotamoph@buffalo.edu

A. Sangalang

University of Dayton, Dayton, OH, USA

e-mail: asangalang1@udayton.edu

J. N. Cappella

Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania,
Philadelphia, PA, USA

e-mail: joseph.cappella@asc.upenn.edu

Seeing the two plotting adventures together is uplifting. Seeing them as young adults kissing at their wedding and growing old in a modest house, saving pennies in the hopes of someday affording their dream vacation at the majestic Paradise Falls is heart-warming. And finally, seeing the old Ellie in her hospital bed, quietly handing her husband their shared adventure book, implying he will continue the journey without her, then seeing Carl alone at church at Ellie's funeral, is nothing less than heart-wrenching and devastating. No viewer, young or adult, will be blamed for shedding tears as Carl walks back to his now-lonely home for the first time. The movie structured the death scene as the culmination and conclusion of a happy, funny, and inspiring journey. Would our empathy for Carl be as strong if we had not witnessed the moments that preceded it? Would we cheer for him with the same solidarity and dedication if the slow and somber piano accompanying him to the funeral were not in such dramatic contrast to the cheerful music at his wedding night? The theory of emotional flow suggests that we would not, and our attempt to test its premises in the area of entertainment-education (EE) is at the heart of the current chapter.

THE PIVOTAL ROLE OF EMOTIONS IN NARRATIVE PERSUASION

Emotions play a central role in decision-making and behavior (Bechara, Damasio, & Damasio, 2000; DeSteno, Gross, & Kubzansky, 2013), and to the extent that persuasion is a kind of decision-making, the inclusion of emotional cues can make a message more persuasive (Nabi, 2002). This is particularly true for narrative messages (Oatley, 2012), where readers and viewers are wrapped into the story's world (Green & Brock, 2000) and form emotional connections with characters (Cohen, 2001). A part of what makes messages in general (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993), and stories (Oatley, 2012), and EE narratives particularly (Wang & Singhal, 2016) effective and persuasive is their ability to create and maintain engagement. Emotions often play a pivotal role in securing and maintaining engagement with plots and characters.

Emotions are temporary states representing affective psychological and physiological (Nummenmaa, Glerean, Hari, & Hietanen, 2014) reactions to an external stimulus (Nabi, 1999; Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1990).

While emotions can be influential in non-narrative messages as well (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993), their role is especially prominent in stories due to the relationships between readers and characters who are involved in emotion-evoking story-events (Dunlop, Wakefield, & Kashima, 2008; Gerrig, 1993; Scheff, 1979). For example, emotional reactions can mediate the effect of narratives on attitudes (Mazzocco, Green, Sasota, & Jones, 2010) and can increase interpersonal discussions following exposure to messages (Dunlop et al., 2008).

Traditionally, studies looking into the effects of emotional cues on persuasion have focused on the effect of single specific (called “discrete”) emotions in message, for example the effect of creating fear (Witte & Allen, 2000). Other studies examined whether messages using multiple emotions are more persuasive than those using only one emotion (Dillard & Nabi, 2006). Importantly, both approaches ignored the possibility that it is not the use of specific emotions that increase persuasiveness, but rather the move between emotions.

Based on that notion, two communication scholars, Robin Nabi (2015) and Melanie Green (Nabi & Green, 2014) have recently suggested that instead of focusing on static emotions, it might be beneficial to explore the effect of emotional flow, “the evolution of emotional experiences over the course of exposure to a health message” (Nabi & Green, 2014, p. 143). Arguably, nowhere is the role of emotions more central to processing and experience of messages than in stories (Oatley, 2002), and indeed, Nabi and Green (2014) hypothesized that emotional shifts presented throughout stories could be particularly important for persuasive narratives. An example of the emotional shift in narratives is the typical story structure of suspense, where a protagonist’s happiness and well-being are under threat due to some event and are restored only at the end of the plot (Archer & Jockers, 2016; Fitzgerald, Paravati, Green, Moore, & Qian, 2019). For example, in an episode of HBO’s *Sex and the City*, a character (Samantha) was asked by a romantic partner to be tested for HIV. She first expresses surprise at the request, then fear and nervousness around taking the HIV test, and finally a relief after learning she does not have HIV (for a discussion of the persuasive effects of this particular narrative, see Moyer-Gusé, Chung, & Jain, 2011).

WHY EMOTIONAL SHIFTS ARE EXPECTED TO INCREASE ENGAGEMENT AND PERSUASION

There are multiple reasons to expect emotional shifts to affect engagement and, consequently, persuasion. One explanation has to do with resistance to persuasion, and particularly rejection of strong negative messages (Moyer-Gusé, 2008). For example, if a story portrays the frightening consequences of smoking through a character who got sick with cancer, readers, especially smokers who are well-invested in the character's situation, may reject the message to avoid coping with its implications for themselves. If, however, the same character is shown recovering from her disease after quitting smoking, the hope resulting from one's ability to fight the detrimental effects of smoking may allow readers to be more open to the scary message preceding it. In this way, the effect of the message according to the emotional flow hypothesis (Nabi & Green, 2014) could arguably be the result of a shift in the emotional state of the audience from fear to relief or hope (Witte, 1992).

The second explanation, which is at the heart of our discussion in this chapter, has to do with the expected effect of emotional shifts and flow on engagement. The persuasiveness of narratives is the result of their ability to involve audiences with characters and plots (for a meta-analysis, see Shen, Sheer, & Li, 2015). Involvement with narratives, often called transportation (Green & Brock, 2000) or narrative engagement (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009), is characterized by an investment of mental and cognitive resources into following plotlines. When one's attention is dedicated to plots and characters, they are less likely to resist and argue with the story's messages and more likely to accept them (Brehm & Brehm, 1981; Slater & Rouner, 2002). During a process known as identification, the reader temporarily adopts the point of view, motivations, and emotions of the character (Cohen, 2001) and as a result are less motivated to question the character's thoughts, actions, and messages (Moyer-Gusé, 2008). For example, a viewer who identifies with a television character who faces a health threat is more likely to feel vulnerable to the disease and to accept the show's messages (Moyer-Gusé et al., 2011).

Maintaining engagement with stories, especially long ones, could be challenging, and one's attention might drift from the story's world back to the real world if the reading experience is interrupted, or when the story is just not well-written or interesting (Tal-Or & Cohen, 2010). Shifts in stories' emotional states could prevent boredom and motivate

readers to keep up with the plot (Nabi & Green, 2014). The need for emotional stimulation could be explained by arousal theory (Berlyne, 1960). Arousal is increased psychological and physiological reaction to stimuli, that could be measured via brain activation, other physiological changes (e.g., heart rate), or self-reports. According to this theory there are optimal levels of arousal for individuals at a given time, and lower than optimal levels of arousal can lead individuals to seek stimulation. In the context of a story, reliance on one emotion throughout a story may not suffice to hold readers' attention and engagement. Of course, having too many emotional shifts in one story could also come at the expense of coherence and may harm immersion. However, the optimal number of shifts has yet to be tested in experimental studies.

Going back to the *Sex and the City* example, the emotional flow hypothesis argues that viewers' interest and engagement with the show is maintained by emotional changes expressed by the characters that are experienced vicariously by the audience (Jose & Brewer, 1984; Nabi & Green, 2014). Viewers who identify with Samantha are expected to share her emotions and wish for her to overcome her obstacles and achieve her goals (Cohen, 2001). Samantha's (and the audience member's) shifts between experiencing fear and hope maintain viewer attention and engagement with the show; people who are more strongly transported into a story's world tend to accept its messages more than those who are less engaged with it (de Graaf, Hoeken, Sanders, & Beentjes, 2012; Green & Brock, 2000; Shen et al., 2015).

DOES EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE SUPPORT THE EMOTIONAL FLOW HYPOTHESIS?

The emotional flow hypothesis makes common sense in that good stories often move between emotional states (Gao, Jockers, Laudun, & Tangherlini, 2016). Yet, for the hypothesis to be used as a practical tool for designing effective EE messages, it should be tested to learn whether evidence supports the argument that emotional shifts in stories can increase audiences' engagement (compared to stability, or no emotional changes). To date, only a few attempts have been made to test the theory. Of these, very few provided preliminary and limited support for emotional flow effects. For example, Fitzgerald et al. (2019) examined the effects of stories of resilience and hope in the face of challenges, a story type they

named “restorative narratives.” They found that exposure to restorative narratives, shifting from negative to positive emotions, yielded higher levels of prosocial behavior than negative-only narratives. Similar results were found in other narrative (Ray, Arpan, Oehme, Perko, & Clark, 2019; Rossiter & Thornton, 2004) and non-narrative (Guido, Pichierri, & Pino, 2018) contexts. A potential explanation might have to do with people’s tendency to identify more easily with others experiencing adversity rather than good fortune (Royzman & Rozin, 2006). When those with whom you identify experience challenges, you wish to follow the plot to learn how they overcame them (Cohen, 2001). However, these studies looked at very specific types of emotional flow and did not examine the manipulation of flow systematically.

At the same time, other studies, including our own set of experiments (Sangalang, Ophir, & Cappella, 2019) failed to provide empirical support for the notion that emotional flow enhances engagement and persuasion. In fact, some studies found short EE stories consisting of only one consistent emotion to be more engaging and persuasive than those consisting of emotional shifts (McAllister, 2020). In the next sections we detail the work our team has conducted in the context of tobacco control and misinformation (Cappella, Maloney, Ophir, & Brennan, 2015) in order to test emotional flow effects in entertainment narratives. We describe the EE story we created, the manipulation and measurement of emotional shift and flow, summarize our findings, and conclude by considering the implications for EE practitioners looking to implement emotional cues into their persuasive stories and messages.

DESIGNING A STUDY OF EMOTIONAL SHIFTS IN A TOBACCO CONTROL CONTEXT

In two experimental studies we conducted, we attempted to examine the full model of effects stated in the emotional flow hypothesis (Nabi & Green, 2014). First, we expected that readers of stories will experience emotions similar to those expressed by the main character. If the character goes through emotional shifts, we expected readers to report going through them too. Second, we expected readers of stories with emotional shifts to report higher levels of engagement with the stories and the main character than those reading a story with no shifts. Finally, as the goal of EE is to enhance persuasion, we tested whether stories with emotional

flow were better at changing readers' beliefs about a health topic. Specifically, we tested whether stories with emotional shifts better educated people about the misleading nature of organic tobacco products (Gratale, Maloney, Sangalang, & Cappella, 2017).

In our first study, a national sample of 385 current smokers, who had smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime (169 females; 332 non-Hispanic whites; 197 college graduates) between the ages of 21 and 65 ($M = 38.8$, $SD = 11.0$), read the story described above before answering questions about their reading experience and their opinions about organic tobacco. For the experiment, we wrote our own text narrative of about 1000 words. A challenge for EE narrators is to mask or at least deemphasize the persuasive intent of the text to increase engagement with the story and characters, and reduce potential resistance from readers, as those who feel pressured to change their beliefs and behaviors may reject the message to maintain their freedom of choice (Brehm & Brehm, 1981; Moyer-Gusé, 2008). We, therefore, decided to wrap our persuasive message about the misleading nature of organic tobacco within a romantic story. To increase engagement and persuasiveness, we made the story more vivid (Ophir, Brennan, Maloney, & Cappella, 2017) by providing rich details about the story's setup and events. For example, we situated the events in a late night in New York City, and specifically at a real bar, Eli's Night Shift on 79th street on the Upper East Side. The additional detail contributed to the realism of the story and made it seem more like a real romantic story and less like a public service announcement.

The story we told was thus not about tobacco but about a young woman (the narrator), who is a former smoker and goes on a first date with a man named Eric. During dinner, the two discuss topics such as local art and their workplaces; eventually Eric invites the narrator to smoke with him outside. The narrator contemplates his offer and decides to reject the invitation, as she quit smoking and wanted to avoid "falling down that rabbit hole again." However, Eric claims that "these are not regular cigarettes. They're not nearly as bad for your lungs." Eric adds more inaccurate claims about organic tobacco cigarettes, claims that were found to be prevalent among smokers and manufacturers of organic tobacco (Gratale et al., 2017; Malson, Lee, Moolchan, & Pickworth, 2002). The narrator hesitates, and here we connected her decision to the date itself to mask the persuasive nature of the story. She decides to smoke with him and trust him on the safer nature of organic tobacco, explaining to herself that "the date was great up to this point and I didn't want to lose the chance just

because of a smoke.” The couple smokes together, gets back into the restaurant, and part ways outside after deciding to go on a second date in the upcoming days.

At this point in the story we manipulated emotional shifts, as different readers were randomly assigned to read a different ending. Participants were randomly assigned to one of seven conditions, six of which included the EE narrative described above. Since the organic cigarettes were presented by Eric as if they offered a hope for smokers who wish to continue their habit while reducing detrimental consequences, the state of hope thus served as the initial emotional state from which emotional shifts stem. The narrator accepts his offer, smokes with him, their dinner continues, and after the two characters part ways, story endings differed based on condition. In the No-Correction condition, the narrator walks home, reading information about artworks they had discussed before. In the Non-emotional Correction condition, she searches out and reads corrective information about the cigarettes online without expressing any emotional response to what she reads. In the other conditions, the narrator reacts emotionally in response to the corrective information by expressing anger over her being deceived into smoking (Hope-to-Anger Ending condition), sadness for people who are misled into smoking (Hope-to-Sadness Ending condition), fear over the power of misinformation to draw people to smoking (Hope-to-Fear Ending condition), and happiness over being able to make the right decision to read more and learn the truth (Hope-to-Happiness Ending condition). Participants in a seventh No Stimulus Control condition completed the questionnaire without being exposed to any story. The expression of emotions was explicit (e.g., “it makes me sad that deceptive information can pull people like me back into smoking”).

Importantly, the characters did not simply express emotional reactions for the sake of including emotional shifts as an experimental manipulation. Instead, the narrator’s reactions were directly tied to the misinformation and its correction, that is, to the central argument made through the story. For example, when the narrator expressed anger, that anger was directed toward the tobacco companies and their misleading messages, not toward Eric, her date, whom she actually liked in all experimental conditions. When the narrator expressed hope, it was directed toward the potential of finding a less harmful substitute for smoking. In that way, we attempted to ensure that emotional appeals did not distract, but rather emphasized, our main message. In addition, the narrative explicitly stated which emotions

the character went through, making it easier for readers to identify emotional shifts in the story.

Engagement is a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon, and in order to capture different aspects of it, we used a battery of preexisting scales often used to assess engagement with EE stories (Murphy, Frank, Moran, & Patnoe-Woodley, 2011), including transportation (Green & Brock, 2000), identification (Cohen, 2001), narrative engagement (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009), perceived realism (Cho, Shen, & Wilson, 2012), and enjoyment. To assess the effects of emotional flow and engagement on persuasion, beliefs about organic cigarettes were measured using items based on real-world misbeliefs about organic tobacco (Gratale, Sangalang, Maloney, & Cappella, 2019). All were measured on a seven-point scale (*strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*).

The main challenge we faced was the need to measure whether or not participants experienced emotional flow in response to emotional shifts in the text. For that purpose, we designed a measurement procedure that could measure whether readers noticed the emotional states and shifts the characters went through, and whether they experienced these emotions themselves. We detail the procedure here for others to adopt it in future studies. First, participants were asked: “As the story moved from beginning to end, I felt...” (1: a lot more hopeful to 5: a lot less hopeful). The same was asked about happiness, anger, fear, surprise, and disgust. This question does not measure emotional shift in just any direction, but rather specific emotional shifts consistent with the story participants read. Next, the participants were asked the same series of questions for each emotion for the narrator (e.g., “As the story moved from beginning to end, the narrator (the main female character) felt”) and for Eric (e.g., “As the story moved from beginning to end, Eric felt...”). Last, and important for our analysis, participants were asked for each emotion (happiness, anger, etc.), “Thinking again about your own experience, how did you feel at the end of the story” with answers ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

WHAT WE FOUND

For brevity, we keep the technical details of our analysis here to a minimum. Interested readers may obtain the full analysis from the authors. First, we learned that readers were able to identify the emotions and shifts the characters went through. For example, participants who read the

angry ending story indicated that the character was angrier at the end of the story than at its beginning. Readers of the angry story were also more likely to indicate the narrator was angry at the end than readers of stories in other conditions. As expected, participants in different conditions did not report different emotional states for Eric's character (congruent with the fact that his character did not change emotions in any of the stories).

Second, we found that readers who strongly identified with the narrator also tended to share her emotional states. For example, participants reading the angry ending version reported feeling higher levels of anger at the end ($M = 3.3$, $SD = 1.2$) than those reading the No-Correction story ($M = 2.3$, $SD = 1.5$), and this difference was statistically significant ($p < .01$). Similar patterns were found for other emotions (e.g., the condition where the narrator expressed sadness at the end yielded more sad responses from readers than the No-Correction story). Those reading stories with no emotional shift expressed higher levels of happiness and hope, consistent with the narrator's emotions in these stories.

Third, as opposed to our theoretical expectations, we found no effect of emotional shifts on reported engagement with the story or the characters. Specifically, there were no differences between conditions on transportation, identification, or narrative engagement. Results were virtually the same when we looked at differences between specific conditions (e.g., sad ending vs angry ending) or when we collapsed conditions and broadly compared stories with and without emotional shifts. In sum, this essential piece of the emotional flow hypothesis was not supported despite reports that showed readers' emotions varied in predictable ways. Variation in emotion was not associated with variation in engagement.

Fourth, we examined story effects on beliefs about organic tobacco. Multiple regression analysis, controlling for different types of engagement as well as demographics, showed that narrative engagement was the strongest predictor of story-consistent beliefs ($\beta = .6$, all reported effects were significant, $p < .01$). However, against expectations, other variables in the model predicted beliefs that were less consistent with the story (i.e., more positive toward organic tobacco), including transportation ($\beta = -.4$), identification ($\beta = -.2$), and enjoyment ($\beta = -.3$). The variables explained 57.3% of the variance in beliefs. These surprising results, and more importantly, the lack of significant relationships between emotional shifts and engagement, led us to design a follow-up study.

In the second study, we tried to understand why emotional shifts did not enhance engagement and why engagement tended to increase

pro-organic tobacco beliefs. For the former, we attempted to bolster the manipulation of emotional shifts. In our first study, the narrator expressed one discrete emotion at the end of the story. In the second study, we created stories that ended either with no emotional shift or with a shift that was expressed by a combination of negative emotions (angry, sad, and fearful reactions). To address the surprising direction of effects on beliefs, we tested whether participants in our first study who strongly identified with the narrator expressed more pro-organic tobacco beliefs due to vicarious cognitive dissonance beliefs (Bandura, 1986; Festinger, 1962). In short, the narrator in our original study accepted Eric's suggestion and smoked with him. Readers who strongly identified with her were perhaps inclined to dismiss the arguments against organic tobacco to justify her behavior or avoid feeling uncomfortable with her misguided behavior. This concern is particularly important in the context of health EE messages, where the behavior depicted is highly relevant and consequential to readers (O'Keefe, 2013). In our case, the plausibility of dissonance is especially high since the readers were smokers themselves.

As opposed to the first study, in the second study participants (national sample of 586 smokers, 347 females; 500 whites, 230 college graduates between the ages of 18 and 65, $M = 46.6$, $SD = 12.2$) were randomly assigned to one of six conditions, all of which were edited variations of the narrative used in the first study. In half of the conditions, the narrator accepted Eric's offer and smoked with him. In the other half she politely refused and waited for him to return from the smoking break. For each of these stories (smoking and not-smoking options) we wrote three versions: one where the health misinformation is not corrected, one where it is corrected without emotional reaction from the narrator, and one where the narrator expresses the combined strong negative emotions. We also modified the belief scale a bit to be more consistent with the exact beliefs expressed in the story by Eric.

The results of the second study were largely similar to those of the first. Once again, we found no significant differences between stories with and without emotional shifts on identification or transportation. In addition, our speculation that the surprising effects of engagement on beliefs was due to the narrator modeling the negative smoking behavior was not supported, as analysis showed no differences on beliefs between participants in the modeling ($M = 3.6$, $SD = .1$) and no-modeling ($M = 3.7$, $SD = .1$) conditions. Modeling did not influence the relationship between emotional shifts and engagement (i.e., there was no interaction between the

two). On average, as was the case in the first study, we found that participants who reported higher levels of transportation also reported more positive beliefs ($\beta = .2$) toward natural tobacco products (i.e., beliefs that were less consistent with the story, though the effect was small and explained only a little of the variance in beliefs about organic tobacco). Last, we found no evidence that emotional shifts affected engagement and then engagement affected beliefs (i.e., no evidence for mediation).

In short, the results of both of our studies failed to support the argument that emotional shifts increase engagement with the plot or characters, and that engagement, in turn, increases story-consistent beliefs. This conclusion was supported by the fact that our participants did notice the emotional changes the character went through, and also reported going through emotional changes themselves. The results and conclusions were virtually the same when using discrete emotions and a combined negative emotion and whether the narrator did or did not smoke with Eric.

LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

The emotional flow hypothesis may ultimately be a useful approach for making EE stories more engaging and persuasive. However, at this time, empirical evidence from experiments, including the two reported in this chapter, fails to provide support for its feasibility and effectiveness, at least in short textual stories. Our findings could shed light on some challenges that need to be taken into consideration in future attempts to implement emotional shifts in EE stories and point toward several possible solutions.

First, the manipulation and measurement of emotional shifts and flows is complicated and requires particular attention and care. For manipulation, we opted to use explicit expressions of emotional states. While our readers were able to successfully report noticing these changes, it could be the case that the explicit nature of emotions limited their effectiveness. EE content designers may opt in the future to deliver emotional shifts through “showing, and not telling.” As for measurement, we suggested a streamlined procedure for measuring multiple aspects of the flow, including evaluation of whether readers noticed what emotional shifts the characters experienced, and whether they themselves experienced them too, which could be used in future studies. Yet, our findings, as well as other’s (McAllister, 2020), suggest emotional flow within short EE texts may not be useful, and at times even detrimental. It could be the case that emotional shifts and flows are necessary to hold audiences’ attention over

90-minute movies or 400-page books, but that the same effect is absent when reading a 1000-word story. These studies suggest that for short stories the use of a single, consistent emotion actually increases engagement and persuasion. Our ancillary analyses (not detailed here) suggested these stories are experienced as more realistic than those including emotional shifts in a shorter space. Emotional shifts may therefore need to be reserved for longer messages. Longer stories may require more than one emotional shift (as used here) to maintain audiences' attention. We believe that studies relying on longer texts will need to develop different measurement tools, and perhaps replace our one-time measurement at the end of the story with assessments of emotional experiences in multiple points throughout the narrative.

A second challenge is determining the order and direction of the emotional shift. In our study, the story first invoked hope, which was then replaced with negative emotions. This emotional shift, at least in our studies, did not yield increased engagement and persuasion. Other researchers managed to achieve more persuasive results with stories shifting from negative emotions to positive ones (e.g., using the restorative narrative structure, see Fitzgerald et al., 2019). However, not all studies using similar shifts replicated; McAllister (2020) showed an advantage for single-emotion stories over restorative ones. While the shift from negative to positive emotions seems more promising at the moment, more research is needed to further support this recommendation.

A third challenge stems from the fact that EE stories often introduce multiple main characters, some of which may experience different and even contradicting emotions. In one of the earliest EE frameworks, the Sabido Methodology proposes EE narratives are successful when they contain characters modeling different positive, negative, and transitional journeys (Poindexter, 2004). For example, in our story, some readers, especially smokers who have a motivation to believe organic cigarettes are healthier, may have identified with the male character, Eric, and not with the female narrator. To ensure readers are being influenced by the intended and not by other unintended emotional arcs, EE practitioners should take steps to promote identification with the protagonist and not with other characters. In our study we did so using first-person perspective that was found to focus identification on the narrator (de Graaf et al., 2012). Other researchers manipulated the background information and history of characters (Tal-Or & Cohen, 2010) and similarity (Kim, Shi, & Cappella, 2016).

Finally, practitioners implementing emotional flows should consider a few ethical implications. Even though we debriefed participants at the end of the study and provided them with additional information about the detrimental health effects of organic tobacco, misinformation studies suggest the exposure to misleading information may cause harm even if followed by a correction (Lewandowsky, Ecker, Seifert, Schwarz, & Cook, 2012). Some of our findings supported that worrisome notion. In addition, EE practitioners should consider the ethical implications of manipulating audiences' emotional states. As evident from prior attempts to manipulate emotions, such as in the infamous case of a recent Facebook experiment (Kramer, Guillory, & Hancock, 2014), people are enraged and hurt when learning their emotions were played with by researchers. Once again, we recommend EE researchers and practitioners to practice respect and compassion toward audiences' emotions when crafting such stories.

Emotional flow remains a promising, if currently under-explored, vehicle for increasing the effectiveness of EE stories. If supported empirically through additional research, emotional flow could become a staple of future EE stories. In the meantime, however, existing data offer only limited support for this intriguing idea, at least in the context of relatively short, text-based EE stories.

REFERENCES

- Archer, J., & Jockers, M. L. (2016). *The bestseller code: Anatomy of the blockbuster novel*. Syuzhet: St. Martin's Press.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory: Vol. xiii*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- Bechara, A., Damasio, H., & Damasio, A. R. (2000). Emotion, decision making and the orbitofrontal cortex. *Cerebral Cortex*, 10(3), 295–307. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cercor/10.3.295>
- Berlyne, D. E. (1960). *Conflict, arousal, and curiosity*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company. <https://doi.org/10.1037/11164-000>
- Brehm, S. S., & Brehm, J. W. (1981). *Psychological reactance—A theory of freedom and control*. New York: Academic Press.
- Busselle, R., & Bilandzic, H. (2009). Measuring narrative engagement. *Media Psychology*, 12(4), 321–347. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15213260903287259>
- Cappella, J. N., Maloney, E., Ophir, Y., & Brennan, E. (2015). Interventions to correct misinformation about tobacco products. *Tobacco Regulatory Science*, 1(2), 186–197. <https://doi.org/10.18001/TRS.1.2.8>

- Cho, H., Shen, L., & Wilson, K. (2012). Perceived realism: Dimensions and roles in narrative persuasion. *Communication Research*, 41(6), 828–851. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650212450585>
- Cohen, J. (2001). Defining identification: A theoretical look at the identification of audiences with media characters. *Mass Communication and Society*, 4(3), 245–264. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327825MCS0403_01
- DeSteno, D., Gross, J. J., & Kubzansky, L. (2013). Affective science and health: The importance of emotion and emotion regulation. *Health Psychology*, 32(5), 474–486. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0030259>
- Dillard, J. P., & Nabi, R. L. (2006). The persuasive influence of emotion in cancer prevention and detection messages. *Journal of Communication*, 56, 123–139. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2006.00286.x>
- Dunlop, S., Wakefield, M., & Kashima, Y. (2008). Can you feel it? Negative emotion, risk, and narrative in health communication. *Media Psychology*, 11(1), 52–75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15213260701853112>
- Eagly, A. H., & Chaiken, S. (1993). *The psychology of attitudes*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers.
- Festinger, L. (1962). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Fitzgerald, K., Paravati, E., Green, M. C., Moore, M. M., & Qian, J. L. (2019). Restorative narratives for health promotion. *Health Communication*, 0(0), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2018.1563032>
- Gao, J., Jockers, M. L., Laudun, J., & Tangherlini, T. (2016). *A multiscale theory for the dynamical evolution of sentiment in novels*. 6 International Conference on Behavioral, Economic and Socio-Cultural Computing, Durham, NC. http://www.gao.ece.ufl.edu/my_paper/sentiment_BESC2016.pdf
- Gerrig, R. J. (1993). *Experiencing narrative worlds: On the psychological activities of reading*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- de Graaf, A., Hoeken, H., Sanders, J., & Beentjes, J. W. J. (2012). Identification as a mechanism of narrative persuasion. *Communication Research*, 39(6), 802–823. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650211408594>
- Gratale, S. K., Maloney, E. K., Sangalang, A., & Cappella, J. N. (2017). Influence of Natural American Spirit advertising on current and former smokers' perceptions and intentions. *Tobacco Control*, tobaccocontrol-2017-053881. <https://doi.org/10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2017-053881>
- Gratale, S. K., Sangalang, A., Maloney, E. K., & Cappella, J. N. (2019). Attitudinal spillover from misleading natural cigarette marketing: An experiment examining current and former smokers' support for tobacco industry regulation. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(19), 3554. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16193554>
- Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2000). The role of transportation in the persuasiveness of public narratives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79(5), 701–721. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.79.5.701>

- Guido, G., Pichierri, M., & Pino, G. (2018). Place the good after the bad: Effects of emotional shifts on consumer memory. *Marketing Letters*, 29(1), 49–60. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11002-017-9439-0>
- Jose, P. E., & Brewer, W. F. (1984). Development of story liking: Character identification, suspense, and outcome resolution. *Developmental Psychology*, 20(5), 911–924. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.20.5.911>
- Kim, M., Shi, R., & Cappella, J. N. (2016). Effect of character–audience similarity on the perceived effectiveness of antismoking psas via engagement. *Health Communication*, 31(10), 1193–1204. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2015.1048421>
- Kramer, A. D. I., Guillory, J. E., & Hancock, J. T. (2014). Experimental evidence of massive-scale emotional contagion through social networks. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 111(24), 8788–8790. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1320040111>
- Lewandowsky, S., Ecker, U. K. H., Seifert, C. M., Schwarz, N., & Cook, J. (2012). Misinformation and its correction: Continued influence and successful debiasing. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 13(3), 106–131. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1529100612451018>
- Malson, J. L., Lee, E. M., Moolchan, E. T., & Pickworth, W. B. (2002). Nicotine delivery from smoking bidis and an additive-free cigarette. *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*, 4(4), 485–490. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1462220021000018498>
- Mazzocco, P. J., Green, M. C., Sasota, J. A., & Jones, N. W. (2010). This story is not for everyone: Transportability and narrative persuasion. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 1(4), 361–368. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550610376600>
- McAllister, C. (2020). *Emotions in motion: The role of emotional flow in narrative persuasion*. Buffalo: University at Buffalo.
- Moyer-Gusé, E. (2008). Toward a theory of entertainment persuasion: Explaining the persuasive effects of entertainment-education messages. *Communication Theory*, 18(3), 407–425. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2008.00328.x>
- Moyer-Gusé, E., Chung, A. H., & Jain, P. (2011). Identification with characters and discussion of taboo topics after exposure to an entertainment narrative about sexual health. *Journal of Communication*, 61(3), 387–406. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2011.01551.x>
- Murphy, S. T., Frank, L. B., Moran, M. B., & Patnoe-Woodley, P. (2011). Involved, transported, or emotional? Exploring the determinants of change in knowledge, attitudes, and behavior in entertainment-education. *Journal of Communication*, 61(3), 407–431. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2011.01554.x>
- Nabi, R. L. (1999). A cognitive-functional model for the effects of discrete negative emotions on information processing, attitude change, and recall. *Communication Theory*, 9, 292–320. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.1999.tb00172.x>

- Nabi, R. L. (2002). Discrete Emotions and Persuasion. In J. P. Dillard, & M. Pfau (Eds.), *The Persuasion Handbook: Developments in Theory and Practice* (pp. 289–308). SAGE Publications. http://sk.sagepub.com/reference/hdbk_persuasion/n15.xml
- Nabi, R. L., & Green, M. C. (2014). The role of a narrative's emotional flow in promoting persuasive outcomes. *Media Psychology, 18*(2), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2014.912585>
- Nummenmaa, L., Glerean, E., Hari, R., & Hietanen, J. K. (2014). Bodily maps of emotions. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 111*(2), 646–651. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1321664111>
- Oatley, K. (2002). Emotions and the story worlds of fiction. In *Narrative impact: Social and cognitive foundations 2a* (pp. 39–70).
- Oatley, K. (2012). *The passionate muse: Exploring emotion in stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- O'Keefe, D. J. (2013). The relative persuasiveness of different forms of arguments-from-consequences: A review and integration. *Annals of the International Communication Association, 36*(1), 109–135.
- Ophir, Y., Brennan, E., Maloney, E. K., & Cappella, J. N. (2017). The effects of graphic warning labels' vividness on message engagement and intentions to quit smoking. *Communication Research, 46*(5), 619–638. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650217700226>
- Ortony, A., Clore, G. L., & Collins, A. (1990). *The cognitive structure of emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Poindexter, D. (2004). A history of entertainment-education, 1958-2000. In A. Singhal, M. J. Cody, E. M. Rogers, & M. Sabido (Eds.), *Entertainment-education and social change: History, research, and practice* (pp. 21–38). Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Ray, E. C., Arpan, L., Oehme, K., Perko, A., & Clark, J. (2019). Testing restorative narratives in a college student resilience project. *Innovative Higher Education, 44*(4), 267–282. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-019-9464-4>
- Rossiter, J. R., & Thornton, J. (2004). Fear-pattern analysis supports the fear-drive model for antispeeding road-safety TV ads. *Psychology & Marketing, 21*(11), 945–960. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20042>
- Royzman, E. B., & Rozin, P. (2006). Limits of symhedonia: The differential role of prior emotional attachment in sympathy and sympathetic joy. *Emotion (Washington, D.C.), 6*(1), 82–93. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1528-3542.6.1.82>
- Sangalang, A., Ophir, Y., & Cappella, J. N. (2019). The potential for narrative correctives to combat misinformation. *Journal of Communication, 69*(3), 298–319. <https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqz014>
- Scheff, T. J. (1979). *Catharsis in healing, ritual, and drama*. California: University of California Press.

- Shen, F., Sheer, V. C., & Li, R. (2015). Impact of narratives on persuasion in health communication: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Advertising*, 44(2), 105–113. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2015.1018467>
- Slater, M. D., & Rouner, D. (2002). Entertainment—education and elaboration likelihood: Understanding the processing of narrative persuasion. *Communication Theory*, 12(2), 173–191. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2002.tb00265.x>
- Tal-Or, N., & Cohen, J. (2010). Understanding audience involvement: Conceptualizing and manipulating identification and transportation. *Poetics*, 38(4), 402–418. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2010.05.004>
- Wang, H., & Singhal, A. (2016). East los high: Transmedia edutainment to promote the sexual and reproductive health of young latina/o americans. *American Journal of Public Health*, 106(6), 1002–1010. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2016.303072>
- Witte, K. (1992). Putting the fear back into fear appeals: The extended parallel process model. *Communication Monographs*, 59(4), 329–349. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637759209376276>
- Witte, K., & Allen, M. (2000). A meta-analysis of fear appeals: Implications for effective public health campaigns. *Health Education & Behavior*, 27(5), 591–615. <https://doi.org/10.1177/109019810002700506>

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if you modified the licensed material. You do not have permission under this licence to share adapted material derived from this chapter or parts of it.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copy-right holder.





Music and Culture in Entertainment-Education

Carlos Chirinos-Espin

Popular songs have inspired and accompanied social movements and provided a soundtrack to the struggle for social change. In the field of entertainment-education (EE), songs have often been part of interventions to disseminate knowledge and persuade individuals to change behaviors. However, a look at the use of music in entertainment-education suggests that most interventions use music as an additional marketing strategy, rather than a key component.

Entertainment-education centers on the incorporation of “persuasive educational messages” in entertainment programs to increase audience engagement and motivate behavior change (Brown & Singhal, 1999). From its inception, EE’s main goal has been the incorporation of educational messages in entertainment formats to increase knowledge and change attitudes and behaviors to address social issues and advance positive social change.

However, this approach has favored the creation of EE programs guided by Western ideology and values (Dutta, 2008). It frequently

C. Chirinos-Espin, Ph.D. (✉)
NYU Steinhardt and NYU School of Global Public Health, New York, NY, USA
e-mail: carlos.chirinos@nyu.edu

imposes a pre-determined agenda on developing countries, often prioritizing health and social issues that do not necessarily reflect the needs and values of the recipient audiences. Televised soap operas, a form of EE that uses drama to engage audiences, have been a very effective way of reaching populations in the developing world, but narratives universalize Western values and norms and neglect social and health priorities of local audiences. Narrative theory posits that stories express identities and make sense of experience through social interaction. Because narratives represent events and characters in an identifiable structure bounded in space and time, they offer a framework for social change communication that distances itself from one-way models of communication (Larkey & Hecht, 2010). Although EE often bases its strategy on narrative storytelling, when EE interventions are designed without the involvement of local people, they advance the social and economic agendas of powerful groups. In this context, an alternative culture-centered approach posits that the communication process should start from those experiencing the social and health issues in question; the purpose of social change communication—and entertainment-education—should be to enable communication spaces in which social and health issues can be discussed and contested in order to create communication campaigns that are meaningful and relevant to local communities (Dutta, 2008).

Participatory communication departs from the notion that individual and collective engagement in the communication process can activate changes in social norms and opinions around collective decisions. Instead, these changes depend on a social and political context that enables local voices to be heard and encourages critical engagement and consciousness for communities to identify their own problems, generate knowledge, and advance their own priorities and solutions (Chambers, 1997). Through processes that enable local communities to establish their own agendas, participation can help define the communication needs of a community and lead to the creation of culture-centered entertainment campaigns that synthesize information in a format that joins together different levels of thought, feeling, and behavior, and uses cultural references and linguistic diversity to ensure that communication is meaningful and reaches the poorest and most disenfranchised communities.

Participation in music events—songwriting, concerts, contests—enables the public to engage in social actions that require collective learning and coordination. This process facilitates the co-creation and dissemination of songs rooted in culture to make sense of problems and

articulate solutions. In a context in which traditional music is under threat from dominant forms of commercial music and socio-political control, enabling the creation of songs by marginalized social groups can enable their voices to be heard and counteract the dominant discourses present in other forms of communication. These cultural performances can play a transformative role in raising consciousness and elevating the voices of the socially disenfranchised (Dutta & Dutta, 2019).

MUSIC-BASED COMMUNICATION

Music-based communication interventions mobilize individuals for a specific social cause that demands a concerted public action. Music artists create songs that reflect the points of view of those involved. Compared to other forms of EE, music interventions activate cognitive, emotional, empathetic, and culture-centered communication that builds upon three pillars to advance social change: (1) music as a unique form of human communication that resonates with audiences, (2) the celebrity capital of a music artist, and (3) public engagement in music activities.

The Power of Music

Together with spoken language, music was one of the first human evolutionary traits toward social communication and has significant influence on the biological, psychological, and social factors that determine individual personality and emotional memory (Janata, Tomic, & Rakowski, 2007). Music performance has been associated with emotional capacity development and with defining psycho-social constructs of personal and social identity (Miranda, 2013). As part of a common language, system of beliefs, and kinship and social structures, music helps define cultural boundaries and provides a shared past that defines values; for example, national anthems provide groups with a unified message that recalls common past, pride, and sense of belonging.

Considering song as a form of spontaneous communication, songs portray the hopes and fears of songwriters and traditional performers who embody the realities of their social environment and reflect popular narrative constructs. Thus, songs may be an appropriate tool to enable communication among communities for whom oral forms of communication are preferred over other forms of communication that do not reflect local identity, language, or values. Some popular songs include narratives with

important symbolic value that respond to social situations and, by building on music-making as a socially accepted cultural practice, songs can remind community members about health risks and suggest ways to prevent them, particularly when people talk about health narratives in songs (Panter-Brick, Clarke, Lomas, Pinder, & Lindsay, 2006).

The public appeal of songs reflects their power in articulating shared feelings, emotions, and frustrations. Some music genres (e.g. Hip Hop and Reggae) are cultural forms of resistance that protest political abuse to galvanize public opinions and attitudes. With increased access to music through online streaming services and broadcast radio stations in rural areas with poor internet reception, songs can be considered as a communication capsule that can reach audiences young and old, particularly in multilingual communities. Song repetition increases the likelihood of message exposure in low-literacy contexts; thus, songs may be a subtle and appealing format rather than repetitive orders from authorities about health risks (Bekalu & Eggermont, 2015).

Celebrity Capital

As music performers gain media exposure and public attention shifts to their personal lives and opinions, some music artists become *music celebrities*, and this public attention can be used to mobilize the public for social action. *Celebrity capital* refers to media visibility and the resulting power that can be used to benefit products, causes, and institutions (Driessens, 2013). Social cognitive theory suggests that *identification* defines the process in which individuals build special links with others, imitate their lifestyle, follow their verbal guidance, and adopt their behaviors and values, and this perceived relationship can lead to opinion change (Bandura, 2002). Thus, the relationship between music celebrities and fans over time builds emotional connections and trust. Moreover, source credibility theory posits that the credibility of information depends on the perceived trustworthiness and expertise of the information source (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Individuals may identify with celebrities and trust them, establishing a *parasocial* relationship with them, a process in which audiences have the illusion of intimacy with a celebrity (Fraser & Brown, 2002; Horton & Wohl, 1956). As celebrities share personal experiences and support for social causes, fans perceive that supporting those causes satisfies the celebrities' wishes, and this can persuade fans to change their opinions and advocate that others change.

Public Engagement in Music Activities

Music events that enable collaboration between artists, fans, and development and health actors can stimulate the development of critical thinking, collaboration, and empowerment that Freire defined as a ‘problem-posing’ approach to education (Freire, 1970). By involving artists and audiences in dialogue and mutual learning, music-based interventions can enable local voices to be heard, contribute to collective empowerment, and help communities define their goals and priorities. Through collaborative songwriting and other forms of celebrity activism, music-based interventions can enable co-creation of messages that are defined by the needs and knowledge of groups seeking social change. In this process, community engagement is mediated through the identification of fans with the musical output, the personality, the values, and opinions of music celebrities. This relationship provides the conditions for the public to engage in dialogue that may lead to opinion and behavior change. In the context of historical, political, and social divisions in culturally heterogeneous societies—as is the case in many low- and middle-income countries—music celebrities with a strong fan base may have the ability to translate and disseminate information, as they help translate complex ideas to simple stories in song. Music celebrities are recognized opinion makers who can mobilize the public through their songs and their activism for social change (Pratt, 2009). Through a combination of participation of local music artists and public engagement, music presents an alternative form of entertainment-education to dominant forms of EE that replicate Western values and behavioral models that are not rooted in local culture (Dutta & Dutta, 2019).

AFRICA STOP EBOLA

To contextualize these ideas, I will discuss my work on Africa Stop Ebola (ASE), an entertainment-education intervention that engaged a collective of West African music artists to create a song to promote community engagement in response to the Ebola epidemic in West Africa. Led by the Ivorian reggae artist Tiken Jah Fakoly and featuring the artists Amadou and Mariam, Salif Keita, Oumou Sangare, Sia Tolno, Barbara Kanam, Mory Kanté, Mokobé, Markus, Didier Awadi, and Kandia Kora, I contributed as a co-writer and co-producer of the song. The song was created as a collaborative composition in which I played the role of facilitator and

researcher. As a facilitator, I investigated the key factors in social resistance to Ebola in Guinea, created a list of “topics” to address in the song, and worked in the studio with the music artists to record and edit the verses of each of the 12 performers.

Based on reports about Ebola that indicated public mistrust in health workers and a general loss of public hope in finding a solution to Ebola, we identified these key messages as the main subjects to be addressed in the song. Therefore, the song’s goal was to communicate two main topics: first, to persuade individuals to trust the health workers responding to the crisis, and second, to encourage hope that the crisis could be overcome. The song also included behavioral commands like “don’t touch the sick, don’t touch the dead” and “avoid shaking hands and be safe” to promote preventive behaviors. Through the verses, the song intended to serve as a nudge to remind listeners about the importance of listening to health actors involved in the response to the epidemic. We encouraged each artist to write an eight-bar verse in their own preferred language that addressed or emphasized these two key concepts. The resulting song included verses performed in French, Malinké, Soussou, Banbara, and Lingala, and the choruses “Ebola, invisible enemy” and “Ebola, trust the doctors.” The song was released as a music video (Fakoly et al., 2014) and was reported in the international media as a positive strategy to promote Ebola prevention in West Africa (Jones, 2014; Kozin, 2014).

Africa Stop Ebola Song Lyrics

Africa is sad, to see our families die. Do not touch our sick; do not touch the dying; Everyone is in danger, Young and old, we must act for our families

Chorus: Ebola, Invisible Ebola Invisible

Ebola you are our enemy, If you feel sick the doctors will help you, I can assure you, the doctors will help you, and there is hope to stop Ebola, trust the doctors

Chorus: Ebola, Ebola, Trust doctors

Ebola it’s not good, go see the doctor, Ebola it’s not good, go see the doctor, Ebola hurt you must see the doctor, Ebola it’s not good, go see the doctor

Chorus

Take Ebola seriously. It is a very serious disease. When she reaches you, death follows. As soon as you have the symptoms, send for the doctors.

They can help you. Wash your hands regularly and avoid shaking hands with others.

I beg you dear parents, let's follow the advice of the medical authorities, Ebola came to hurt us, Let's respect their advice.

Ebola you kill our people, you add pain to the DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo), but we will defeat you, let's remain standing.

Get up, get up, Ebola is a problem for us, we cannot greet someone, we cannot kiss someone, It does not mean that person shames you, it's just a reality

Ebola has become a problem for us today, I ask all doctors in Africa to get up, Ebola really became a problem for us

Chorus

Once again we talk about tragedy, like a false note that comes in the melody, Ebola we thought you were since abolished, you walk in the debauchery sowing disease, we will not run away from you we will not bury ourselves, because we know we have ways to get away, we're going to get hooked we're not plague, we're going to get together, we will fire you!

Among them there are many who have been able to access hospitals, those who are cured are no longer contagious, there are some who stay at home until the evil grows, Oh my God! Mama Africa get up and stay united as we are used to doing for our other battles, Ebola you will also be defeated

Another drama that hits the continent, Africa needs vaccine and medicine, is hope for them allowed? Is it necessary to close our eyes and leave them in oblivion? (no!) So we unite for a good cause, we mobilize, we break the closed doors, Ebola I swear to chase you until you leave, Africa needs the vaccine to heal.

Chorus

The promotion of the song in the international media led to a strategic association with the medical humanitarian organization *Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF France)*; they used the song and the image of the ASE artist collective in their awareness campaign and fundraising efforts to combat Ebola in West Africa. As a result, the campaign was nominated to *Fighting Ebola: A Grand Challenge for Development*, an innovation award that provided resources to implement an intervention in the form of a song contest in Conakry, Guinea (USAID, 2015).

I worked with collaborators to create a participatory communication intervention in the form of a song contest to engage local artists in Conakry, Guinea, to create songs to promote Ebola prevention. To promote the song contest and recruit local artists, we implemented a social marketing campaign with TV and radio ads, posters, leaflets, and social media posts. Over 250 local artists auditioned, out of which 14 were selected to participate in workshops with health promotion workers and music coaches to enable them to write original songs about Ebola. Through this process, local artists were able to talk with health workers such that both parties articulated their ideas and expressed their opinions. Yet the final lyrical content of the songs was created by the artists and included diverse points of view and diverse music genres (e.g. gospel, reggae, traditional music, and Afro-pop). To conclude the intervention and select a group of winners of the song contest, we organized a final public event that was recorded for TV broadcast and online streaming, in which artists performed their songs and spoke about their personal experiences with Ebola (Africa Stop Ebola, 2015). The public event was hosted by the artists Tiken Jah Faly and Mory Kanté, both considered international music celebrities with a strong cultural connection to Guinea.

The affiliation of the song contest with the local office of MSF may have helped improve the image of health workers with the local communities through a process of negotiating reciprocity and trust with local music artists who represented civil society, helping break the barrier between health institutions and civilians. The workshops and collaborations with other artists and health workers to write the lyrics of the songs created a genuine process of engagement that helped local artists better understand the social and behavioral challenges of Ebola prevention. In this regard, the process of the song contest was more important than the resulting songs since it created a space for dialogue, self-expression, and knowledge generation. The resulting songs provided a narrative about Ebola prevention from the point of view of the communities affected. Many of the resulting songs reinforced trust in the health sector and avoidance of contact with others, which were to a great extent, narratives promoted by health actors as well. However, the manner in which the songs appealed to the public started from local culture to make sense of the crisis and encourage the public to prevent the disease.

In this intervention I applied an action research methodology in which I became a facilitator of a process of dialogue between local music artists and some of the health workers responding to the crisis. I documented

events in audiovisual format, conducted a knowledge, attitudes, and practices survey of the general public, and carried out interviews with health workers to understand the impact of the intervention in Ebola prevention (Chirinos-Espin, 2019). Through this process, I learned that social resistance to social interventions to control Ebola was the result of previous negative experiences with ruling political parties and medical interventions in West Africa. In the context of a medical emergency caused by an unknown infectious disease like Ebola, my findings suggested that music artists may be in a better position to communicate with civil society than institutional actors because they are trusted by the public and are able to communicate complex biomedical information in appealing stories. The source credibility model provides a theoretical basis to explain this, as it suggests that the trustworthiness of the information source does not affect the acquisition or retention of information, but it significantly influences opinion change (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). For example, evidence of the effectiveness of spokespersons in public service announcements suggests that people pay less attention to messages when delivered by international celebrities because they lack a direct connection to the crisis or are doing it for their own image, but people pay more attention and are motivated to change their opinion when a local person delivers the message because of a sense of belonging to the same place and identifying with them (Toncar, Reid, & Anderson, 2007).

The involvement of local artists in the songs and the public broadcast of the contest on radio, TV, and online enhanced the perception of local ownership of the message and enabled emotional engagement. In the vacuum of professional journalism and constraints imposed on the media by governments or private commercial interests in Africa, music is a tool for emancipation of youth that reflects the everyday experiences of people in the peripheries; lyrics often represent the everyday concerns of ordinary people (Mano, 2007).

The original ASE song was produced in the style of reggae, a music genre that is part of a legacy of social activism as a pan-African music genre associated with critique of racism and imperialism. Reggae represents an avenue for self-expression and dissent that challenges the status quo and enables the voice of youth in Africa, disenfranchised by poor job opportunities and political oppression, to contest dominant narratives and call out abuse of power by local and global elites (Reed, 2012). Thus, even though the lyrics of the song addressed trust and hope, reggae suggested a connection of the crisis with the imbalances of global political power. In this

sense, collective song creation allows communities to interpret a social phenomenon, create and share collaborative knowledge, and appeal to youth and collectivist societies that value music as an endogenous form of cultural expression.

MUSIC IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

As I write the final pages of this chapter, the world is going through a crisis related to the COVID-19 pandemic. From singers serenading neighbors from Italian balconies to songs about washing hands, music played an important role in sharing information, hope, and stress relief during the first months of 2020. Through songs, performances, and actions, music artists activated their fans to advocate for public health. One of the songs produced during the early stages of the pandemic provides an example of how music may be a useful tool in youth engagement in COVID-19 prevention. Vietnam is credited for reacting to the early warnings of the outbreak in Wuhan, China, by implementing social distancing rules, border closures, and contact tracing early on. Having had previous experiences with outbreaks of infectious diseases and knowing the potential effects of an uncontrolled epidemic on the health care system, the country opted for a policy of prevention that contributed to containing cases (Jones, 2020). Early on in the COVID-19 pandemic, Ghen Cô Vyl NIOEH x K.HỦNG x MIN x ERIK (2020) collaborated with the Ministry of Health, Vietnam, and Vietnam's National Institute of Occupational and Environmental Health to release the *washing hand song* on YouTube. At the time of writing, this song has been watched over 53 million times. Its lyrics urge listeners to stay alert, avoid touching their face, and maintain social distance. The video became popular on social media, and a user created a choreographed video on TikTok—an emerging popular social media channel for user-generated videos—that inspired many others to copy it. The TikTok featured young Vietnamese choreographer Quang Dang performing the handwashing challenge and shows handwashing steps coordinated with the song and tagged with the hashtags #vudieuruatay #handwashingmove (Đang, 2020). Using the song as a time cue for length and coordination, the choreography shows the appropriate steps to wash hands, helps users remember the steps to wash hands thoroughly, and provides persuasion through peer-to-peer influence in the form of millions of users who responded to the online challenge, copied the choreography, and posted it online.

Another form of social mobilization through music was the activism of artists who rallied to fundraise for the World Health Organization (WHO) and promote COVID-19 prevention. In April 2020, American artist Lady Gaga launched “One World Together at Home,” a virtual concert that featured an all-star line-up of celebrity music artists who performed and asked viewers to stay home and donate to the WHO. The concert was endorsed by Director-General of the WHO, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus (World Health Organization, April 18, 2020). It provided a platform for artists to perform, at a time when all live music events were canceled, and to show their support for WHO and actions to stop the spread of COVID-19. During the show, artists promoted a positive attitude toward the WHO, although the official US narrative partially blamed the WHO for a slow response to COVID-19. Through celebrity involvement, the public mobilized to make donations, which confirmed that the public agreed with the message. In these two COVID-19 examples, song and celebrity capital enabled public engagement through user-generated videos and contributing funds to support a global institution working on COVID-19 relief, which further supports that popular music can be an effective social mobilization tool.

LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

Through the Africa Stop Ebola project in Guinea, we implemented an entertainment-education campaign that relied on song to engage local people in creating and disseminating health information in a manner that connected with the needs of the local people. In this process, the initial idea of creating a “health education” message in a song changed to a message that encouraged listeners to trust the response and have hope that the epidemic could be stopped. The artists were more confident about delivering messages of wisdom and hope than repeating the normative messages about disease prevention disseminated by health actors in the region (avoiding touching and social distancing); the project focused on addressing the collective emotional toll of the health crisis and responded to the artists’ own views. This highlights a key lesson: local artists are the most able to create content that resonates with their communities. Following the principle of using entertainment-education to reach the poorest and most disenfranchised communities, we used Reggae and local forms of Hip Hop to create a popular song.

We learned to prioritize media that was accessible by those living in rural and remote areas who are often isolated and neglected in the communication process as a result of their culture, language, or size of their community. This included a free digital music video on YouTube and promotion on local radio stations. The use of radio helped to reach communities with diverse languages, since radio stations enable many indigenous and rural communities living in extreme poverty to access information and communication in their own languages via simple battery-operated radios. Radio provides a reliable tool to reach disenfranchised rural groups that do not have access to broadcast TV, digital, or written communication.

One of the biggest challenges to music-based EE interventions is conducting monitoring and evaluation as interventions occur. Since funding for EE interventions is tied to the ability to produce evidence of effectiveness, planning a monitoring and evaluation protocol in advance was a critical step to ensure that we could collect data to understand potential impact. To evaluate the intervention, I collected media metrics such as number of views of the online music video, the number and type of users' comments, and press coverage of the song in the international and local press in Guinea. I conducted surveys inquiring into the public perceptions of the effectiveness of songs and music artists in communicating about Ebola. The results showed that music artists were perceived as trusted sources of information about health, and that songs were perceived as an effective way to communicate with young people. I also interviewed health workers and MSF health promotion managers, and I found they valued the intervention as it provided a novel method to communicate and engage people in a context of public fatigue with Ebola messages. This was another important lesson learned: the communication environment during a health crisis can become overloaded with repetitive messages that demand behavior change from individuals without consideration of their emotional impact. Repetition leads to public fatigue, which can negatively impact efforts to control a disease. In this sense, what started as a health communication campaign ended as an emotional communicational tool created by artists to promote trust and hope in the context of a high level of public mistrust in state and international development actors.

The effectiveness of this process goes beyond the social marketing value of songs as vehicles for message dissemination because music enables the creation of culture-centered narratives that can engage the public in dialogue and critical reflection. Thus, music in entertainment-education provides a platform for bottom-up community engagement in actions to address social change and health communication through participatory communication.

REFERENCES

- Africa Stop Ebola. (2015). *Africa Stop Ebola song contest in Guinee*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=it1pFjxjEIs>
- Bandura, A. (2002). Social cognitive theory of mass communication. In J. Bryant & D. Zillmann (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (pp. 121–153). Erlbaum.
- Bekalu, M. A., & Eggermont, S. (2015). Aligning HIV/AIDS communication with the oral tradition of Africans: A theory-based content analysis of songs' potential in prevention efforts. *Health Communication, 30*(5), 441–450.
- Brown, W. J., & Singhal, A. (1999). Entertainment-education media strategies for social change: Promises and problems. In D. Demers & K. Viswanath (Eds.), *Mass media, social control, and social change: A macrosocial perspective*. Iowa State University Press.
- Chambers, R. (1997). *Whose reality counts? Putting the last first*. Intermediate Technology Publications.
- Chirinos-Espin, C. (2019). *Africa Stop Ebola: Social resistance and music-based participatory communication in Guinea's Ebola Epidemic 2014–15* [Unpublished Doctoral thesis]. SOAS, University of London.
- Dang, Q. (2020). *Handwash choreography*. TikTok. Retrieved from <https://www.tiktok.com/@im.quangdang/video/6795172608770870529>
- Driessens, O. (2013). Celebrity capital: Redefining celebrity using field theory. *Theory and Society, 42*(5), 543–560. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-013-9202-3>
- Dutta, M. J. (2008). *Communicating health: A culture-centered approach*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Dutta, U., & Dutta, M. J. (2019). Songs of the Bauls: Voices from the margins as transformative infrastructures. *Religion, 10*(5), 335.
- Fakoly, T., Keita, S., Sangare, O., Amadou & Mariam, Kanté, M., Kanam, B., Tolno, S., Mokobé, Markus, Awadi, D., & Kandia Kora. (2014). *Africa Stop Ebola*. YouTube. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ruYQY6z3mV8&ab_channel=AfricaStopEbola
- Fraser, B. P., & Brown, W. J. (2002). Media, celebrities, and social influence: Identification with Elvis Presley. *Mass Communication and Society, 5*(2), 207–228. <https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327825MCS0502>
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. 30th Anniversary Edition. Continuum.
- Ghen Cò Vyl NIOEH x K.HUNG x MIN x ERIK. (2020). *Washing hand song, Corona song*. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtulL3oArQw&feature=emb_logo
- Horton, D., & Wohl, R. (1956). Mass communication and parasocial interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance. *Psychiatry, 19*, 215–229.
- Hovland, C. I., & Weiss, W. (1951). The influence of source credibility on communication effectiveness. *The Public Opinion Quarterly, 15*(4), 635–650.

- Janata, P., Tomic, S. T., & Rakowski, S. K. (2007). Characterisation of music-evoked autobiographical memories. *Memory*, 15(8), 845–860. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658210701734593>
- Jones, A. (2020). Coronavirus: How “overreaction” made Vietnam a virus success. *BBC News*. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-52628283>
- Jones, S. (2014). African musicians band together to raise Ebola awareness. *The Guardian Global Development*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/oct/29/african-musicians-record-song-ebola-awareness>
- Kozin, A. (2014). How to protect yourself from ebola, in song. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/10/29/how-to-protect-yourself-from-ebola-in-song/>
- Larkey, L. K., & Hecht, M. (2010). A model of effects of narrative as culture-centric health promotion. *Journal of Health Communication*, 15(2), 114–135.
- Mano, W. (2007). Popular music as journalism in Zimbabwe. *Journalism Studies*, 8(1), 61–78.
- Miranda, D. (2013). The role of music in adolescent development: Much more than the same old song. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 18(1), 5–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2011.650182>
- Panter-Brick, C., Clarke, S. E., Lomas, H., Pinder, M., & Lindsay, S. W. (2006). Culturally compelling strategies for behaviour change: A social ecology model and case study in malaria prevention. *Social Science & Medicine*, 62(11), 2810–2825.
- Pratt, C. B. (2009). Using the personal influence model to guide theory building for participatory communication in Africa. *Communicatio: South African Journal for Communication Theory and Research*, 35(1), 30–49.
- Reed, D. B. (2012). Promises of the chameleon: Reggae artist Tiken Jah Fakoly’s intertextual contestation of power in Côte d’Ivoire. In E. Charry (Ed.), *Hip Hop Africa: New African music in a globalizing world* (pp. 92–108). Indiana University Press.
- Toncar, M., Reid, J. S., & Anderson, C. E. (2007). Effective spokespersons in a public service announcement: National celebrities, local celebrities and victims. *Journal of Communication Management*, 11(3), 258–275.
- USAID. (2015). *United States announces additional results in Grand challenge to fight Ebola*. USAID. Retrieved from <http://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/feb-11-2015-united-states-announces-additional-results-grand-challenge-fight-ebola>
- World Health Organization. (2020). ‘One world: together at home’ global special. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news-room/events/detail/2020/04/18/default-calendar/one-world-together-at-home-global-special>

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if you modified the licensed material. You do not have permission under this licence to share adapted material derived from this chapter or parts of it.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.





Strengthening Integration of Communication Theory into Entertainment-Education Practice: Reflections from the *La Peor Novela* Case Study

*Rafael Obregon, Jessica Wendorf Muhamad,
and Charlotte Lapsansky*

The need to bridge the gap between theory and practice is often at the heart of discussions about the role of communication in promoting social and behavioral change and advancing development outcomes. Over the past several years, scholars and practitioners in Communication for Development (C4D) and Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) have made considerable progress in strengthening the integration of theory into the practice of C4D/SBCC programmatic design, implementation, and evaluation. This is illustrated by the definitions of C4D/

R. Obregon (✉) • C. Lapsansky
UNICEF, New York, NY, USA
e-mail: robregon@unicef.org; clapsansky@unicef.org

J. W. Muhamad
Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL, USA
e-mail: jw.muhamad@cci.fsu.edu

SBCC currently used among leading development institutions, which increasingly emphasize theory and evidence-based approaches. For instance, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), one of the leading global development agencies in the use of C4D strategies, defines C4D as “an evidence-based process that is an integral part of programmes and utilizes a mix of communication tools, channels and approaches to facilitate dialogue, participation and engagement with children, families, communities, and networks for positive social and behaviour change in both development and humanitarian contexts” (UNICEF, 2018, p. 8). The Johns Hopkins University Health Communication Capacity Collaborative (n.d.) emphasizes four key characteristics of SBCC—systematic, evidence-based, participatory, and focused on strengthening capacity—and explicitly states that it uses theory to frame program design.

While SBCC theories generally play an important role in the design of communication strategies in development programs, many of which feature entertainment-education (EE) components (Brown, 2013; Piotrow, Kincaid, Rimon, & Rinehart, 1997; Singhal & Rogers, 1999), there tends to be greater emphasis on using social and cognitive theory to inform interventions. Studies of EE have frequently described the effects of specific messages within an EE intervention on individuals’ social interactions and/or behaviors; the influence of communication theory within EE interventions is less clearly articulated (Cardey, Garforth, Govender, & Dyll-Myklebust, 2013; Makanweni & Salawu, 2018) and the role of the broader narrative structure or impacts of storytelling is often overlooked. There are several communication theories that explore how individuals process narratives and explain how EE leads to attitudinal, behavioral, or social change (Moyer-Gusé, 2008). Petraglia (2007) captures this point in relation to health communication:

Health communication strategies that rely overtly on storytelling, such as “entertainment-education” (EE), sidestep narrative as a conceptual framework. While the literatures of behavior change communication and EE (in the form of soap operas, novels, theatre, ballads, serialized comic strips, fotonovelas, etc.) frequently allude to social-cognitive theory and role modeling as proposed by Albert Bandura (1986), the fact that role models are characters whose behavior is only understood within the context of a story goes largely unremarked and unexplored. (pp. 494)

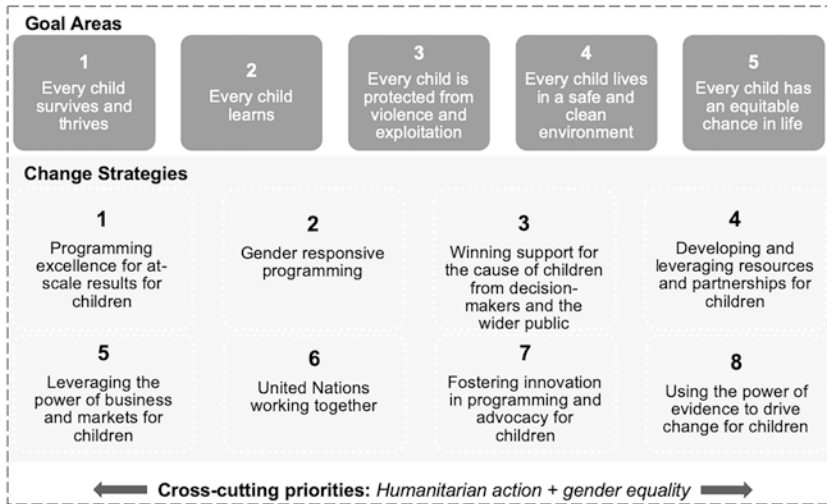
Other scholars have raised similar concerns. Tufte (2008) stated that organizations leading EE interventions in health and development communication could benefit from more in-depth exploration of the linkages between communication theory, especially media and audience theory, and the intended behavior change outcomes. Sood, Riley, and Alarcon (2017) have argued that there is a need to “continue to unpack the role of narrative engagement/transportation/emotional involvement to understand further how and why narratives matter” (p. 32). This issue is of critical importance to development practice. To the extent that communication theory does not properly or sufficiently inform EE, its effectiveness can be limited.

Our point of departure for this chapter is that the effectiveness of EE interventions can be enhanced through a more explicit theoretical foundation. We argue that this integration of theory into practice needs to include more emphasis on communication theory alongside the more traditionally invoked social and cognitive theories. We explore these issues through the lens of an EE intervention led and implemented by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in the Dominican Republic to promote prevention of child marriage by addressing unequal gender norms.

UNICEF’S DEVELOPMENT AGENDA AND THE ROLE OF C4D/SBCC

Anchored in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN Commission on Human Rights, 1990; UNICEF, 2019), UNICEF’s Strategic Plan for the 2018–2021 period has the overarching goal to drive results for the most disadvantaged children and young people across five goal areas (UNICEF, 2018): (1) survival and development; (2) learning; (3) protection from exploitation and violence; (4) living in a clean and safe environment; and (5) having an equitable chance in life. The goals are tied to specific results, prioritizing gender equality and humanitarian dimensions (see Fig. 9.1). The Strategic Plan describes specific change strategies that UNICEF values. One of these change strategies is C4D, and it specifically engages local communities, adolescents, and young people to promote social and behavior change.

UNICEF C4D work is guided by the social-ecological model, a framework that facilitates understanding the complex effects of personal and



Adapted from: UNICEF. (2018). *UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021: Executive Summary*.

Fig. 9.1 UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018–2021. Goal Areas and Change Strategies

environmental factors determining social and behavioral change (UNICEF, 2018). The social-ecological framework (Fig. 9.2) comprises five levels: individual, interpersonal, community, institutional, and policy/enabling environment (UNICEF, 2018). It draws on a wide range of theories to understand determinants of behaviors, detect communication gaps across the levels, and address them with integrated approaches (Gillespie et al., 2016; UNICEF, 2018). The use of the social-ecological model makes EE even more relevant, as EE is often expected to work across different audiences and across the levels of the model.

ENTERTAINMENT-EDUCATION IN UNICEF

While entertainment formats have been a core feature of UNICEF’s development and humanitarian work for decades, the launch of the Meena cartoon character in the early 1990s was a turning point for the organization. Meena, a young girl, became widely popular throughout South Asia and provided a platform to portray girls’ aspirations and promote gender equality, girls’ rights, and other rights for children. An evaluation of the Meena Communication Initiative in eight countries across South Asia

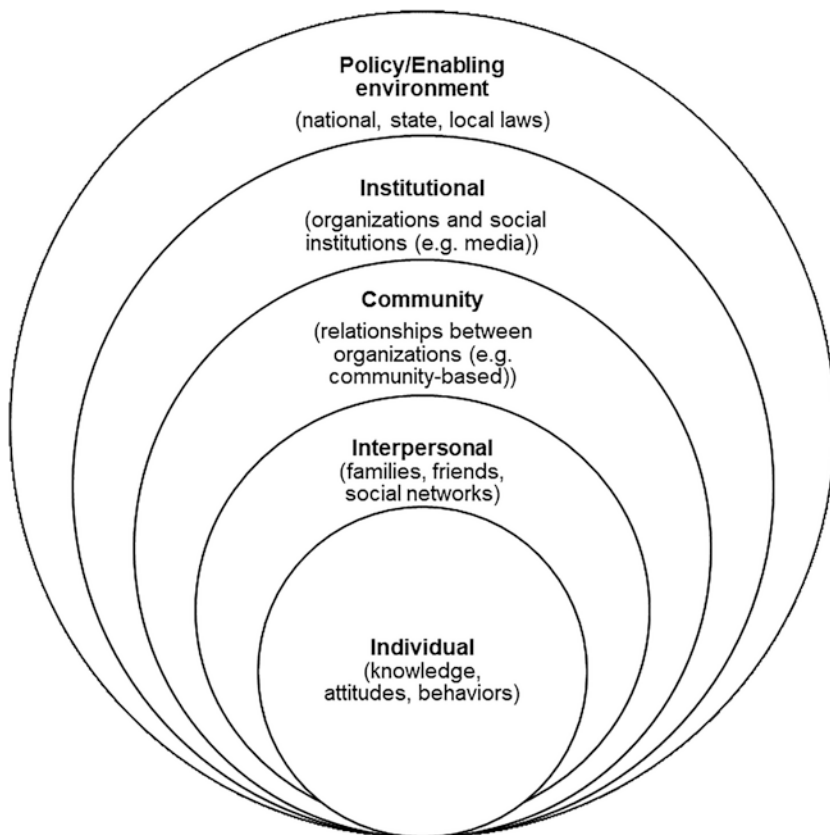


Fig. 9.2 Social-ecological model. (Adapted: UNICEF. (2018). *UNICEF 2017 report on Communication for development (C4D). Global progress and country-level highlights across program areas*)

documented that Meena reached millions of children, both boys and girls, its cross-country appeal, its contribution to raising awareness about gender equality, and its promotion of life skills such as good nutrition (Chesterton, 2004). Meena's stories, which are still used today in India and Bangladesh, were adapted to different media formats and served as a strong reference for the growing use of EE strategies in UNICEF's development and humanitarian programs, including its replication through a similar character named Sara in East and Southern Africa.

Over the past decades, building on the success of Meena, UNICEF has used numerous formats, approaches, and partnerships in its EE development programs. For instance, UNICEF supported early EE initiatives such as *Soul City* in South Africa and *Puntos de Encuentro* in Nicaragua. UNICEF also has engaged in regional EE partnerships such as *C'est la Vie*, a TV drama broadcast across West Africa in collaboration with Canal Plus and several regional and international agencies. In collaboration with the MTV Foundation, UNICEF also implemented *Shuga*, a radio show later developed into a TV series, which promoted HIV prevention. EE formats such as popular theater have been widely used by UNICEF in many countries to address social norms that drive child marriage and female genital cutting. Through collaboration with Nollywood producers, brief drama pieces have been produced and disseminated via mobile phones to promote polio vaccines in hard-to-access areas in Nigeria. Over the years, UNICEF's EE work has operated under three primary modalities. Table 9.1 outlines these modalities and lists relevant and illustrative examples.

An inventory of EE initiatives across UNICEF conducted in 2013 showed that at least 17 EE initiatives were being implemented at the time, with most of those interventions falling in the third modality. In most cases, these EE interventions were part of broader C4D strategies that included other community and interpersonal communication components, the majority of which were driven by social and behavioral theory. For instance, polio video capsules and related content focused on building trust in health care workers among resistant communities (Obregon & Guirgis, 2017). *C'est la Vie* focuses on a wide range of health and development issues and regularly models behaviors to challenge, for instance, prevailing social norms about Female Genital Cutting (FGM). This behavior modeling draws on key concepts from social cognitive theory such as self-efficacy.

La Peor Novela

La Peor Novela ("The Worst Telenovela" which implies that the challenging lives that the main characters experience is the real worst telenovela) is part of a broader C4D strategy which was designed based on the social-ecological model. The EE component supports efforts to promote changes in attitudes, norms, and behaviors and contributes to broader development outcomes in areas such as prevention of child marriage and prevention of gender-based violence. The Dominican Republic has experienced

Table 9.1 Typology of entertainment-education modalities in UNICEF

<i>Modality</i>	<i>Key dimensions</i>	<i>Example</i>
UNICEF-led EE	UNICEF invests considerable resources and takes an active role in the conceptualization, design, implementation, and evaluation.	<i>Kyunki... Jeena Issi Ka Naam Hai</i> (Because... That's What Life Is), a long running soap opera nationally broadcast in India through a partnership with BBC Media Action and the National TV Channel Doordarshan with a focus on health, gender equality, and community development
UNICEF supported	UNICEF partners with NGO development and EE implementing agencies with less involvement in it.	<i>C'est la Vie</i> (That's life) is a TV soap opera broadcast across regional and national African TV networks. It is a program of Réseau Africain d'Education en Santé, produced by Keewu Productions in collaboration with UNICEF, UNFPA, and other partners. The drama is broadcast in several languages and addresses a wide range of health and development issues.
UNICEF interventions with EE components	UNICEF integrates targeted EE components in health and development interventions. They tend to have shorter duration and limited scale.	This modality includes a wide range of initiatives ranging from the use of street theater to radio and TV shows targeting youth to the use of brief animated productions to promote children's rights or reach populations in hard-to-access areas. Examples include <i>Shuga</i> , a radio series to promote HIV Prevention in collaboration with the MTV Foundation, UNAIDS, and other agencies; production of video capsules for promotion of polio vaccination in Nigeria, in collaboration with Nollywood producer; use of street theater in Bangladesh to promote social norms change related to child marriage.

substantive economic growth over the past few years, and important investments have been made to improve the conditions of large segments of the population. However, significant inequality and exclusion gaps persist. Protection of children against violence, abuse, and exploitation remains one of the critical challenges for the country. Sixty-three percent of children and adolescents aged 1–14 years are victims of violent

discipline at home. *La Peor Novela* was launched in a context where 36% of young women marry before reaching 18 years, the highest percentage in Latin America and the Caribbean, and where existing social norms tolerate it.

In collaboration with the government of the Dominican Republic, NGOs, and private sector organizations, the soap opera falls under the first category of UNICEF's EE typology. It consisted of two stories divided into five short chapters, each ending with key information on the consequences of early marriage for girls and the country. For example, chapter 1 presents the story of Paola, a young girl who finds early union is a way out of sexual abuse at the hand of her stepfather; Paola's partner then abandons her after she becomes pregnant. In chapter 2, Kenia, a 14-year old girl, is given in early marriage by her mother in exchange for protection and economic stability, yet Kenia is mistreated and eventually kicked out for not meeting the man's expectation. Kenia's disappointed mother does not allow her back in the home, and the episode shows how Kenia's life takes a tragic turn. The goal was to challenge norms supporting early marriage, while at the same time showing that choices to marry early are often influenced by factors such as abuse or parental pressure and should not be judged.

La Peor Novela has been implemented in two distinctive phases. The first phase was the national broadcast of the soap opera which brought social visibility to early unions and shifted society's perceptions about them. The show reached at least 2.3 million people and contributed to greater levels of audience engagement compared to previous online-only campaigns, including an increase in positive comments from 30% to 63%. Monitoring data showed shifts in perceptions about child marriage, including a 20% increase (from 63% to 83%) among respondents who stated that "it is wrong, under any circumstances, that girls marry older men," and an 11% increase among respondents who said that "it is a crime for an adult to have sexual relations with a girl under 18 years of age." However, respondents continued to perceive child marriage as a private matter, tended to hold the parents or the family (28% to 62%) responsible for it, placed little responsibility on the men who engage in child marriage (only 11%), and did not see the need to intervene in such cases (nearly 50%). Similarly, perceptions about the role of men and women, including among adolescents between 12–17 years of age, illustrated gender inequalities that perpetuate early marriage; 92.6% believe that the main role of females is to be good women and mothers, while 87.2% believe that the

main role of men is to be economic providers (UNICEF, 2020). These results led to important dialogue between UNICEF and the government leading to commitments to ending early marriages, including a second phase focused on an EE intervention in schools. The second phase focuses on the development of an EE package that draws on the *La Peor Novela* episodes to promote prevention of early marriage at scale and with a long-term perspective through the country's schools.

ASSESSING THE USE OF COMMUNICATION THEORY IN *LA PEOR NOVELA*

While the program designers did not explicitly use these theories to develop *La Peor Novela*, we believe that analyzing it with theory provides important insights to substantiate our argument for greater integration of communication theory into EE. Social cognitive theory and other theories commonly used in EE provide an important basis for understanding some of the cognitive processes underlying individual change, but they do little to explain which narrative approaches are most likely to spark these cognitive processes. For this, theories such as the extended elaboration likelihood model (EELM) and the entertainment overcoming resistance model (EORM) might provide additional clarity. Additionally, we present the concept of “sensemaking” as a framework for understanding the cognitive processes audiences undergo as part of their engagement with EE content.

Extended Elaboration Likelihood Model (EELM) and the Entertainment Overcoming Resistance Model (EORM)

According to Petty and Cacioppo (1986), the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) posits that individuals process messages through two main channels: central processing which is concerned with attention to the message being presented and peripheral processing which focuses on cues. Persuasive messages sustain an individual's attention while prosocial subtext embedded in the narrative may present desired behaviors. The extended elaboration likelihood model (EELM), which developed from the earlier ELM, helps to identify factors that impact audience members' reception and processing of persuasive messages. For example, Slater and Rouner (2002) have found that “psychological reactance,” or a kind of resistance to a message that comes across as overtly persuasive, can

interfere with an individual's motivation to imitate behaviors. They go on to argue, however, that persuasive narratives lead to increased involvement of the audience in the narrative, and that such "absorption in the narrative may motivate deeper processing of a different kind" (p. 187); narratives can reduce counterarguing and help audiences come to endorse attitudes and behaviors modeled in the narrative. Shrum (2004) similarly finds that this involvement can lessen instances of message resistance.

The Entertainment Overcoming Resistance Model (EORM) goes a step further in detailing the importance of considering counterargument, as it provides a framework to understand aspects of a message that might cause resistance and suggests ways in which EE can mitigate this resistance (Moyer-Gusé, 2008). Message resistance occurs when individuals perceive their choices are threatened while engaging with persuasive messages, which then results in rejection of the message (Buller, Borland, & Burgoon, 1998). However, stories that present balanced, yet complex situations are able to overcome reactance that stems from this perceived threat to choices (Moyer-Gusé, 2008). Thus, we can see how narrative effects such as reactance, involvement, or transportation can all serve as variables that mediate EE effects (Wendorf Muhamad, 2016).

La Peor Novela provides a good example of how these narrative effects can influence the messages audience take away from the intervention. The various chapters of *La Peor Novela* show the detrimental effects that not only child marriage but also judgment and stigma can have on the individual. Recognizing the possibility that individuals may not perceive themselves as similar to the characters, and may counterargue (e.g., "that doesn't sound like me," "no one here acts that way"), the producers portray positive, negative, and neutral characters as in Miguel Sabido's original approach. However, unlike the Sabido Methodology, in the case of *La Peor Novela*, one of the main characters makes a choice that negatively impacts her life. Clearly, young girls should not be judged for making such decisions as they are influenced by multiple factors; thus, by eliminating potential instances of resistance, audiences are better able to focus on the intended message that child marriage was nonnormative.

Throughout the 10 episodes, audiences are presented with characters who engage in nonnormative behaviors, such as Kenia's mother, but also with characters demonstrating desired behaviors, like the neighbor telling Kenia's mother that she should not send her child off with an older man. Main characters at times express doubts about what to do and the consequences of engaging in or avoiding early marriage are portrayed as well.

This realistic presentation of a complex social issue is purposeful in that it allows audiences to engage with the material while mitigating reactance that may emerge as a result of fatalistic thinking (“there is no solution to this problem”).

*Overcoming Reactance Through Character Identification,
Transportation, and Sensemaking*

Character identification and transportation are two related narrative concepts that help us understand how viewers relate with the role models portrayed in the intervention. Character identification is the process through which audiences understand the characters’ experiences through finding shared attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, values, and/or experiences (Flavell, Botkin, Fry, Wright, & Jarvis, 1968). Identification involves elaboration on why the character might have made certain choices (Tal-Or & Cohen, 2010). Cohen (2001) found that character identification involves four dimensions: (1) feelings, (2) thoughts, (3) goals, and (4) transportation to the story. Through character identification, individuals are able to perform identities of others while retaining their own. This in turn allows for parallel processes of observing and internalizing prosocial attitudes and behaviors (Wendorf Muhamad & Kim, 2020). Transportation, or narrative involvement, is the process in which individuals are absorbed cognitively and emotionally into the story (Green & Brock, 2000). This process allows individuals to live experiences, instead of just witness the story. Transportation is an effective tool for reducing reactance, because for individuals to be fully immersed in stories, they must temporarily suspend belief (Gilbert, 1991). If the story is entertaining enough, the individual will be willing to discard certain preconceived attitudes or ideological differences with characters (Wendorf Muhamad, 2016).

La Peor Novela attempted to encourage both identification and transportation. Telling the stories of Paolo and Kenia, fictional characters similar in age, gender, and socioeconomic status to the target audience encouraged character identification through perceived similarity. The viewers were then asked by a mix of people from their communities to take the perspective of these characters, as they were subjected to abuse. This perspective taking was further encouraged by narratives that approach the issue from varying perspectives and scenarios that prompt viewers to become immersed by adopting a position within the story. Additional elements such as simplified language, culturally appropriate dialect, accuracy

of food, dress, and housing further the absorption process. Subtle details, although not central to the story line, enhance this sense of identification and absorption and reduce counterarguing. The prosocial subtext can be more effective and encourage viewers to further identify with the characters and understand their perspectives. Through this perspective taking, identification of shared values, beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors is possible, and viewers are able to assess what possibilities exist, given the circumstance facing the characters. In so doing, audiences are challenged to examine and question stigmatizing attitudes as a new reality unfolds through placing themselves in the experiences of the character.

Sensemaking. Sensemaking helps explain how individuals negotiate their experiences, attitudes, and behaviors. Sensemaking involves audiences rationalizing the characters and their own experiences, so they are understandable (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Maitlis, 2009; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005; Weick, 1995; Webb & Weick, 1979). When individuals are confronted with new, confusing, or surprising events, sensemaking can be activated. In the case of EE, viewers are challenged to rationalize and make sense of the experiences of the story characters, which can often be quite different from those of the viewer. According to Blatt, Christianson, Sutcliffe, and Rosenthal (2006), sensemaking operates through (1) confidence in one's understanding of the situation and (2) the nature (positive or negative) of the relationship with the others in shared experience. Given that EE interventions simulate fictional yet plausible worlds, they provide avenues for the viewers to understand how the characters perceive themselves, their environment, and norms.

La Peor Novela used this approach to help viewers that might not have had experience with child marriage or might have internalized it as normative to understand the topic. By presenting information on its harmful effects and potential solutions, *La Peor Novela* enables viewers to confront existing norms in a low resistance space, while at the same time understanding how said norms might have been enabled previously.

Sensemaking can also be a productive process to inform formative research when designing an EE intervention, as was the case for *La Peor Novela*. Younger participants surveyed after exposure to early versions of the EE package were more likely to identify the enacted behaviors as non-normative, while older ones tended to conform to the dominant normative expectation. More importantly, the data did not show a significant change in normative beliefs after viewing the EE intervention.

What might have caused this response? The intervention's designers attempted to understand this finding via sensemaking, by engaging

critically with the material presented in *La Peor Novela*. Although the show provided information at the end of the episode on why the enacted behavior was nonnormative, it did little in terms of portraying prosocial attitudes/behaviors that could be imitated. The team realized that this presentation of a social problem without a solution could, in turn, activate reactance among audience members. In response, the team developed short debriefing videos, presented before and after the soap opera, wherein individuals, demographically similar to the target population, speak directly to the audience. These clips not only provide potential solutions to viewers, but are also based on accepted cultural norms, such as community and togetherness, that might further mitigate any potential rejection of the message.

LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

Our analysis of the *La Peor Novela* has shown how communication theories can provide insights into the narrative processes that support the social and cognitive change process of EE and provides important lessons for better integration of communication theory into EE practice. Specifically, the *La Peor Novela* experience points to some insights that are relevant for practitioners, academics, and researchers who engage in EE interventions, especially in the context of international development programs that organizations such as UNICEF lead or support worldwide.

1. Without adequate integration of theory in EE, designers and producers may not have enough information about how audience members interact with the program content. While integration of theory is often seen as too costly or complex a process for development programs bound by time and resource constraints, in many cases, these perceived costs are outweighed by the benefits. The *La Peor Novela* formative research process, for example, demonstrated how applying a sensemaking theoretical lens helped producers avoid the cost of distributing a product that was not sufficiently effective in overcoming audience resistance.
2. Not only is the integration of theory critical, but this analysis has shown how *communication* theory in particular, as well as critical aspects derived from it such as character identification and transportation, can be powerful tools (both in the formative and evaluation stages) to understand how EE can effect change. We suggest that

using such narrative and communication theories *alongside* the social and cognitive theories historically used in EE will provide program planners with more powerful theoretical frameworks with which to approach this work. For example, in *La Peor Novela*, we see how communication concepts like transportation and identification can help to further understand how the role modeling (which drew on more traditional social cognitive theories) in *La Peor Novela* positively affects audience. In short, we argue for deliberate and systematic use of communication theories to maximize the power of social and behavioral theories to drive changes. However, doing so will require greater dialogue and sharing between C4D/SBCC program designers, EE producers and creative personnel, EE researchers, managers of development programs, donors, and decision makers to advocate for resource and time allocation for improved integration of communication theory.

3. While our analysis focuses primarily on the integration of communication theory in EE, we also argue that such efforts should be broadened to ensure that communication theory is central to all aspects of communication strategies used in international development beyond EE. Global fora for international development such as the Global Alliance for Social and Behavior Change and the Social and Behavior Change Communication Summit that serve as platforms to advocate for stronger integration of C4D and SBCC in international development should also be leveraged as spaces to more proactively and deliberately address the limited use of communication theory in EE interventions. Moreover, academic and professional communication gatherings where the boundaries of communication theory are also pushed should serve as active platforms to facilitate dialogue between development policy makers and communication practitioners. Lastly, technical tools and guidance that practically translate C4D and EE initiatives into practice should include specific sections that explain and illustrate how communication theory can make a difference both in the overarching aspects of social-ecological models as well as in specific components such as EE interventions. Such focus will ensure that capacity strengthening initiatives in C4D and SBCC and their actual application will effectively draw on the power of communication theory to inform more effective narrative-based interventions for change.

We would like to close by noting that this analysis has focused on a largely TV-based EE intervention, but the changing media landscape will increasingly call on us to think about EE differently. Historically, EE interventions were most often designed for and studied in the context of traditional media like television or radio (Sabido, 2004). Today we have a much wider variety of communication channels, including digital and mobile technologies, and social media platforms. Stories are no longer contained solely within the confines of the television episode, but storytelling often takes place across a transmedia landscape. While it will continue to be important for EE to draw on radio and television formats, especially in low resource settings, it is also important to look at the role of digital media, including interactive media such as video games and serious games (Wendorf Muhammad et. al., 2019). While considering these new landscapes, it will continue to be important to draw on theory, especially communication theories. In particular, this can be informed by a growing body of communication theory and research for the development of serious games that have evolved rapidly. Relying strongly on theoretical foundations emerging from scholars looking at these new digital, mobile, social media, video games, and transmedia approaches could strengthen efforts to achieve the behavioral and normative changes in EE initiatives undertaken by organizations such as UNICEF.

The authors would like to thank the UNICEF Dominican Republic Country Office, particularly Lilen Quiroga, Communication for Development Officer, and Vianka Oliveros, Communication Officer, who provided access to key resources, materials, and relevant background information.

REFERENCES

- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundation of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Prentice-Hall.
- Blatt, R., Christianson, M. K., Sutcliffe, K. M., & Rosenthal, M. M. (2006). A sensemaking lens on reliability. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 27(7), 897–917.
- Brown, W. (2013). Promoting health through entertainment-education media: Theory and practice. In R. Obregon & S. Waisbord (Eds.), *The handbook of global health communication* (pp. 121–143). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Buller, D. B., Borland, R., & Burgoon, M. (1998). Impact of behavioral intention on effectiveness of message features evidence from the family sun safety project. *Human Communication Research*, 24(3), 433–453.

- Cardey, S., Garforth, C., Govender, E., & Dyll-Myklebust, L. (2013). Entertainment education theory and practice in HIV/AIDS communication: A South Africa/United Kingdom comparison. *Critical Arts*, 27(3), 288–310.
- Chesterton, P. (2004). *Evaluation of the Meena Communication Initiative*. UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia Kathmandu. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/files/ROSA_2004_800_Meena_Comm_Initiative.pdf
- Cohen, J. (2001). Defining identification: A theoretical look at the identification of audiences with media characters. *Mass Communication and Society*, 4, 245–264.
- Flavell, J. H., Botkin, P. T., Fry, C. L., Wright, J. W., & Jarvis, P. E. (1968). *The development of role-taking and communication skills in children*. Wiley.
- Gilbert, D. S. (1991). How mental systems believe. *American Psychologist*, 46, 107–119.
- Gillespie, A. M., Obregon, R., El Asawi, R., Richey, C., Manoncourt, E., Joshi, K., et al. (2016). Social mobilization and community engagement central to the Ebola response in West Africa: Lessons for future public health emergencies. *Global Health: Science and Practice*, 4, 626–646.
- Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2000). The role of transportation in the persuasiveness of public narratives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79, 701–721.
- Johns Hopkins University Health Communication Capacity Collaborative. (n.d.). Social and behavior change communication saves lives. Retrieved from http://ccp.jhu.edu/wp-content/uploads/JHU_Social_and_Behaviour_FULL_OUTLINES_V2.pdf
- Maitlis, S. (2009). Who am I now? Sensemaking and identity in posttraumatic growth. In *Exploring positive identities and organizations: Building a theoretical and research foundation*. Routledge.
- Makanweni, B., & Salawu, A. (2018). Bridging theory and practice in entertainment education: An assessment of the conceptualization and design of *Tsha Tsha* in South Africa. *Communication*, 8(1) <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018758146>
- Moyer-Gusé, E. (2008). Toward a theory of entertainment persuasion: Explaining the persuasive effects of entertainment-education messages. *Communication Theory*, 18, 407–425.
- Obregon, R. and Guirguis, S. 2017. “Health promotion and communication responses to disease outbreaks – lessons from “Getting to Zero Ebola” and polio eradication”. International Union of Health Promotion and Education Global Conference, May, Curitiba, Brazil.
- Petraglia, J. (2007). Narrative intervention in behavior and public health. *Journal of Health Communication*, 12, 493–505.

- Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion. In *Communication and persuasion* (pp. 1–24). Springer.
- Piotrow, P., Kincaid, L., Rimon, J., & Rinehart, W. (1997). *Health communication: Lessons from family planning and reproductive health*. Praeger.
- Sabido, M. (2004). The origins of entertainment-education. In A. Singhal, M. J. Cody, E. M. Rogers, & M. Sabido (Eds.), *Entertainment-education and social change: History, research, and practice* (pp. 61–74). New York: Routledge.
- Shrum, L. J. (2004). The cognitive processes underlying cultivation effects are a function of whether the judgments are on-line or memory-based. *Communication*, 29(3), 327–344.
- Singhal, A., & Rogers, E. (1999). *Entertainment-education: A communication strategy for social change*. Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Slater, M. D., & Rouner, D. (2002). Entertainment education and elaboration likelihood: Understanding the processing of narrative persuasion. *Communication Theory*, 12, 173–191.
- Sood, S., Riley, A., & Alarcon, K. (2017). Entertainment-education and health and risk messaging. *Communication*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.245>
- Tal-Or, N., & Cohen, J. (2010). Understanding audience involvement: Conceptualizing and manipulating identification and transportation. *Poetics*, 38, 402–418.
- Tufte, T. (2008). Fighting AIDS with edutainment: Building on the Soul City experience in South Africa. In J. Servaes (Ed.), *Communication for development and social change* (pp. 327–346). Sage.
- UN Commission on Human Rights. (1990). Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- UNICEF. (2018). UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021: Executive Summary.
- UNICEF. (2019). *Communication for development (C4D)*. Supplement to the global annual results reports 2018.
- UNICEF. (2020). *Cambiando normas de género para prevenir el matrimonio infantil y las uniones tempranas en República Dominicana*. La experiencia de monitoreo de una intervención educativa. Republica Dominicana.
- Webb, E., & Weick, K. E. (1979). Unobtrusive measures in organizational theory: A reminder. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24(4), 650–659.
- Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations*. Sage.
- Weick, K. E., Sutcliffe, K. M., & Obstfeld, D. (2005). Organizing and the process of sensemaking. *Organization Science*, 16(4), 409–421.
- Wendorf Muhamad, J. (2016). *Beyond passive entertainment: Evaluating the role of active entertainment-education in the prevention of commercial sexual exploitation of children* (Doctoral dissertation).

- Wendorf Muhamad, J., & Kim, S. (2020). Serious games communicative tools for attitudinal and behavioral change. In D. O’Hair & M. O’Hair (Eds.), *Handbook of applied communication research*. Wiley.
- Wendorf Muhamad, J., Schrier, K., & Huse, L. K. (2019). Facilitating communicative environments: An exploration of game modalities as avenues for prosocial change. In M. Filimowicz & V. Tzankova (Eds.), *Reimagining communication: Mediation*. Routledge.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if you modified the licensed material. You do not have permission under this licence to share adapted material derived from this chapter or parts of it.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter’s Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter’s Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.



PART III

From Research to Impact



Using Audience Research to Understand and Refine a Radio Drama in Myanmar Tackling Social Cohesion

*Sally Gowland, Anna Colquhoun, Muk Yin Haung Nyoï,
and Van Sui Thawng*

Myanmar's media environment has undergone massive change over the past decade, but drama remains a top choice for audiences. At the same time, though an increase in news has created a more informed population, Myanmar has also seen a proliferation of fake news, misinformation, and hate speech which can often exacerbate long-running religious and ethnic divides. BBC Media Action created the radio drama the *Tea Cup Diaries* to tackle some of these issues and engage audiences in a family-based drama which would increase audiences' understanding of diversity in Myanmar and challenge negative portrayals of different ethnic and

S. Gowland (✉)
BBC Media Action, London, UK
e-mail: sally.Gowland@bbc.co.uk

A. Colquhoun • M. Y. H. Nyoï • V. S. Thawng
BBC Media Action, Yangon, Myanmar
e-mail: anna.colquhoun@mm.bbcmmediaaction.org;
haung.nyoï@mm.bbcmmediaaction.org; vansui.thawng@mm.bbcmmediaaction.org

religious groups. On air since 2015, audience research has been critical throughout the series broadcast to inform storylines and characters, to test content, and to evaluate whether drama can play a role in challenging negative attitudes and increasing tolerance and understanding of different groups. This chapter showcases how audience research has been used throughout the creative process, and the importance of investment in research on a sensitive and challenging subject to ensure that dramatic storylines balance between reflecting and challenging audiences' lives and attitudes.

MYANMAR'S ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

Myanmar is a country rich in ethnic and cultural diversity. The Bamar majority makes up about two-thirds of the population, but there are a further 134 ethnic groups in the country. While the large majority of people are Buddhists, a significant minority are Christian, Muslim, or Hindu (World Population Review, 2019). Decades of military dictatorship and domination of Myanmar's political, educational, and religious institutions by the Burmese Buddhist majority have resulted in discriminatory laws, differentiated access to social services, and widespread discrimination and negative stereotyping of ethnic and religious minority groups in the country. The concept of national identity and unity is heavily contested and citizenship is politicized, with powerful political interest groups often using media to sow division and deepen the divides. In addition, many people have limited exposure to other ethnic and religious groups, particularly in rural parts of the country. These factors have narrowed the public space for constructive discussion on inter-faith and inter-ethnic issues. The proliferation of hate speech, misinformation, and fake news has been exacerbated by the rapid expansion of mobile internet access among audiences with limited digital literacy, which has made divisions deeper and more widespread, heightening the climate of mistrust and antagonism. Amid these tensions, an uncertain political climate, and active conflict in the north and eastern border states of the country, information for the public that aims to promote social inclusion is severely limited. Both rural and urban populations have limited access to information that acknowledges Myanmar's diversity, or that provides a more tolerant narrative, and that helps to bridge divides rather than create them.

THE *TEA CUP DIARIES* RADIO DRAMA

Myanmar has undergone a transformation in its media landscape over the past decade. Strict censorship rules have eased, transforming it from a society dependent on a few radio stations and a heavily censored print media to one where most people have access to a range of broadcast, online, and print media. Based on our BBC Media Action 2020 national survey of the population ages 15 and older, radio is used by 39% of adults in Myanmar, and remains an important platform for rural, Bamar, and poorer audiences; 40% of people on low income levels and 43% of rural audiences still rely on radio, compared to 32% of their urban counterparts.

To reach this key target audience of rural Bamar Buddhists, BBC Media Action launched the radio drama *Tea Cup Diaries*. The drama aims to increase understanding and tolerance between different ethnic and religious groups across Myanmar. Specifically, it aims to increase audiences' understanding of, openness to, and respect for people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds, challenge negative portrayals of different groups, and encourage discussion and reflection around negative views or stereotypes about different religious and ethnic groups which are prevalent in the population. For example, the widespread use of fake news, hate speech, and misinformation targeting Muslims and notably the Rohingya community in Myanmar has been well documented (Human Rights Council, 2018).

Drama is a popular format in Myanmar and is an effective vehicle to address complex or sensitive issues related to conflict or division, ranging from facilitating communication between opposing groups to strengthening civil society and tackling misperceptions of, and changing attitudes toward, the 'other' (Cramer, Goodhand, & Morris, 2016; DFID, 2000). Dramas and soap operas enable audience members to put themselves in others' shoes and can address a range of pertinent issues in a compelling and emotive way. Indeed, research suggests that when audience members are highly engaged, transported by, or immersed in a fictional narrative, they often experience attitude and belief change in line with those expressed in the story (Green, 2021; Nabi & Green, 2015).

The 15-minute weekly radio drama is aimed at rural audiences and has aired on Myanmar Radio, the national broadcaster, since 2015. It focuses on the family and community around a local tea shop in the outskirts of Yangon (see Fig. 10.1). Listeners follow the funny, heart-warming, and



Fig. 10.1 The *Tea Cup Diaries* production team recording on location in Yangon. (Credit: BBC Media Action)

realistic stories of various characters that reflect Myanmar’s religious and ethnic diversity. These characters include the tea shop owners, their friends and children, as well as the tea master, a cook, and waiters as they face the day-to-day struggles that everyone experiences—worries about money, jobs, family, friends, and relationships.

HOW RESEARCH HAS SHAPED THE DRAMA

Since the drama began, across the course of nearly 6 years, we have spoken to more than 10,000 people in Myanmar to understand their media habits, access to information, views on fake news and misinformation, and how this relates to ethnic and religious tension. Through a combination of surveys, focus groups, and in-depth interviews, we have systematically understood our audiences and used these insights to help shape the different strategies the project has used to develop and refine the drama.

Audience Research Helped Shape the Premise of the Drama

Research Method. At the start of the drama in 2014, we conducted an in-depth qualitative study which included 24 paired interviews with a mix of male and female adults in Myanmar from a range of different religions and ethnicities. We also did 13 key informant interviews with media experts, members of Civil society organisations (CSOs), and international experts on peacebuilding. This initial formative research aimed to understand how key target audiences felt about people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Research Insights. We learned that people’s main struggles and concerns were around money and the future of their family—regardless of their ethnic or religious background. Poverty and unemployment were the key issues people were worried about. Secondly, when we dug down to try and understand what people thought about those from other ethnic and religious groups and their interaction, we found that people often lived ‘side by side but not together’. Most people had few and often very limited interactions with people from different backgrounds, and interaction usually occurred outside the home, or at places like local tea, snack or beer bars, during work, and, for young people, at school. Sometimes people talked about having casual friendships with people from different religious or ethnic backgrounds, but it was not the norm. Thirdly, it was very clear that there was a perceived hierarchy of religions—especially among the Bamar Buddhist majority. They felt that Hinduism was most similar to Buddhism. People from the Christian faith were less close to them. They had the least in common with Muslims, and they did not feel that Rohingya Muslims were even part of the country. Large-scale nationally representative media survey data confirmed that in order to reach the key target audience of rural Bamar Buddhist populations, radio would be the most effective platform.

Research Uptake. This research helped the production team shape the very premise of the drama itself. For example, the production team began to craft a radio drama which centered around a family struggling with the same key issues the audience told us about in our research—money, their livelihoods, and the future of their families. The decision to set it in a tea shop also came from the audience telling us what type of locations they would interact with people from different backgrounds. The tea shop in the drama is set in a community on the outskirts of the capital, Yangon—a place where a diverse range of characters would realistically come and

mingle, interact, and chat. Tea shops in Myanmar have a reputation for welcoming people from all backgrounds and walks of life. They provide a space for people to share a cup of tea, some food, and exchange ideas, opinions, problems, hopes, and aspirations, so the drama aimed to leverage this.

Finally, the research helped production make decisions about character selection. The research used case studies of research participants' experiences as someone from a particular ethnic or religious group; the production team drew on these real-life examples to shape the drama's characters and their experiences. The aim of the drama was to reach and engage the Bamar Buddhist majority; therefore, characters in the drama were carefully chosen—with a Bamar Buddhist couple as central characters who were the tea shop owners. The research had found that there were different levels of acceptability toward people from different religious faiths, so this had to be considered in how much to feature characters from these different faiths.

For example, to challenge misinformation around Christian beliefs, James, the young tea shop waiter, has been a central character across the series, and the audience has followed him growing up over the years. The plots have featured him in baptism ceremonies, going to bible camps and participating in Christmas hymn singing. In contrast, the introduction and featuring of characters from the Muslim faith have been more gradual. The research highlighted the negative attitudes around different religions and ethnicities held by the target audience. Therefore, owing to audience sensitivity and fear of Muslims, Muslim characters were introduced in early episodes as secondary characters in the neighborhood. They gradually became more central to storylines as the audience became fonder of them (see Fig. 10.2).

Characters and Plot Development Responded to How Audiences Were Reacting to the Drama

Research Method. At the outset, qualitative research with target audiences helped the production team shape the drama. The production team appreciated having these audience insights but wanted them regularly in order to continuously understand how audiences were reacting to the show to inform the future direction of the series. As a result, audience panels were set up to ensure that the production team could draw on feedback from listeners to inform the program. Listeners from regions where



Fig. 10.2 Recording an episode of the *Tea Cup Diaries*. (Credit: BBC Media Action)

media data indicated high program listenership were selected to participate in short telephone and face-to-face interviews (depending on circumstances) every 2 to 3 weeks. Questions focused on recall, engagement, and new learning from the program.

Using a research panel (albeit small) has been integral to helping the creative team understand how content is engaging audiences and to help them make creative decisions. For example, the panel studies allow for a highly adaptive and responsive research and creative process as it provides timely and relevant feedback for production teams, and the research team could update the questionnaire set depending on production needs at that time.

Furthermore, given the sensitive nature of some of the issues the drama aimed to tackle and a constantly changing socio-political landscape around these issues (e.g. the Rohingya crisis igniting in August 2017, continued ongoing armed clashes between ethnic groups, and increasing levels of fake news and misinformation fueling ethnic and religious tension), it became very important to keep abreast of how audiences were engaging with *Tea Cup Diaries*.

Research Insights. The audience panels helped us to understand how audiences were reacting to and engaging with the drama. Research conducted early in the series found that audiences did not always recognize different characters' ethnic or religious backgrounds—despite the clues and signifiers given in the show. This was a problem because if people were unable to recognize the different backgrounds of the characters, then it would be difficult for them to begin to reflect on and discuss that difference. Audiences began to warm to characters having friendships or romantic relationships with people from different ethnic or religious backgrounds, but it was evident from the ongoing research that deep-rooted beliefs and discriminatory beliefs were still present.

Different races are not the problem, but it is a problem for different religions [in response to an inter-ethnic marriage in the show].—Female, Listener, Hinthada

Audiences engaged with storylines or characters which dealt with everyday issues that they also experienced, such as arguments with partners, money worries, and concerns for their children. For example, older audience members said they were most interested in the characters U Chit Maung and Daw Kin Thit, the couple that owns the tea shop. They dealt with the challenges of married life, keeping peace within their family, and managing their business. Female listeners regularly mentioned that they identified with Daw Khin Thit and her daily workload, while male listeners related to U Chit Maung's perspective as head of the household.

I like Daw Khin Thit most in the drama because she works for her family and I'm also doing the same for my family. I am identical with Daw Khin Thit. By listening to the *Tea Cup Diaries*, I learn from Daw Khin Thit how to guide my children.—Female listener, Myaing

Research Uptake

Every two weeks the research team gave us feedback. When we first started having the feedback from the audience panel, we didn't hear what we expected. We learned more about our audiences' engagement with the program and how they sometimes missed the themes we thought they understood. We saw that we needed to repeat key points we'd mentioned in the start of the series—for example that lending with interest is not used by Muslims—a number of times. We then started to see that audiences were talking about this more.—Maung Maung Swe, Managing Editor of *Tea Cup Diaries*

The research found that at the start of the series, audiences were not always recognizing subtle markers of characters' ethnic or religious backgrounds. For example, there was a lack of recognition that a Muslim father and son were of the Muslim faith; signifiers which were used at the start of the series such as the son not coming to band practice on a Friday or declining to eat pork were not cutting through. These findings gave confidence to the production team to be bolder and more explicit, for example having the characters talk more openly about Muslim traditions and practices—around managing money or weddings. These characters also became less secondary and more central to storylines. For example, they created more storylines which showed tension between these characters and other members of the community. One storyline featured a local plumber U Hla Mint (of Muslim faith) who was defended by his friend, tea shop owner U Chit Maung (of Buddhist faith), when the community elders did not want him to come and fix the plumbing in the local community center.

The research also helped the production team to understand how far they could press different inter-ethnic and inter-religious relationships. For example, a romantic relationship between Sam (a Karen Christian man) and Htet Htet (a Bamar Buddhist woman) was developed which the audience warmed to. A friendship between Inn Gine (Buddhist woman) and Naing Gyi (Muslim man) did not develop into a romantic relationship as it was clear from the audience panel this would not yet be acceptable.

The *Tea Cup Diaries* is unique in its timely reflection of real-life events woven into the drama's plotlines, and the impact of COVID-19 is no exception. The production team was quick to adapt to the upheaval—from setting up home recording studios (see Fig. 10.3), to introducing new storylines reflecting how different characters are dealing with the pandemic. Recent storylines have included the economic impact on the Tea Shop (and the commencement of a food delivery service!), the implications of lockdown, characters discussing rumors and fake news they have seen about the virus, and implementing physical distancing measures with those around them. Feedback from the audience found that they were surprised the show continued to air, but very much appreciated the fact that it did. They reflected on the fake news and misinformation characters were finding (which they were also experiencing) and the reality of how relationships were being affected (such as young people in relationships not being able to see one another). They also reported learning specific health information from the show, such as the 6 feet physical distancing



Fig. 10.3 Recording an episode of the *Tea Cup Diaries*. (Credit: BBC Media Action)

measure, effective handwashing, and avoiding large gatherings. With the audience panel research approach already set up, we shifted to a focus on telephone-based interviewing to ensure that continuous feedback between the audience and production was maintained, despite the significant changes in working practices for both the production and research teams.

We should respect and follow [COVID-19 advice], as it is happening all over the world. We should not be neglectful and forget. [The show] is presenting according to what is practically happening outside—it is more complete and meaningful as they warn us with storylines and drama.—Male listener, Bago

MAKING AND MEASURING THE IMPACT OF THE DRAMA

Ongoing audience panel feedback has been critical for making speedy production decisions. But across the broadcast period, we have also undertaken more in-depth impact studies using a range of methodologies to

measure the reach and impact of the drama. To measure the number of people listening to the show, we put questions in three of our other project's nationally representative media and impact surveys in 2015, 2018, and 2020. We have also conducted several qualitative impact studies earlier in the series to understand how and why listeners are engaging with the show. This in-depth qualitative research helped us to think about how to frame quantitative survey measures in a bespoke impact survey we conducted in one state where listenership to the show was particularly high. In 2018 in the Irrawaddy region, we sampled 800 radio listeners (400 who were *Tea Cup Diaries* listeners and 400 who were not) to test and measure quantitatively, for the first time, how the *Tea Cup Diaries* was influencing people's knowledge and attitudes around social cohesion issues.

Impact of Tea Cup Diaries

Reaching the Target Audience. In a nationally representative survey of adults in Myanmar, 39% listen to the radio and Myanmar Radio (which broadcasts the *Tea Cup Diaries*) remains the most popular radio station. The *Tea Cup Diaries* reaches 4.3 million adults, 1.7 million of whom are tuning in regularly (at least to every other program). This survey also found that *Tea Cup Diaries* regularly reaches rural audiences particularly well—its audience is 73% rural, 40% female and 60% male. Based on our 2020 nationwide survey of 2985 people, over three-quarters (78%) of the audience are from the Bamar ethnic group, indicating the show is successfully reaching its target audience.

Listening for Education and Entertainment. Qualitative research to evaluate the drama found that audience members listen to *Tea Cup Diaries* to be entertained and educated. As discussed above, believable characters and storylines that include romance, marriage, family, and romantic relationships and running a business have helped engage listeners, as many see themselves and their lives reflected in the program. When asked in our 2018 impact survey what engages them most in the drama, 52% of listeners said they liked the drama because it educates them, 43% said they liked the characters, and 24% said it was entertaining.

Listeners Discussed Diversity Issues and Gained Knowledge. Discussion plays a key role in social and behavior change communication (Chatterjee, Bhanot, Frank, Murphy, & Power, 2009; Frank et al., 2012). There is growing evidence that where discussion takes place, attitudes are

more likely to change (Snow & Taylor, 2015). Listeners also reported discussing issues raised in the drama in their everyday lives. They talked about certain storylines—particularly dramatic and controversial ones such as Nway Nway’s adoption (the tea shop owner’s daughter finding out she was adopted and belonged to a different ethnic group) or U Chit Maung (the male tea shop owner) going to see an old sweetheart. In our survey of 800 radio listeners, people who listened to *Tea Cup Diaries* who were more emotionally engaged with the drama were 1.6 times more likely to discuss issues relating to ethnic and religious tension compared to less engaged listeners.

The same survey also found that people who listened to *Tea Cup Diaries* were 1.6 times more likely to have higher levels of knowledge about religions other than their own compared to non-listeners. Qualitative impact research provided the examples of how this had happened. For example, listeners reported learning about different money management practices, citing a scene when U Hla Myint explained to U Chit Maung about the pitfalls of lending or borrowing money (as per the rules of his Muslim faith).

The drama showcases the diverse groups of people living in Myanmar by using authentic voices and actors—a device that audience members appreciated. Listeners also reported learning about the customs of different ethnic and religious groups from the program.

We learned that Christian people go to church every Sunday and they ask for forgiveness and have prayer. At first, I thought they didn’t have devotion, that they only sing and it’s finished. Now I know that they also pray.—
Female listener, Pekon

Emotional engagement with the drama was key for impact. Attitudes toward different ethnic and religious groups can be deep-rooted and take a long time to shift. While research participants sometimes had mixed views on storylines that feature inter-ethnic and inter-religious friendships and relationships, survey analysis found that the more emotionally engaged listeners were with the program, the more likely they were to accept such relationships, compared to those who do not listen. Regular listeners who were highly emotionally engaged were 1.9 times more likely than non-listeners to demonstrate higher levels of acceptance toward inter-ethnic and religious friendships and relationships.

I like the parts that [the program] includes about religion. They don't discriminate. They are very united.—Male listener, Ayeyarwady

Negative Ethnic and Religious Attitudes Remain. Though the impact data indicated that the *Tea Cup Diaries* had been effective in key areas such as improving knowledge, discussion, and attitudes, it was evident that many discriminatory attitudes remain prevalent among the audience and will continue to take a long time to change. For example, the 2018 impact survey asked all 800 respondents (92% of whom were Buddhist) which religious groups it would be most unacceptable to marry or be friends with. People from the Muslim faith continued to be on top of this list (59% felt it was unacceptable to be friends with someone Muslim and 68% felt it was unacceptable to marry someone Muslim). Those who were more likely to hold negative attitudes were women. This may be because of their lower levels of interaction with other groups, as women, particularly within the older generation, are more likely to stay at home. It may also be linked to common narratives related to Islam in Myanmar which suggest that Muslim men pose a risk of physical and sexual violence against Bamar women. In contrast, people who were more likely to demonstrate more accepting attitudes were people with higher education levels, people from non-Bamar groups, and those with wider social networks.

The whole world knows that Muslims tortured Myanmar girls and women after they got married to them.—Young Female Listener, Bamar Buddhist

Tea Cup Diaries also aims to get people discussing these issues more through its engaging storylines—but it is clear that this also remains a challenge. When we asked audience members in our impact survey if they discussed the show with others, only 20% of listeners said they did. When we look at this within the broader picture we start to understand why—across the whole sample only 30% of respondents reported discussing religious or ethnic tension with other people (in comparison to 74% reporting they discussed key social and political issues). This indicates that this remains a highly sensitive topic for people to talk about. Discussion has been a key driver of impact in drama; therefore, it's important that the *Tea Cup Diaries* continues to find the right angles and methods to encourage reflection and discussion among its audience members going forward.

LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

Using a Variety of Different Evaluation Methods to Understand Impact has been Key. We used lots of qualitative research to first understand how the drama was landing and engaging audiences. We then looked at other key measures and indicators used in measuring ethnic and religious conflict in order to design an evaluation which would measure the effect *Tea Cup Diaries* was having at a larger scale—through a bespoke impact survey of 800 radio listeners. Advanced regression analysis on this data helped us demonstrate clearly that there was a positive association between the outcomes the drama was aiming to have and measured levels of emotional engagement. This was always our hunch from what we heard in qualitative research but having it emerge from larger-scale quantitative research was critical for building our evidence base—and helped crystallize a key insight for the production team—emotional engagement is key to ensuring drama has real impact.

Identify Your Key Stakeholders to Ensure Research Uptake. The *Tea Cup Diaries*' creative lead (Managing Editor, Maung Maung Swe) is the key person in the creative team who values research, can easily understand and digest findings, and knows how to adapt the *Tea Cup Diaries* content accordingly. He acts as a champion for research and makes sure his team and freelance writers understand what the research insights are telling them and makes sure changes are made in relation to these findings. We always think about who our primary client is (Burmese producers and script writers) and ensure research is communicated to them in the most relevant way. Reports are written in Burmese, are written in plain language, and include quotes to illustrate key points so the whole team can understand. An English summary is then circulated for international staff to follow. Even when sending emails to production with the panel findings we think about how we can make sure they will read them—this includes snappy titles in the email header (“Want to know what impact your show has made this week?”) to telling them how long it will take to read attached reports. The key way to engage them, however, is to ensure the production team attends field research when it is taking place—so they can meet the audience themselves. This helps them feel a sense of ownership of the research and have led to analysis discussions with their own production team as a result. Researchers have also employed production techniques when talking to audiences in the field—such as creating short “vox pops” of audience members talking about why they like the show.

Adapt Research Methodology Based on Learnings. To do such quick testing and feedback, having a strong research team and embedded process within production is key. We have an inquisitive local research team with a strong understanding of the audience and we have strong engagement from our ‘client’—the production team. The sensitivity of the topic being discussed means having that feedback loop from the audience is vital. The research methodologies have also improved over time, having ongoing feedback mechanisms initially with the same audience members were very useful. However, now the audience panel is set up in such a way that new listeners are included in each round of recruitment—this is in order to minimize bias from previous participation and ensure we rigorously capture an accurate and open picture of how audiences are engaging with the drama. Conducting survey research with audiences on what they think and feel about people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds required significant cognitive testing and piloting to ensure survey measures were as effective as they possibly could be and ensuring we were asking questions in a sensitive way. For example, names and terms used to describe other religious or ethnic groups vary a great deal by location and community. As such, sometimes it can be difficult to know which groups are being referenced. We learned that among people in Myanmar, there is quite a bit of confusion between religion and ethnicity. When we talked to Bamar Buddhist audiences, for example, they often refer to ‘Kalars’ as a catchall derogatory term for people from South Asian descent—who may be Muslim, Hindu, or just generally darker skinned. Within this context, it can be really tricky to understand and measure impact on how people think and feel about specific different groups we put in our drama.

Quantifying Attitudes and Beliefs Is Difficult. It can be difficult to capture the nuance in quantitative studies, especially when tried and tested measures looking at these issues have been developed in very different countries and contexts. We adapted measures as best we could, tested them thoroughly, and always ensured we used both qualitative and quantitative research to fully understand these complex issues.

Know Your Audience (and how that may affect your research findings). In Myanmar, audiences rarely offer ‘negative’ feedback on content. To encourage more constructive criticism, we framed interview questions in simple terms of ‘likes and dislikes’ and ‘ways the program could be improved’.

Build Partnership Between Creative and Research Teams. We strongly believe that the evidence of *Tea Cup Diaries* creating a positive impact has been, in part, owing to the overall approach of using audience research to shape and test the drama. The creative team's engagement with audience research—especially methodological approaches which have enabled ongoing monitoring and feedback which they can act upon in line with production timelines—has been particularly effective. Rapid and regular feedback (even if it's small scale) is valued and helpful. For example, the use of audience panel studies to gather small-scale but frequent feedback to gauge how listeners are engaging with content has been very useful for our production team as it creates a continuous feedback mechanism to help production teams adapt and review storylines regularly. It also allowed the research team to change questions we ask listeners based on new areas of interest that arise and to match production needs. The longer the program is on air, the more it pushes boundaries in addressing sensitive storylines (such as more inter-ethnic and inter-religious relationships being featured). Working in partnerships between the creative and production teams is vital for checking how sensitive storylines or different character development could be. This fusion of knowing the audience and creative ideas is especially important in creating a drama which tackles sensitive subjects, dissimilar to any other drama in the market.

Develop Relationships to Enable Sensitive Storylines. Using regular systematic audience research to shape storylines is also very helpful in facilitating our relationship with our broadcast partner, state broadcasters, Myanmar radio. For example, when sensitive storylines have been included in episodes and the broadcaster is worried about potential backlash, we are in a position to share audience feedback with them in order to help convince them that these are acceptable, appropriate, and realistic storylines. As a result, we find that when we share audience research with our broadcast partners they really value and appreciate it (as they rarely conduct any themselves). The number of series produced over several years has also provided the needed space and time to take the audience on a journey with the characters and to address sensitive issues gradually. The drama has been funded by a range of donors for the length of series, but during series breaks the production team has rebroadcast highlights of episodes in order to retain audience engagement.

These lessons learned and best practices continue to guide and shape the development of the *Tea Cup Diaries* which, though popular and making an impact, is competing for audiences in an increasingly digital media

space. As such, the drama's Facebook page is a new focus for building and engaging newer, more urban, and younger audiences. The audience research going forward will also focus more on understanding the engagement and impact we can have in this online space.

REFERENCES

- Chatterjee, J. S., Bhanot, A., Frank, L. B., Murphy, S. T., & Power, G. (2009). The importance of interpersonal discussion and self-efficacy in knowledge, attitude, and practice models. *International Journal of Communication*, 3, 607–634.
- Cramer, C., Goodhand, J., & Morris, R. (2016). *Evidence synthesis: What interventions have been effective in preventing or mitigating armed violence in developing and middle-income countries?* Department for International Development.
- DFID. (2000). *Working with the media in conflicts and other emergencies*. DFID report. [Online]. Retrieved from https://www.adelaide.edu.au/acru/pubs/DFID_media_&_conflict.pdf
- Frank, L. B., Chatterjee, J. S., Chaudhuri, S., Lapsansky, C., Bhanot, A., & Murphy, S. T. (2012). Conversation and compliance: Role of interpersonal discussion and social norms in public communication campaigns. *Journal of Health Communication*, 17(9), 1050–1067. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10810730.2012.665426>
- Green, M. (2021). Transportation into narrative worlds. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Human Rights Council. (2018, September 10–28). Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar. Retrieved from https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/HRCouncil/FFM-Myanmar/A_HRC_39_64.pdf
- Nabi, R. L., & Green, M. C. (2015). The role of a narrative's emotional flow in promoting persuasive outcomes. *Media Psychology*, 18(2), 137–162.
- Snow, C., & Taylor, W. (2015). *Media, discussion and attitudes in fragile contexts*. BBC Media Action. Retrieved from <http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/pdf/research/media-discussion-attitudes-fragile-contexts-report.pdf>
- World Population Review. (2019). Myanmar population 2019. Retrieved from <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/myanmar-population/>

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if you modified the licensed material. You do not have permission under this licence to share adapted material derived from this chapter or parts of it.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.





Social Norms Theory and Measurement in Entertainment-Education: Insights from Case Studies in Four Countries

*Amy Henderson Riley, Farren Rodrigues,
and Suruchi Sood*

SOCIAL NORMS IN ENTERTAINMENT-EDUCATION

Entertainment-education (EE) is formally defined in other texts as “the process of purposely designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate in order to increase audience members’ knowledge about an educational issue, create favorable attitudes, *shift social norms* [emphasis added by us], and change overt behavior” (Singhal & Rogers 1999; Singhal & Rogers, 2002; Singhal & Rogers, 2004, p. 5). Although this definition of EE has evolved over time, social norms remain a fundamental part of this creative communication strategy (Poindexter, 2004). But while social norms have been considered since the beginning

A. H. Riley (✉)

Jefferson College of Population Health, Philadelphia, PA, USA

e-mail: Amy.Riley@jefferson.edu

F. Rodrigues • S. Sood

Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA, USA

e-mail: ss3724@drexel.edu

© The Author(s) 2021

L. B. Frank, P. Falzone (eds.), *Entertainment-Education Behind the Scenes*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-63614-2_11

of EE, specifically how social norms have been measured in research and evaluation, and what that has meant in terms of EE practice, has been an evolution that has mirrored the advancement of social science theory and research. Two of us (Amy and Suruchi) have been fortunate to help advance the science and practice of EE in our careers as academic researchers. This chapter presents case studies of social norms from our shared experiences leading research projects in four global settings, some personal experiences, and lessons we learned along the way. Farren was a graduate assistant at the time of this writing and helped us immensely in what we hope is an accessible chapter for EE practitioners and enthusiasts that furthers a dialogue on EE research and practice, particularly around social norms.

The Sabido television programs in Latin America were some of the first theoretically grounded examples of modern EE. From the beginning, folks thought about EE's impact on social norms. A retrospective qualitative study of the program *Simplemente Maria* found young women signed up for adult literacy classes in the countries where the program aired and thus EE researchers drew conclusions regarding exposure and social change (Singhal, Obregon, & Rogers, 1995). The Indian soap opera *Hum Log* was an early replication of the EE format outside of Spanish-speaking countries and included educational information on family planning, gender equality, and social norms (Singhal & Rogers, 1988). A qualitative study analyzed the text of letters written to the show and drew conclusions about social norms, as did results from a survey (Ryerson, 1994). As modern social science evolved, so too did attempts to measure social norms as a result of EE using advances in technology. For example, an evaluation of the recent Indian television show *Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon* analyzed the content of 1.7 million phone calls, analysis which would have been technologically challenging in early evaluations of EE (Wang & Singhal, 2018). EE research has since followed the theoretical advances in social norms over time.

SOCIAL NORMS CONSTRUCTS AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

The literature on social norms approaches using EE can appear overwhelming to both practitioners and academics alike. There are a plethora of constructs, theories, and models, which can be confusing and seemingly

esoteric. To keep it simple, social norms are the unwritten rules that guide human behavior; they are what we do, what we believe others do (construct 1 in Table 11.1), and what we believe others think we should do (construct 2) (WHO, 2010). For their existence, social norms inherently require a reference group (construct 3), that is a network of people to whom we identify and compare ourselves (Lapinski & Rimal, 2005). This reference group determines norms because identity with a specific group influences whether or not a behavior is considered normative within the group and, in turn, may predict whether or not a new behavior will be adopted (Goldstein, Cialdini, & Griskevicius, 2008). Members of a group expect, are expected to follow, and are motivated to follow norms because of expectations of sanctions for non-adherence (construct 4) and rewards for adherence (construct 5). Finally, collective norms (construct 6) are

Table 11.1 Summary of six social norms constructs

<i>Constructs by many names</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Theorists/theoretical model(s)</i>
1. Descriptive norms/ empirical expectations	Beliefs about what other people do (i.e., perceived prevalence)	Cialdini, Reno, and Kallgren (1990) Bicchieri (2006, 2016) Mackie, Moneti, Shakya, and Denny (2015)
2. Injunctive norms/ subjective norms/ normative expectations	Beliefs about what others approve of/think people should do	Cialdini et al. (1990) Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) Bicchieri (2006, 2016)
3. Reference group	A group of people that a person feels a connection or identity with	Lapinski and Rimal (2005) Costenbader, Lenzi, Hershov, Ashburn, and McCraher (2017)
4. Sanctions/punishments	Beliefs about the perceived sanctions/punishments	Bendor and Swistak (2001) Rimal and Real (2005) Rimal (2008) Mackie et al. (2015)
5. Benefits/rewards	Beliefs about the perceived benefits/rewards	Rosenstock (1974) Bandura (1977) Rimal and Real (2005) Rimal (2008)
6. Collective norms	Actual prevalence of a behavior	Kaggwa, Diop, and Storey (2008) Storey and Kaggwa (2009) Sedlander and Rimal (2019)

what people actually do, that is, the actual prevalence of a behavior. While we realize we are oversimplifying a bit, we acknowledge that this work draws from the work of various scholars across several disciplines, and our aim here is simply to summarize the social norms constructs and provide key citations from where these constructs are selected.

The social norms constructs outlined above emerge from a host of different theories. Several theories of individual change include social norms, such as the theory of planned behavior, developed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), which provides a way to predict intentions and subsequently behavior through perceived subjective norms. This theory indicates beliefs have to take into consideration the strength of a norm and whether or not to comply with it (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2008). The theory of normative social behavior (Rimal & Lapinski, 2015; Rimal & Real, 2005; Lapinski & Rimal, 2005; Rimal, Lapinski, Cook, & Real, 2005) is another theory practitioners may be familiar with. This theory relies on descriptive and injunctive norms (explained in Table 11.1), and also incorporates “outcome expectations.” This idea that expectations of socially sanctioned rewards and punishments motivate behaviors is critical when designing EE by allowing intended audiences to vicariously experience benefits.

Other theorizing includes social norms as part of a larger equation of behavior and social change. The theory of bounded normative influence (Kincaid, 2004), for example, is a communication theory that derives from the diffusion of innovations (Rogers, 2003) approach by postulating that every innovation begins as a deviation from existing social norms. According to the theory of bounded normative influence, social norms and behavior occur within relatively bounded, local subgroups of a social system rather than the system as a whole. Across communication theorizing, norms are considered to be an intermediate step that have to change in order to accomplish behavioral outcomes. The use of a broader social-ecological perspective in this type of theorizing situates individuals within their broader environment (inter-personal, community, institutional, societal, etc.) and allows for analysis at different levels of influence and the development of strategies to impact them.

Another set of key theories are narrative persuasion theories. The term narrative persuasion is an umbrella term that comes from the field of communication and encompasses a set of theoretical constructs that each explain how storytelling (or narrative) engenders change. These constructs include narrative transportation (Green & Brock, 2000), narrative engagement (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009), and identification with characters

(Cohen, 2001). In short, these ideas explain how the innate properties of storytelling are what that bring about change in a person's knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs as a result of exposure to EE programs. Have you ever gotten so lost in a story that you blocked out the rest of the activity happening in the physical room you are sitting in? Have you ever yelled at the television for your favorite character to “watch out!” or cried when something sad happened in a beloved movie? As humans and communicators, we are instinctively persuaded by stories when we get lost in the world of the story and its characters. There is, in fact, a growing body of research that illustrates people are more likely to remember and apply didactic health information when they experience such information in a narrative versus a non-narrative format, and when narratives and characters are designed to be similar to themselves (Frank, Murphy, Chatterjee, Moran, & Baezconde-Garbanati, 2015). This idea of narrative persuasion is not new. Research looking at what is called “parasocial interaction”—or a perceived relationship with a fictional character—emerged in the mid-twentieth century (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Both Suruchi and Amy's research careers have built on the theoretical ideas of storytelling vis-à-vis EE. In fact, Suruchi wrote her doctoral thesis on the role of audience involvement and the effects of EE from the radio soap opera *Tinka Tinka Sukh* in India (Sood, 2002), while Amy wrote hers on social norms, narrative persuasion, and EE from the *Ouro Negro* radio program in Mozambique (Riley, Sood, & Sani, 2019).

These various theories use different terminology. However, the underlying premise across social norms theorizing is that norms influence behavior and vice versa. If normative beliefs can be changed, behavioral change will ensue and if behavior change occurs, then norms will change.

Recent and growing interest in social norms theory has resulted in conceptual models that focus on how social norms influence behavior and social change (we know, we know, we started with theories, and are now talking about models, but hang in with us here). The *Flower for Sustained Health* is one such conceptual model that illustrates how resources, and individual, social, and institutional factors shape the social and gender norms at play (Institute for Reproductive Health, 2019; Heise & Cislighi, 2017; CARE, 2017). Another broad model based on practical experiences focuses on the norm-related determinants of behavior change. This module, synthesized in the manual *Everybody Wants to Belong*, looks at the behavioral determinants of social norms with multiple social norms components grouped into sociological factors that affect psychological factors

like attitudes, cognitive bias, and self-efficacy, and in turn the adoption of a new behavior (Petit & Zalk, 2019). A third and final framework, consolidated under the acronym ACT, attempts to measure social norm change around harmful practices, specifically Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), resulting from communication interventions using a social-ecological perspective (Sood et al., 2020). ACT stands for the different sections of the framework (two sections per letter): (1) Assess what people know, feel, and do; (2) Assess normative factors; (3) Consider the context, especially gender and power; (4) Collect information on social networks and social support; (5) Track individual and social change over time; and (6) Triangulate all data analysis.

Growing interest in measuring social norms has resulted in recent guides, which have mostly focused on quantitative techniques (Institute for Reproductive Health, 2019; Petit & Zalk, 2019). Though there is widespread agreement that qualitative methods are useful for examining norms (e.g., using vignettes), much of the measurement literature has not tapped into participatory research as a technique to understand and evaluate norms (Sood et al., 2020). Additionally, despite all of these theories, models, and measurement frameworks, a thorough understanding of how social and behavior change interventions address social norms is yet to be articulated. The following four case studies illustrate how we measured and researched social norms in different ways in EE projects designed with the express intention of addressing social norms, and our thoughts on the meaning of what we found for applied EE practice.

ENTERTAINMENT-EDUCATION CASE STUDIES

India

Kyunki... Jeena Issi Ka Naam Hai (Because... That's What Life Is; abbreviated *Kyunki...*) was an Indian television drama serial that ran for 501 episodes from 2008 to 2011 on Doordarshan, the public service broadcast network. UNICEF India developed the program with information from *Facts for Life*, the global maternal and child health initiative spearheaded by international partners including UNDP, UNESCO, UNAIDS, WFP, WHO, and the World Bank. Key educational messages included safe motherhood, breastfeeding, immunization, HIV/AIDS, child protection, girls' education, child marriage, and others designed to improve the lives of women and children. Doordarshan (the national broadcaster) aired three new half hour episodes of *Kyunki...* each week.

Kyunki ... struck a unique balance between social messaging and prime-time entertainment, through a compelling storyline involving five key protagonists. Three of the five lead characters were females and included Savita, Shabnam, and Kamla as community health workers in the fictional village of Rajpura. Savita is portrayed as an urban dweller who struggles to find her way in a traditional rural setting. Shabnam, herself a victim of domestic violence, is a strong champion of women and child rights, and Kamla is a young widow who rises above societal restrictions to serve as the local health volunteer. The drama also included Phoolwati, the local village head, who is appointed as a figurehead but over the course of the drama finds her voice and stands up for the people of Rajpura. The fifth role model is Hiralal, a humorous and down to earth schoolteacher who emerges as the champion for education in his village. These protagonists are challenged at every turn by Bade Sahab, the all-powerful village patriarch, and the main negative character. The serial also included Meena, a fun loving and precocious girl and her group of friends. *Kyunki*... included Bollywood-style entertainment including high drama, comedy, romance, as well as music, while showcasing positive social change at the individual and community levels. The serial emerged as the most watched show across all channels in India in its time band (according to Television Audience Measurement—TAM), with a reach of over 145 million people and 61 percent of viewers being women in the age group of 15–35.

Suruchi led the evaluation efforts for *Kyunki*... (Sood et al., 2015). The research design included three cross-sectional quantitative studies: a baseline, completed before the program aired; a midline, conducted after approximately 260 episodes; and an endline, after the conclusion of the television serial, as well as concurrent mixed-methods monitoring. Data were collected from approximately 9000 people at each time point: women, their husbands, and their mothers-in-law who resided in UNICEF priority states, for a total sample size of over 27,000. Amy and Suruchi worked together with colleagues on a subsequent study using the evaluation data that looked at exposure to *Kyunki*... and social norms when Amy was a doctoral student under Suruchi's tutelage (Riley et al., 2017a). The *Kyunki*... evaluation measured one social norms construct: descriptive norms, albeit many times over across key messages.

What worked well in this evaluation is that the social norms questions were relatively straightforward and the analysis was uncomplicated and easy to understand. But we experienced a major challenge. This program's evaluation was designed before newer scholarship regarding social norms

measurement emerged and, as a result, only descriptive norms were measured using a single measure. As the more recent literature indicates, social norms are much more nuanced and descriptive norms alone are likely insufficient for making claims regarding change over time.

Mozambique

Ouro Negro (Black Gold) is a radio program in Mozambique that began broadcasting across the country in 2015 and is still on the air as of this publishing. UNICEF Mozambique developed the program in partnership with WFP, UNFPA, the Ministry of Education, PCI Media Impact, and Radio Mozambique. Like the *Kyunki...* project in India, the *Facts for Life* global campaign informed *Ouro Negro's* content on maternal and child health. New episodes are broadcast nationally twice a week in Portuguese and district-level content includes radio call-in shows in local languages and digital media components.

Ouro Negro takes place in the fictional town of Jambolane, which is confronted by the arrival of a foreign mining company. The plot follows the meeting of two families, one modern and one traditional, and the conflicts that ensue between rural and modern life. The key protagonists include: Jambo, the village chief; Quim, Jambo's son and a successful football player; Almeida, the coal mining plant manager; Isabel, a female medical doctor; Lura, a young girl with a passion for dancing; and Anita, a 13-year-old student. The creative team designed the characters to be similar to members of the audience and to model pro-social and educational themes throughout their story arcs and a theory of change encompassing levels of the social ecological model. The radio drama airs across 118 stations across the country, including call-in shows in local languages, and digital components on social media.

UNICEF Mozambique contracted Suruchi (as principal investigator) and Amy (as project manager) to evaluate the impact of the first year of *Ouro Negro*. Together, Suruchi and Amy designed a mixed-methods monitoring and evaluation framework to determine if the program was effective and what social and behavior change could be attributed to *Ouro Negro*. The evaluation included two arms: a survey arm, which employed a population-based, longitudinal, single pre-test, single post-test panel design, and a focus group arm, which utilized a cross-sectional research design. The study included data from 1910 women aged 15–34 who responded to the survey and 512 men and women aged 15+ who

participated in focus groups. Amy subsequently analyzed the data to look at the role of social norms as part of her doctoral dissertation; Suruchi chaired Amy's dissertation committee (Riley, Sood, & Sani, 2019).

The *Ouro Negro* evaluation measured five social norms constructs: descriptive norms, injunctive norms, benefits, sanctions, and reference groups. We used various ways of measuring each of the constructs in the surveys including testing closed-ended questions designed to measure benefits and sanctions, for example: "Please tell me some of the benefits of using latrines for defecation." We measured the same constructs in focus groups that contained three participatory activities. The first activity (called "Complete the Story") was a narrative tool whereby focus group participants were provided with two scenarios mirrored by those experienced by the *Ouro Negro* radio program protagonists and asked to think about and report on what they would do if they themselves were faced with these scenarios. The second activity was a social network mapping activity where participants mapped who they talked to and trusted regarding the program topics. Suruchi designed the final activity, "2x2 Tables," which she has also used in other countries, to have participants work through a series of questions to unfold the existence, persistence, and changes in social norms on the topics over time. 2x2 Tables are a written, participatory research method.

Several things worked well in this case study. Social norms theorizing had matured in the time since the *Kyunki...* project and we aimed to include many more constructs in our evaluation that better matched the recent literature. Our mixed-methods efforts worked well to measure not only if social norms were changing, but how and why such changes occurred through a combination of data sources. A logistical detail from this case study that worked well was how we handled the fieldwork for this project. We traveled together for our first trip to Mozambique. Again, Amy was a doctoral student at the time and it was important for her to learn from Suruchi from this applied research project and for all team members to be present for the inception of the project. When it came time for a subsequent international trip, Amy traveled alone to work with the local team. By this time, the local team knew and trusted Amy and she was able to handle her tasks with Suruchi's assistance when needed from afar. We have both found that trust is vital to the success of our research and the programs that we are fortunate enough to evaluate.

Our biggest challenge from this case study, however, was exposure. Although we had a robust study design that included following the same

people over time, only 206 of 1910 participants at endline listened to *Ouro Negro*. What does this mean? Practically, this means that you can have strong research studies designed to measure all of the latest fancy ideas on social norms, but if audiences either don't listen to or don't like your show, it doesn't matter. A strong research study cannot make up for a program that audiences do not find engaging. (Note: That is not to say *Ouro Negro* was or is a failure. To the contrary, the program continues as of this writing. What we found after one year of broadcast, however, were low levels of exposure and engagement.) It is therefore critical to put the "entertainment" in entertainment-education first. To change social norms, we must first tell good stories. The storytelling really matters!

Bangladesh

From 2017 to 2019, Suruchi provided technical assistance to the James P. Grant School of Public Health in Dhaka, Bangladesh, for the evaluation of a 26-episode social and behavior change communication transmedia initiative, including an EE television show *Ichchedana* (On the Wings of Wishes). This project was a result of collaboration between the Government of Bangladesh (GoB), UNICEF, Asiatic, MCL, PCI Media, and BRAC JHSPH. The EE TV show portrayed the lives of a group of young Bangladeshi girls who face and overcome challenges and risks of adolescence such as child marriage, sexual harassment, menstrual hygiene management, nutrition, and adverse gender norms through sports. *Ichchedana* focused on empowering adolescents and facilitating an enabling environment for their families and communities to support positive behaviors and norms. In addition, the program delivered on-the-ground community engagement interventions implemented in high child marriage areas mobilized around key behaviors and messages. *Ichchedana* aired on five national channels, including the national broadcasting network as well as satellite channels, and reached over six million people. The episodes were also hosted on UNICEF and the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs' (MoWCA) social media platforms and on YouTube. The UNICEF Bangladesh Facebook platform engaged over 2 million people. Community efforts reached more than 320,000 parents and communities to create an enabling environment to support adolescent empowerment. Private sector partners contributed more than 1.5 million USD through sponsoring media dissemination of *Ichchedana*. Additionally, *Ichchedana* won numerous awards including a Bronze Telly Award where it was recognized as a

standard bearer of video excellence and several accolades at the Bangladesh Brand Forum Commward 2019.

The *Ichchedana* evaluation included a pre and post design. A total of 1164 households with four respondents per household ($n = 4356$) were involved in the baseline study. The recently concluded endline study (2019) utilized a longitudinal panel design and involved 3905 respondents. The evaluation measured descriptive norms, injunctive norms, rewards, and sanctions over a range of normative issues, including child marriage, prioritizing boys' education over girls in case of financial restraints, restricting girls' mobility to protect from sexual harassment, girls/women earnings contributing financially toward the family, and equal participation of men and women in the decision-making process.

One of the key challenges that emerged from the *Ichchedana* evaluation was that the baseline data did not ask questions on social norms in the same in-depth manner as the endline. The lack of pre and post intervention data for some indicators, therefore, made it difficult to track change over time in social norms that could be attributed to exposure to the *Ichchedana* evaluation and/or that *Ichchedana* contributed to. Another unique challenge related to asking about norms surrounding specific development issues, such as child marriage, education for girls, and sexual harassment independent of gender norms. Gender norms cross-cut education, protection, and health; they are also a primary driver for child marriage. Hence, social norms programming for adolescent development has to include a gender focus that involves transforming the ways gender is constructed for girls and boys.

Zambia

Our last case study is from research that Amy led in Zambia. In 2018, the Grantham Foundation awarded a grant to Population Media Center (PMC) to enhance PMC's capacity to affect social norm change and measurably demonstrate the impact of their global EE programs. PMC partnered with Amy as the academic lead on the project. After reviewing the scholarly literature and designing a social norms strategy for PMC, Amy designed a pilot study to answer the following research question: Are vignettes a valid methodological approach for measuring social norms to inform EE research and practice? A vignette is a short narrative that describes a hypothetical person within a specific social context (Finch, 1987; Alexander & Becker, 1978; Jenkins, Bloor, Fischer, Berney, &

Neale, 2010). Applied in research, participants respond to questions following a vignette stimulus through close-ended survey responses or open-ended qualitative responses in interviews or focus groups (Wilson & While, 1998; Barter & Renold, 1999). Amy and her colleagues chose to test vignettes based on their likeness to the narratives inherent to EE. They chose family planning, as the topic has been and continues to be one of the most common topics covered in EE by both PMC and other organizations around the world (Sood, Riley, & Alarcon, 2017). They chose Zambia as PMC had an ongoing EE program in two languages in the country at the time of the research.

Amy and her colleagues designed a mixed-methods cross-sectional study to test the validity of vignettes as a social norms measurement tool in one purposively selected rural and one purposively selected urban district in the Central Province of Zambia, where PMC was concurrently airing the EE radio program. *Kwishilya* (“Over the Horizon”) was a 156-episode serial drama funded by USAID that aired from 2019 to 2020 and addressed the topics of family planning, adolescent reproductive health, education, child marriage, HIV/AIDS, and gender-based violence. Together with a local research partner, we collected survey data from 438 women aged 19–34 who had listened to at least one episode of PMC’s program but had never answered questions about the radio program before (i.e., were not part of separate monitoring and evaluation activities) and focus group data from 135 women who met the same inclusion criteria and were part of 16 focus group discussions spread across the two districts.

This study measured all six social norms constructs outlined in this chapter. As this was a validation study, we threw in the kitchen sink with this study. We scoured the literature and used several methods for each of the constructs to compare results and determine which measurement approach might work best in the future. While the results are in progress as of this writing, overall, we found vignettes may be an appropriate tool for measuring social norms on topics in EE narratives with existing characters and stories. But we experienced two challenges: one related to testing and one practical challenge. In terms of testing, while it was a fruitful academic exercise to test many different question formats on the same topic, we found participants experienced fatigue at answering essentially the same question in several different ways. While we cannot say how many questions are “ideal” to measure social norms in research and

evaluation of EE projects, we do not think quite so many questions are necessary in all cases.

The other challenge experienced was a practical one. In the middle of this project, Amy learned she was pregnant with her first child (she and her husband were clearly not utilizing the modern contraceptive methods promoted by *Kwishilya*). Like the other case studies outlined here, our research typically requires in-country fieldwork where we work together with our local partners to plan data collection and train enumerators and supervisors. The fieldwork for this project was planned at the end of Amy's pregnancy and she was unable to travel to Zambia. Thankfully, Suruchi's talented research manager Sarah Stevens was available to consult on this project. Sarah traveled on Amy's behalf and Amy spent many early mornings on WhatsApp and email communicating with the team from afar. EE research can be unpredictable for a multitude of reasons and having a keen sense of flexibility is absolutely fundamental for this type of work.

LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

Our collective experiences working on these four EE case studies include a plethora of lessons learned for social norms theory, research, and practice. The following are our "top five" for academics and EE practitioners alike.

Conduct Rigorous Research, Starting with Formative Research

Folks working to develop and produce effective EE understandably want to demonstrate that their programs have an impact. When it comes to social norms, EE programs should first determine if the "educational" or didactic topic at hand is actually influenced by social norms, through rigorous formative research. Although it is de rigueur as of this publishing to talk and write about social norms, this is a moot point if the topic at hand isn't really influenced by social norms in the first place. Not all EE programs are going to change social norms, and that is OK! Social norms can be said to influence a behavior only when expectations and behaviors share a causal relationship. One has to practice a behavior because they believe a majority of individuals in their social networks are engaging in the behavior and also that these individuals expect one to perform the behavior. If the topic is thus influenced by social norms, we think researchers should tackle all of the applicable social norms constructs outlined in this chapter,

but without burden on the research participant. Social norms are complex and exist at the intersection of perceptions of what others do, what others expect a person to do, and what the tangible and intangible rewards of compliance or defiance of a given social norm are. For example, social norms may prevail because individuals feel that others in their community behave in a certain manner, even when it is contradictory to their own values. One way to counteract this is to message accurately, to convince audiences that “others” hold the same values and principles as them. EE has proven successful over and over again, in addressing not just individual behaviors but by fundamentally changing determinants such as social and gender norms that underlie harmful practices. There are nuances and contradictions between personal approval which is generally more positive than approval of “others” in the community or “others” whose opinions matter. A successful EE program has to balance the nuances and contradictions between personal beliefs and attitudes and social and gender norms.

Work in Partnership with Strong Local Researchers

The research studies outlined in these case studies were conducted using a stakeholder framework that includes international aid organizations (such as UNICEF and The Grantham Foundation), international universities (i.e., our academic institutions), local creative talent, and local research teams. Each of these stakeholders contributes to the success of EE programs by providing their specific areas of expertise. The expertise that we bring as international researchers is in the theory and evaluation of EE. Critical to the success of our work is a strong local research partner. Our local partners are key to conducting this research and, in terms of social norms, to piloting tools and confirming cultural interpretations of questions. The constructs outlined in this chapter are complex ideas that frustratingly have overlapping terms to describe similar ideas, but it is critical to include members of the community to confirm research questions are asking what we think they are asking. Translation and back translation are important, particularly in polyglot settings where nuance can be easily lost. And cognitive interviewing is helpful to make sure research items are processed and understood by members of the audience. Essentially, our viewpoint is that social norms work (and international research in general) is only possible through reciprocal and respectful partnerships with strong

local researchers. As EE work is scaled up over time, it is our hope that we eventually work ourselves out of our jobs and build capacity among local teams to conduct research independent of us.

Include the Voices of Your Intended Audience Through Participatory Research

Our social norms research has found that it is crucial to have the voices of the intended audience at the table. Participatory research methods are bottom up approaches and one way to include the voices of audiences. In participatory research, members of affected communities, particularly members of traditionally marginalized and vulnerable groups, can identify indicators of change and hypothesize solutions themselves. We have written about participatory research methods elsewhere (Riley, Sood, & Robichaud, 2017b; Sood, Cronin, & Kostizak, 2018) and are of the opinion that participatory research methods can be used at any stage of evaluation (i.e., formative, process, and/or impact evaluation) to amplify the voices of impacted individuals and communities.

Use Storytelling for Storytelling

EE has a unique “secret sauce” in the world of social and behavior change communication: storytelling. At the heart of every EE program is a cast of positive, negative, and transitional characters designed to be like members of the primary audience and carefully planned, entertaining storylines. EE programs are typically developed with top local creative talent, including producers, writers, and actors. We think that this built in capacity for good storytelling can be tapped for research efforts for measuring social norms, as well as other indicators. In other words, use storytelling for storytelling. Vignettes (described earlier) are one example of a storytelling methodology where research participants read or listen to a short story stimulus and respond to questions to elicit their attitudes, beliefs, and social norms. While our research has shown that vignettes “work” as a way to garner such responses, we think such efforts could be strengthened even further with the inclusion of EE creative talent in this process—for example, by having scriptwriters design vignette research questions and actors record focus group prompts. It seems to us like a natural fit to utilize creative EE teams not only in the design and implementation of EE programs, but also in evaluation and research efforts.

Merge Theory and Practice

Theory and practice must coexist. EE research and theorizing must not exist in an erudite vacuum, and instead must be accessible to practitioners. What this means practically is that we need a shared lexicon (i.e., less overlapping and confusing terms) and a space for open dialogue between researchers and practitioners. Together we can interpret and communicate our findings so they may be translated into real-world outcomes. EE is an exciting and creative strategy that can change individuals, impact communities, and shift social norms. It takes time, for sure. Change does not happen overnight, especially when one is attempting to raise awareness around practices that are intertwined with religion, culture, tradition, and self-identity. To expect radical shifts in norms through one EE program would be naïve. But in order to keep propelling the field forward, we must align our efforts in a state of continuous improvement where practice informs research and research informs practice.

REFERENCES

- Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1980). *Understanding attitudes and predicting social behavior*. Prentice Hall.
- Alexander, C. S., & Becker, H. J. (1978). The use of vignettes in survey research. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 42(1), 93–104.
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Prentice Hall.
- Barter, C., & Renold, E. (1999). The use of vignettes in qualitative research. *Social Research Update*, 25, 1–4. Retrieved from <http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU25.html>
- Bendor, J., & Swistak, P. (2001). The evolution of norms. *American Journal of Sociology*, 106(6), 1493–1545.
- Bicchieri, C. (2006). *The grammar of society: The nature and dynamics of social norms*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bicchieri, C. (2016). *Norms in the wild: How to diagnose, measure, and change social norms*. Oxford University Press.
- Busselle, R., & Bilandzic, H. (2009). Measuring narrative engagement. *Media Psychology*, 12(4), 321–347.
- CARE. (2017). *Applying theory to practice: CARE's journey piloting social norms measures for gender programming*. Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere, Inc. (CARE). Retrieved from <http://gender.care2share.wikispaces.net/file/view/care-social-norms-paper-web.pdf>

- Cialdini, R. B., Reno, R. R., & Kallgren, C. A. (1990). A focus theory of normative conduct: Recycling the concept of norms to reduce littering in public places. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 58(6), 1015–1026.
- Cohen, J. (2001). Defining identification: A theoretical look at the identification of audiences with media characters. *Mass Communication & Society*, 4(3), 245–264.
- Costenbader, E., Lenzi, R., Hershov, R. B., Ashburn, K., & McCarraher, D. R. (2017). Measurement of social norms affecting modern contraceptive use: A literature review. *Studies in Family Planning*, 48(4), 377–389.
- Finch, J. (1987). The vignette technique in survey research. *Sociology*, 21(1), 105–114.
- Frank, L. B., Murphy, S. T., Chatterjee, J. S., Moran, M. B., & Baezconde-Garbanati, L. (2015). Telling stories, saving lives: Creating narrative health messages. *Journal of Health Communication*, 30, 154–163.
- Goldstein, N. J., Cialdini, R. B., & Griskevicius, V. (2008). A room with a viewpoint: Using social norms to motivate environmental conservation in hotels. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35(3), 472–482.
- Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2000). The role of transportation in the persuasiveness of public narratives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79(5), 701–721.
- Heise, L., & Cislighi, B. (2017). *Transforming gender norms to achieve gender equity: What is the role of social norms theory?* Discussion paper. The Lancet-Stanford Working Group, Stanford. Retrieved from <https://researchonline.lshtm.ac.uk/id/eprint/4646481/>
- Horton, D., & Wohl, R. R. (1956). Mass communication and para-social interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance. *Psychiatry*, 19(3), 215–229.
- Institute for Reproductive Health. (2019). *Resources for measuring social norms: A practice guide for program implementers*. Learning Collaborative to Advance Normative Change. Washington, DC.
- Jenkins, N., Bloor, M., Fischer, J., Berney, L., & Neale, J. (2010). Putting it in context: The use of vignettes in qualitative interviewing. *Qualitative Research*, 10(2), 175–198.
- Kaggwa, E. B., Diop, N., & Storey, J. D. (2008). The role of individual and community factors among women in union in Mali. *International Family Planning Perspectives*, 34(2), 79–88.
- Kincaid, D. L. (2004). From innovation to social norm: Bounded normative influence. *Journal of Health Communication: International Perspectives*, 9(S1), 37–57.
- Lapinski, M. K., & Rimal, R. N. (2005). An explication of social norms. *Communication Theory*, 15(2), 127–147.
- Mackie, G., Moneti, F., Shakya, H., & Denny, E. (2015). *What are social norms? How are they measured?* Working paper. UNICEF/University of California San Diego Center on Global Justice.

- Montano, D., & Kasprzyk, D. (2008). Theory of reasoned action, theory of planned behaviour and the integrated behavioural model. In K. Glanz, B. Rimer, & K. Viswanath (Eds.). *Health behaviour and health education. Theory research and practice*, Jossey-Bass.
- Petit, V., & Zalk, T. (2019). *Everybody wants to belong. A practical guide to tackling and leveraging social norms in behavior change programming*. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/4716/file/MENA-C4DRReport-May2019.pdf.pdf>
- Poindexter, D. O. (2004). A history of entertainment-education, 1958–2000. In A. Singhal, M. J. Cody, E. M. Rogers, & M. Sabido (Eds.), *Entertainment-education and social change* (pp. 21–37). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Riley, A. H., Sood, S., Mazumdar, P. D., Choudary, N., Malhotra, A., & Sahba, N. (2017a). Encoded exposure and social norms in entertainment-education. *Journal of Health Communication*, 22(1), 66–74.
- Riley, A. H., Sood, S., & Robichaud, M. (2017b). Participatory methods for entertainment-education: Analysis of best practices. *Journal of Creative Communications*, 12(1), 62–76.
- Riley, A. H., Sood, S., & Sani, M. (2019). Narrative persuasion and social norms in entertainment-education: Results from a radio drama in Mozambique. *Health Communication*, 35(8), 1023–1032.
- Rimal, R. (2008). Modeling the relationship between descriptive norms and behaviors: A test and extension of the Theory of Normative Social Behavior (TNSB). *Health Communication*, 23(2), 103–116.
- Rimal, R., & Lapinski, M. (2015). A re-explication of social norms, ten years later. *Communication Theory*, 25(4), 393–409.
- Rimal, R., Lapinski, M., Cook, R., & Real, K. (2005). Moving toward a theory of normative influences: How perceived benefits and similarity moderate the impact of descriptive norms. *Journal of Health Communication*, 10(5), 433–450.
- Rimal, R., & Real, K. (2005). How behaviors are affected by perceived norms. A test of the theory of normative social behavior. *Communication Research*, 32(3), 389–414.
- Rogers, E. M. (2003). *Diffusion of innovations* (5th ed.). Simon & Schuster.
- Rosenstock, I. M. (1974). The health belief model: Origins and correlates. *Health Education Monographs*, 2(4), 328–335.
- Ryerson, W. N. (1994). Population communications international: Its role in family planning soap operas. *Population and Environment*, 15(4), 255–264.
- Sedlander, E., & Rimal, R. N. (2019). Beyond individual-level theorizing in social norms research: How collective norms and media access affect adolescents' use of contraception. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 64(4), S31–S36.
- Singhal, A., Obregon, R., & Rogers, E. M. (1995). Reconstructing the story of *Simplemente Maria*, the most popular telenovela in Latin America of all time. *International Communication Gazette*, 54, 1–15.

- Singhal, A., & Rogers, E. M. (1988). Television soap operas for development in India. *International Communication Gazette*, 41, 109–126.
- Singhal, A., & Rogers, E. M. (1999). *Entertainment-education: A communication strategy for social change*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Singhal, A., & Rogers, E. M. (2002). A theoretical agenda for entertainment-education. *Communication Theory*, 12(2), 117–135.
- Singhal, A., & Rogers, E. M. (2004). The status of entertainment-education worldwide. In A. Singhal, M. J. Cody, E. M. Rogers, & M. Sabido (Eds.), *Entertainment-education and social change* (pp. 3–20). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.
- Sood, S. (2002). Audience involvement and entertainment-education. *Communication Theory*, 12(2), 153–172.
- Sood, S., Cronin, C., & Kostizak, K. (2018, November). Participatory research toolkit. *Rain Barrel Communications*. Retrieved from <https://www.rainbarrelcommunications.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Participatory-Research-Toolkit-Rain-Barrel-Communications.pdf>
- Sood, S., Riley, A. H., & Alarcon, K. (2017). Entertainment-education and health and risk messaging. In R. Parrott (Ed.), *Oxford research encyclopedia of communication*. Oxford University Press.
- Sood, S., Riley, A. H., Mazumdar, P. D., Choudary, N., Malhotra, A., & Sahba, N. (2015). From awareness-generation to changing norms: Implications for entertainment-education. *Cases in Public Health Communication & Marketing*, 8, 3–26.
- Sood, S., et al. (2020). ACT: An evidence-based macro framework to examine how communication approaches can change social norms around female genital mutilation. *Frontiers in Communication*, 5, 29. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2020.00029>
- Storey, J. D., & Kaggwa, E. B. (2009). The influence of changes in fertility related norms on contraceptive use in Egypt 1995–2005. *Population Review*, 48(1), 1–19.
- Wang, H., & Singhal, A. (2018). Audience-centered discourses in communication and social change: The ‘voicebook’ of *Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon*, an entertainment-education initiative in India. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 13, 176–191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17447143.2018.1481857>
- Wilson, J., & While, A. E. (1998). Methodological issues surrounding the use of vignettes in qualitative research. *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, 12(1), 79–86.
- World Health Organization. (2010). *Violence prevention: The evidence*. Retrieved from http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/4th_milestones_meeting/evidence_briefings_all.pdf

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if you modified the licensed material. You do not have permission under this licence to share adapted material derived from this chapter or parts of it.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.





In Search of Entertainment-Education's Effects on Attitudes and Behaviors

Donald P. Green

The story of entertainment-education's effects on social behaviors is itself a literary genre of sorts, with memorable legends and alluring theoretical formulations about why dramatized messages work. One of my first encounters with this genre was in 2006, when reading a *New Yorker* magazine article that retold some of the most famous instances of entertainment-education's enormous reach and influence. For example, on the subject of adult literacy:

For this telenovela, called "Ven Connigo" ("Come with Me"), instead of the usual blond, blue-eyed leading ladies, Sabido chose actresses who were dark-haired and spoke with working-class accents. Its main plot centers on Barbara, a teacher from a working-class family, and Jorge, the wealthy man who loves her. Sabido's subplot involved some of Barbara's adult students, including a carpenter, a maid, a single mother who works on a farm, and an ex-con. Posters from the Ministry of Public Education's actual literacy campaign hung in the classroom. In the first episode, an older man sits outside Barbara's classroom without introducing himself. When she finally notices

D. P. Green (✉)
Columbia University, New York, NY, USA
e-mail: dpg2110@columbia.edu

© The Author(s) 2021
L. B. Frank, P. Falzone (eds.), *Entertainment-Education Behind the
Scenes*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-63614-2_12

him and asks why he's there, he admits that he is embarrassed, because his grandchildren have finished primary school and he hasn't. The ratings for this series were higher than for any of Televisa's previous telenovelas. In one episode, Barbara's students visit the headquarters of the government's literacy program to pick up free booklets. The following day, more than twelve thousand people converged on the actual headquarters, creating a traffic jam that lasted until after midnight. Close to a million new students signed up for literacy classes. (Rosin, 2006)

At the time, I didn't think to question how the author documented the claim that "more than twelve thousand people converged on the actual headquarters" or that the number of new students was "close to a million." I figured the number of viewers is astronomical; the fan base watches attentively; a certain portion of them fanatically emulate the behaviors they see modeled on TV.

Another anecdote from the same essay paints a similar picture:

The most widely viewed program in the world is not a telenovela but "The Bold and the Beautiful," a CBS soap opera set in rival fashion houses. It is broadcast in a hundred and thirty-four countries, including Bangladesh, Uganda, and Yemen. In 2001, in a major twist, Tony, a young designer, told Kristen, his girlfriend, that he was H.I.V.-positive. The writers had consulted with experts from the Centers for Disease Control, and provided an 800 number that people could call for more information. After one particularly emotional scene, the line received five thousand calls. (Rosin, 2006)

My (admittedly academic) reaction at the time was that tracking the number of calls to an 800 number is an elegant way to measure the behavioral effects of a soap opera. I imagined a study in which one tracks the number of daily calls for a few weeks leading up to the episode in which the 800 number is displayed during the soap opera, then watches the number of calls soar as the episode airs, and assesses how long it takes for the number of calls to return to normal. Eventually, as I describe below, I collaborated on some experiments of this kind. But, to preview what comes later, our numbers didn't soar after the numbers aired on the telenovelas. Maybe our weak effects reflect the fact that our messages aired on ordinary soap operas rather than "the most widely viewed program in the world," but perhaps that is the point. Hundreds of millions of viewers evidently generated a few thousand calls; our programs' viewership was two orders of magnitude smaller, and so were the numbers of people who took some kind of measurable action.

Now you're probably wondering whether this is going to be one of those cranky academic essays that devotes its pages to puncturing inflated claims made by non-academics. It's not. This essay is instead a cranky account of how inflated claims backed up by poorly designed impact assessments (often by university researchers) have caused entertainment-education's effects to be misunderstood. More scientifically rigorous evaluations show entertainment-education (EE) does work but not in the transformative ways that proponents claim. When properly assessed, the effects of EE are found to be narrow. They often change specific ways in which audiences think and act, but much to the disappointment of funders or policymakers, EE seldom changes broad worldviews or core values. One possibility is that we have set our expectations for EE's effects too high. Another possibility is the lack of deep-seated change in the wake of exposure to narratives reflects the limitations of the content or presentation, in which case the producers and evaluators need to collaborate during the writing and production phases to produce more influential programs. The message of this essay is that if we want to do good in the world via narrative entertainment, we need to not only learn whether specific media content is effective, but also, more generally, understand the conditions under which it is effective. Funders do not seem to be embracing the latter goal, and as a result, evaluations tend to be disjointed, one-off affairs that focus on a specific donor-supported messaging campaign. This state of affairs slows the development of effective entertainment-education programming, which is arguably a tragic missed opportunity.

This essay is organized as follows. I begin by briefly summarizing the key findings from the burgeoning literature on narrative education conveyed through mass media. Here I call attention to the kinds of results one encounters when reading recent experimental evaluations of television and radio programs, both multi-episode dramas and short format messages. It is clear that narrative-based media content often has meaningful effects on attitudes and behaviors, but rarely does one see profound and enduring changes. Interestingly, although there are good theoretical reasons for thinking that narrative messages are more influential than non-narrative messages, few head-to-head comparisons have been conducted, and these focus exclusively on health behaviors rather than on controversial social issues. In other words, although I suspect that narrative messaging is an especially effective way of shaping policy-related attitudes and actions, direct evidence on this point is lacking. Next, I discuss my own experiences developing and testing narrative messages. In particular, I call

attention to some of my blunders and missteps, commenting on how they changed the way I think about what to study and how. Finally, I briefly sketch out a new model for developing effective messages that departs from the one-off evaluation approach that dominates the literature. I propose testing more immersive and sustained narratives whose ingredients are developed in conjunction with an evaluation team.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE ENTERTAINMENT-EDUCATION LITERATURE

A large and growing list of studies evaluates the effectiveness of entertainment-education in the form of video or audio narratives. This literature can be roughly categorized into four groups, based on the scientific rigor with which the evaluation is conducted. The first category comprises qualitative accounts. These reports typically rely on interviews with audience members or observe audiences as they view or listen to narratives. The strength of these studies is that the quotations and descriptions they provide give a sense of how audiences interpret and perhaps internalize the messages to which they are exposed. The main weakness of this approach is the lack of a well-defined control group that would allow us to assess whether and to what extent the audience changed as a result of exposure. Other problems include the obtrusive manner in which outcomes are measured—respondents are aware that they are being asked about the narrative that they were exposed to, and sometimes the questions invite them to describe how the drama changed their attitudes or beliefs. This heavy-handed approach risks encouraging respondents to say what they think the interviewer wants to hear, which presumably is some sort of praise for the narrative program. For what it's worth, such studies typically draw upbeat conclusions about entertainment-education programs.¹ In part, that reflects the leeway that researchers have when recounting audiences' reactions; there may be a temptation to cherry-pick the most positive quotations in order to placate funders or media partners. Anyone who has seen presentations of evaluation findings knows that vibrant anecdotes draw appreciative reactions—perhaps itself a

¹For example, the handbook *Edutainment: Using Stories & Media for Social Action and Behaviour Change* (Perlman, Jana, & Scheepers, 2013) is essentially a compendium of success stories. None of the interventions that are presented as case studies are evaluated via randomized experiment.

commentary on the effects of performance art. But from the standpoint of a detached observer who wonders what became of the qualitative responses that ended up on the cutting room floor, studies of this kind cannot be considered reliable guides on questions of cause and effect.

A second group of evaluations might be classified as “point-blank lab studies.” In contrast to the qualitative studies mentioned above, lab studies (usually) randomly assign participants to experimental conditions in which one group is exposed to a narrative message while the other group receives either some other kind of message or none at all. Random assignment makes for a fair comparison between a treatment group that is exposed to narrative messages and a control group that is not. However, two features of these studies undercut the value of the evidence they generate. First, participants are exposed to entertainment-education under artificial conditions—for example, they are often paid to participate in the study, and they watch the program because they are following the experimenter’s instructions. Second, outcomes (attitudes, beliefs, behavioral intentions) are typically measured a few minutes after participants are exposed to the media narrative. The compressed timeframe between exposure and outcome measurement may exaggerate the apparent effectiveness of the drama. For example, a study I conducted in Uganda compared the apparent effects of exposure to a three-part video about teacher absenteeism. One experiment was conducted in a lab-like environment in which subjects viewed the videos on a tablet computer and expressed their opinions immediately afterward; the other experiment tested the same videos by embedding them in a multi-week film festival and assessed outcomes two months later. Both tests showed that the ads substantially increased viewers’ willingness to take actions to address absenteeism, but the effects found in the lab were more than twice as large as the effects found in the field (Green, Cooper, Wilke, & Tan, 2020a).

A third category includes nonexperimental studies that track changes over time or between locations, as regions gained access to mass media or soap operas. These studies often present arresting examples of how changes in attitudes or behaviors coincided with the rollout of mass media. One of the most prominent studies tracked the consequences of cable TV access in Indian villages and found that villages that acquired cable access showed abrupt shifts in women’s subsequent attitudes toward violence against women (VAW) and their preference for having male children (Jensen & Oster, 2009). Another influential study found that Brazilian women aged 25 to 44 living in regions that were exposed to popular soap operas

subsequently experienced declines in fertility (La Ferrara, Chong, & Duryea, 2012). These intriguing studies and others like them raise two concerns. The first is whether, short of conducting an experiment, we can draw reliable inferences about the effects of mass media by comparing the groups that did or did not receive it. The concern is that even if media truly had no effect, there might appear to be an effect due to unmeasured differences between the treated and untreated groups. A second concern is publication bias, or the tendency to write up splashy results that show large effects. Had the comparison of geographic regions shown no effect, would the researchers have bothered writing up the results knowing that academic journals were unlikely to be impressed? If studies that fail to find effects remain in file drawers, the academic literature may exaggerate the influence of media or narratives.²

The final category includes randomized trials that are conducted in real-world settings. I recently collaborated on an effort to assemble a fairly comprehensive literature review of entertainment-education, and we found 30 such studies. The take-home lessons from this literature can be summarized as follows. First, it is clear that entertainment-education “works” in the sense that it regularly generates effects on beliefs, attitudes, behavioral intentions, and behaviors. Audiences update their beliefs about topics such as the risk of HIV infection in the wake of information that is conveyed through narrative. Attitudes, or dispositions to respond positively or negatively to stimulus objects, also change. For example, rural Tanzanians exposed to a two-hour radio soap opera about forced marriage of underage girls became more likely to say two weeks later that girls should be able to choose whom they marry (Green, Groves, & Manda, 2020b). And narratives seem to spur audiences to act, such as texting a hotline to report instances of corruption when this behavior is modeled in a feature-length movie (Blair, Littman, & Paluck, 2019). Among the studies that measure behavioral intentions under various scenarios, narratives again seem to move the needle. Green, Wilke, and Cooper (2020c) studied Ugandan villagers who were exposed to videos that stress the importance of preventing violence against women by reporting abuse; eight months later, those who saw the videos were more likely to express

²One potential advantage of studies conducted outside academia is that they are less susceptible to publication bias, since publication is seldom the objective. On the other hand, these studies often fail to include key technical details about the experimental design or analysis that would ordinarily be expected from a peer-reviewed publication.

willingness to report abuse to authorities. Almost every published study reports at least one “statistically significant” (i.e., too large to be attributed to chance) finding on an attitude, belief, behavioral intention, or behavior.

That said, EE’s effects are rarely large. One of the strongest reported effects is that Nigerians shown eight 22-minute episodes of the TV series MTV *Shuga* on consecutive weekends displayed increases in knowledge and HIV testing, with mixed results concerning risky sexual behavior (Banerjee, La Ferrara, & Orozco-Olvera, 2019a). In relative terms, HIV testing is almost twice as high in the treatment group as the control group, but in absolute terms, this effect amounts to a 3 percentage point increase (i.e., a change among 3 out of every 100 viewers). In a similar vein, Ugandans in villages that were randomly assigned three five-minute videos dramatizing teacher absenteeism during the commercial breaks of a free film festival showed clear increases in their support for community action to address absenteeism *vis-à-vis* their counterparts in other villages that received messages on other topics. Eight months later, approximately 59% of the treatment group favored organizing or participating in some kind of collective response to absenteeism in the local school, as opposed to 54% of the control group. Given the large number of villages and participants, the treatment effect is convincing but by no means overwhelming.

With few exceptions, the changes that do occur are specific to the particular messages that are conveyed in the drama. For example, the Ugandans who saw the messages stressing the importance of preventing violence against women became more inclined to report incidents to village leaders but did not change their minds about the more general issue of whether husbands are justified in beating their wives. Similarly, the Tanzanians exposed to a soap opera that made them more skeptical about early/forced marriage did not change their views about gender hierarchy more generally. So far as we can tell, the rapid transformation in core attitudes occasioned by exposure to TV in nonexperimental studies such as La Ferrara (2012) has not been reproduced in randomized trials.³

A final observation about the EE literature is how rarely researchers conduct head-to-head tests of narrative versus non-narrative messaging about

³ One partial exception is Banerjee, La Ferrara, and Orozco-Olvera (2019b), which finds a marginally significant effect of watching *Shuga* (which focused in part on gender-based violence) on respondents’ views that husbands are justified in beating their wives under various scenarios.

social issues. The studies of which we are aware of focus on health-related knowledge and behaviors. Tests of competing videos report conflicting results. Moran, Frank, Chatterjee, Murphy, and Baezconde-Garbanati (2016) found that 11-minute videos more effectively communicated information about cervical cancer when they contained a narrative component, and Murphy et al. (2015) found that narrative content was more effective at inducing women to schedule a PAP test in the six-month period since exposure to the video. On the other hand, Bekalu et al. (2018) tested competing four-minute video clips on pandemic influenza and found the non-narrative version to be better at imparting knowledge. The mixed findings about health knowledge and behaviors suggest that narratives are not necessarily more informative or compelling, at least given an experiment in which participants are expected to look at whatever message is put in front of them. It may be that in more naturalistic viewing environments, narratives have the advantage of attracting and retaining willing audiences.

But even if we accept the mixed results from the health literature, it remains unclear what to conclude about the effects of narratives on widely held social attitudes, such as the belief in rural East Africa that a husband has a legitimate right to beat his wife if she disobeys. Social attitudes invite resistance from those whose viewpoint is challenged by the message. Narratives, according to one leading theory, break down resistance by *transporting* audiences and inducing them to take the perspective of the protagonists (Green & Brock, 2000). Narratives also *model* appropriate attitudes and effective behaviors in ways that lead audiences to update how they are expected to think and act (Bandura, 2004). The hypothesis that underlies entertainment-education is that narrative has the ability to win over an audience that would otherwise reject direct arguments against their social and policy convictions. Unfortunately, we simply do not have direct evidence about whether narratives work as these theories suggest in the domain of social attitudes. At present, the evidence in hand indicates that narratives produce meaningful but not overwhelmingly large effects, primarily in the narrow domain on which the narrative focuses.

EVALUATION AND CONTENT CREATION

My involvement in the entertainment-education literature has been in the role of evaluator. From time to time, philanthropic organizations, research groups, or NGOs have offered me the opportunity to conduct randomized trials to see if dramas can influence attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors on

a wide array of topics: gender-based violence, early/forced marriage, abortion stigma, HIV stigma, teacher absenteeism, or vote-buying. Beyond the study of media dramas in particular, I am also involved in ongoing randomized evaluations of access to radio and TV, with an eye toward verifying the findings of Jensen and Oster (2009) on the effects of media access. Most of my studies have taken place in East Africa, although I have also conducted some research in India and the United States. I have not been paid to conduct these evaluations; I take them on because my scholarly interests include media effects, public opinion, and the conditions under which people change their views about social issues.

My involvement as an evaluator takes one of two forms. The first mode might be described as “program evaluation” in both senses of the term. Here, the research team is asked to evaluate the effectiveness of existing soap operas that have already been aired. Since we cannot go back in time, my approach is to assess their effects on new audiences that are similar to the ones that were exposed “naturally” when the programs were aired initially. For example, the Tanzanian NGO UZIKWASA, which focuses on issues of gender equality, produced a multi-part radio soap opera set in the northeast of the country that depicted early and forced marriage in a Muslim family. Many remote villages in this region, however, were outside the catchment area of the radio station that initially aired the series. Our research team selected 30 unexposed villages and interviewed a random sample of villagers at baseline. At the end of this interview, we invited them to attend a two-hour audio drama a few days later, without disclosing the content of the program. After baseline data were collected, we randomly assigned each village to one of the two soap operas: one on forced marriage or another on HIV stigma. Fully 83% of those invited showed up, with almost identical attendance rates in each experimental group. Two weeks after the radio programs aired, 95% of participants were reinterviewed in their homes. (We plan to return to interview respondents one more time once the COVID-19 threat lifts.)

One attractive feature of this experimental design is that we simultaneously test the effects of two dramas on two different sets of outcomes. In this case, we learned that one soap opera increased support for letting girls choose whom they marry, while the other increased support for increasing access to retroviral drugs. Another feature of this type of design is that we get answers back quickly. Follow-up interviews were conducted two weeks after audiences listened to the soap operas, so the results were in hand quickly enough to make timely changes to the content of the programs if

we had needed to do so. From the standpoint of practitioners, this design strikes a useful balance between the speed of a point-blank lab study and the naturalism of a field experiment with long-term follow-up.

That said, this experiment is far from perfect. To condense 20 hours of soap opera content to a two-hour format changes the nature of the listening experience, and our evaluation does not necessarily do justice to the effects that the original series may have had over the many weeks that listeners tuned in. An alternative approach is to bring audiences together repeatedly over the course of several months to have them listen to the complete soap opera, as Paluck (2009) did in her study of an ethnic reconciliation radio drama in Rwanda. Not only did our study change the cadence of exposure to the drama; it also changed the content, as we sought to distill the original plot down to its bare essentials.

The other mode of evaluation is to have the research team coordinate the writing and production of a drama, whose effects are then tested by way of an experiment. One of my first attempts along these lines was in collaboration with a team of scholars led by Elizabeth Levy Paluck, whose pathbreaking work in this field was mentioned earlier. In this study, we worked with a leading Spanish-language network in the United States to weave nine social messages (e.g., put your infant into car seat when driving, register to vote, eat low-cholesterol foods) into the scripts of its nightly *telenovelas*. The experimental design randomly varied *when* each theme was woven into the plot; once this was determined, we worked with scriptwriters to provide information about each issue and guidance about the goals of each message. For example, one message encouraged audiences to put their savings into a bank account rather than save cash at home. The subplot featured a main character working up the courage to visit a bank to open up an account; an actual bank with a large number of local branches was depicted, and the scenes emphasized the way in which the new client was helped by a friendly bilingual bank officer. This bank shared with the research team daily records of how many new accounts were created before, during, and after the airing of these scenes. No apparent uptick in accounts occurred. Similarly disappointing results were obtained for other behaviors, such as registering to vote or visiting a website that featured information about college scholarships for minority students (Paluck et al., 2015). I might add parenthetically that these results changed my view about the effects of entertainment-education. I am now more skeptical that large aggregate behavior changes routinely occur in the wake of subplots among audiences in developed countries. It may be the case that behavior changes

occur when entire series focuses on a given theme, as in “16 and Pregnant” (Kearney & Levine, 2015), although even here the (nonexperimental) evidence is debatable (Jaeger, Joyce, & Kaestner, 2019).

Evaluation teams are sometimes given an opportunity to craft the main storyline, not just a subplot. In partnership with Peripheral Vision International, my research team worked to develop a mini-series of three five-minute vignettes that would be aired to rural Ugandans during commercial breaks in feature-length films. In an effort to make it easy for audiences to be drawn in by these narratives, the vignettes were written by local writers and filmed on location in the local language. Overdubbed Hollywood films were shown each weekend for four to six weeks, initially in 56 villages during the pilot study and a year later in 112 villages during the main study. The experiment randomly assigned different mini-series to villages hosting the film festivals.

The pilot testing phase turned out to be crucial, as it gave us an opportunity to test audiences’ reactions to each of the mini-series. One of the series focused on violence against women and sought to articulate and model official norms regarding the topic. Characters that included a visitor from Kampala, a village leader, villagers, and police officers all expressed norms that wife-beating is illegal, immoral, and unjustified in all circumstances. In the end, the abusive husband is arrested by police. Bear in mind that Ugandans, especially rural Ugandans, widely believe that husbands are justified in beating their wives when presented with scenarios that include disobedience, gossiping, unfaithfulness, and the like; thus, the views expressed by characters in our mini-series ran counter to prevailing or at least widespread views. Reports from the field suggested that this message did not sit well with male audience members, and our surveys two months later revealed that the video, which was randomly assigned to some villages and not others, had no apparent effect on attitudes about gender-based violence. (Meanwhile, the other two series on teacher absenteeism and abortion stigma seemed to be well-received and effective in shaping the views of audiences whose villages were randomly assigned to see them.)

Rather than repeat this debacle on an even larger scale in the main study of 112 villages, we developed an alternative mini-series on the same topic but this time building on locally prevailing norms. Depth interviews with villagers suggested that although most rural Ugandans (even women) believed that husbands are justified in beating their wives under some conditions, when pressed to say whether by “beaten” they had in mind a slap or something more forceful than that, respondents overwhelming said a

slap. This apparent norm against extreme violence came through as well in our structured surveys of villagers. So we decided that the new video should feature a case of unacceptable violence, which unfortunately is quite common in rural Uganda, where a large share of women report that their husband has at some point beaten them severely. Our *Tale of Two Cities* narrative begins in a village where there is reluctance to report VAW. The protagonist is an affable woman whose husband beats her severely, despite her sincere efforts to appease him. In a crucial scene, the protagonist's neighbor overhears her screams but decides not to speak out. In the second vignette, which begins with the protagonist's hospitalization and ends with her funeral, audiences learn that her daughter and parents also knew about the violence and now regret their failure to speak out. The final vignette depicts the "disclosure" village. The focal woman in this scene is also beaten by her husband but decides to disclose this information to her parents, who intervene to help mediate. Moreover, the parents share the information with the local women's counselor (*Nabakyala*), who visits the household to provide guidance. The vignette closes with the couple getting along, and the voiceover reminds the viewer of the importance of saying something in order to prevent violence. This video mini-series did not work miracles (it had no effect on views about whether husbands are justified in beating their wives or on attitudes about gender hierarchy) but did have meaningful and persistent effects on viewers' willingness to report incidents to authorities. We also found evidence suggesting a decline in violence against women in the villages that were randomly chosen to receive this message, perhaps reflecting the deterrent effect of being in a village where more people are willing to speak out.⁴

In some sense, it was dumb luck that we stumbled on a video that worked given that we only had two chances. We were guided by theories that emphasized the persuasive effects of narratives that model appropriate behaviors and that draw viewers into the story such that they let down their guard. Yet, it is clear from our first failure that audiences need not follow the models that are presented to them, and that they do not let down their guard for just any narrative. The fact that the second mini-series worked (to some extent) suggests that modeling norms might work when writers meet their audiences half-way, in this case denouncing

⁴Although the combination of production and evaluation costs totaled more than \$300,000, this sum is arguably a bargain for a scalable media intervention that is known to be effective.

excessive violence rather than any violence, but even that is a conjecture rather than an established fact.

The experience of developing and testing successive mini-series on the same topic inspired us to dig more deeply into the question of what makes a particular narrative effective. My co-authors, Jasper Cooper and Anna Wilke, led an effort to re-edit the footage from the two mini-series so that the narrative and characters had different combinations of features. In some mini-series, the woman who is beaten is depicted in a way that inspires empathy; in some plot lines, the theme that violence can spiral out of control is stressed; sometimes the storyline and narration emphasize the benefits of intervention; sometimes the script mentions legal norms that declare wife-beating to be illegal. In all, ten different combinations were produced and tested in a lab-like setting against a placebo video about teacher absenteeism. The lab-like setting is less than ideal, especially since participants watched the video alone rather than in a communal setting; what's worse, because we were coming to the end of our grant, the study was far too small (351 participants spread over 11 different experimental conditions). But putting aside the details of how we conducted this small study, the broader point is that head-to-head testing of narratives with different ingredients is an attractive way to discover the most effective entertainment-education package for a given audience. We should have done this sort of test before conducting our field tests. Indeed, this kind of evidence-based R&D should be part of the ramp-up to any entertainment-education initiative.

From a theoretical standpoint, even this kind of retrospective R&D is potentially of enormous value. Leading theories are stated at a level of generality that is detached from the specifics that might guide scriptwriters as they attempt to craft influential narratives. I am told that the development of narrative entertainment content is sometimes guided by focus group reactions to preliminary versions, but I am aware of no rigorous experimental tests that add and subtract narrative elements in an attempt to discern the mechanisms by which entertainment is influential. Suppose we assume that audiences are persuadable when they are drawn into a story and take the perspective of the protagonist. Very well, what narratives, audiences, and contexts contribute to this kind of perspective-taking? Do the persuasive effects increase or diminish when audiences view the narratives collectively (as often occurs in rural East Africa) as opposed to individually (as often occurs in urban and more affluent areas)? Detailed theorizing requires a rigorously developed evidence base that offers robust insights into what works.

Lessons Learned and Best Practices

The education entertainment literature is filled with inspiring examples that make success look a lot easier to achieve than it actually is. A sober reading of the literature suggests that entertainment-education is a promising and often cost-effective avenue for effecting social change, but we currently lack an empirically grounded understanding of the conditions under which narrative entertainment works. To develop this understanding, however, requires a very different approach than what is currently on offer. Philanthropic funders typically focus on evaluating a single entertainment-education product (i.e., the one that the group that they funded produced), not theoretically telling alternative versions of it. Scholars are often quite content with the one-at-a-time method of evaluation, perhaps because it leads to lots of discrete publications, but this disjointed process slows that rate at which theoretical knowledge is accumulated. And when scholars do compare alternative messages, they tend to focus on bite-size media content so that tests can be conducted conveniently within the confines of a lab-like environment. We need to think bigger, on both the production front and the evaluation front. Given the kinds of social outcomes that hang in the balance, we urgently need a more coherent evidence-based partnership between creative artists and evaluators.

The alternative vision is a much more systematic investigation of the conditions under which entertainment-education works. For any given topic or target audience, this investigation requires exploring an array of narratives that vary along an assortment of dimensions. What attitudes and behaviors are modeled, and by whom? What kinds of archetypal storylines work best for attracting sizable audiences and persuading them to think or behave differently? To what extent does the effectiveness of the narrative depend on serialization and repetition of stories and themes? Do the effects of entertainment-education grow reliably with the dosage of drama that audiences receive?

One may think of this kind of experimental study as a bake-off among different recipes, with the aim of discovering the ingredients—or the portion sizes—that tend to produce large and persistent changes. It may turn out that even optimized entertainment interventions fail to produce effects of legendary proportions, yet the exercise will still be worth the effort if it points to reliable ways to make entertainment-education more effective.

Acknowledgements I thank Dylan Groves, Beatrice Montano, and Bardia Rahmani for their comments on earlier drafts and for their help in assembling the entertainment-education literature.

REFERENCES

- Bandura, A. (2004). Health promotion by social cognitive means. *Health Education & Behavior, 31*(2), 143–164.
- Banerjee, A., La Ferrara, E., & Orozco-Olvera, V. H. (2019a). *The entertaining way to behavioral change: Fighting HIV with MTV*. The World Bank.
- Banerjee, A., La Ferrara, E., & Orozco-Olvera, V. H. (2019b). Entertainment, education, and attitudes toward domestic violence. *AEA Papers and Proceedings, 109*, 133–137.
- Bekalu, M. A., Bigman, C. A., McCloud, R. F., Lin, L. K., & Viswanath, K. (2018). The relative persuasiveness of narrative versus non-narrative health messages in public health emergency communication: Evidence from a field experiment. *Preventive Medicine, 111*, 284–290.
- Blair, G., Littman, R., & Paluck, E. L. (2019). Motivating the adoption of new community-minded behaviors: An empirical test in Nigeria. *Science Advances, 5*(3), eaau5175.
- Green, D. P., Cooper, J., Wilke, A. M., & Tan, B. (2020a). *Encouraging community action against teacher absenteeism: A mass media experiment in rural Uganda*. Unpublished manuscript, Columbia University.
- Green, D. P., Groves, D. W., & Manda, C. (2020b). *A radio drama's effects on attitudes toward early and forced marriage: Results from a field experiment in Rural Tanzania*. Unpublished manuscript, Columbia University.
- Green, D. P., Wilke, A. M., & Cooper, J. (2020c). Countering violence against women by encouraging disclosure: A mass media experiment in rural Uganda. *Comparative Political Studies, 53*(14), 2283–2320.
- Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2000). The role of transportation in the persuasiveness of public narratives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 79*(5), 701–721.
- Jaeger, D. A., Joyce, T. J., & Kaestner, R. (2019). *Tweet sixteen and pregnant: Missing links in the causal chain from reality TV to fertility*. w25446. National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Jensen, R., & Oster, E. (2009). The power of TV: Cable television and women's status in India. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 124*(3), 1057–1094.
- Kearney, M. S., & Levine, P. B. (2015). Media influences on social outcomes: The impact of MTV's 16 and pregnant on teen childbearing. *American Economic Review, 105*(12), 3597–3632.
- La Ferrara, E., Chong, A., & Duryea, S. (2012). Soap operas and fertility: Evidence from Brazil. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics, 4*(4), 1–31.

- Moran, M. B., Frank, L. B., Chatterjee, J. S., Murphy, S. T., & Baezconde-Garbanati, L. (2016). A pilot test of the acceptability and efficacy of narrative and non-narrative health education materials in a low health literacy population. *Journal of Communication in Healthcare*, 9(1), 40–48.
- Murphy, S. T., Frank, L. B., Chatterjee, J. S., Moran, M. B., Zhao, N., Amezola de Herrera, P., et al. (2015). Comparing the relative efficacy of narrative vs nonnarrative health messages in reducing health disparities using a randomized trial. *American Journal of Public Health*, 105(10), 2117–2123.
- Paluck, E. L. (2009). Reducing intergroup prejudice and conflict using the media: A field experiment in Rwanda. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96(3), 574–587.
- Paluck, E. L., Lagunes, P., Green, D. P., Vavreck, L., Peer, L., & Gomila, R. (2015). Does product placement change television viewers' social behavior? *PloS One*, 10(9), e0138610.
- Perlman, H., Jana, M., & Scheepers, E. (2013). *Edutainment: Using stories & media for social action and behaviour change*. Soul City Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.soulcity.org.za/resources/research/published-articles/edutainment-using-stories-and-media-for-social-action-and-behaviour-change>.
- Rosin, H. (2006). Life lessons: How soap operas can change the world. *The New Yorker*, 82(16), 40–45.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if you modified the licensed material. You do not have permission under this licence to share adapted material derived from this chapter or parts of it.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.





When Life Gives You Lemons: What to Do When Something Goes Wrong in Your Carefully Planned Research and How to Avoid Disasters in the First Place

Sheila T. Murphy

Perhaps it is because my last name is Murphy and I have lived my entire life cursed by Murphy's Law that "Whatever can go wrong will" that I seem to be a magnet for "research gone wrong" scenarios. As a result, I have become skilled at planning research in such a way that even if I cannot avoid research catastrophes altogether, at least I can salvage something valuable from the smoldering ruins of what was a perfectly designed study. In this chapter, I draw on actual examples from myself and my EE colleagues to illustrate key lessons that I have learned over the years.

Lesson 1

Think ahead of all the possible outcomes (both intended and unintended) your intervention may have.

S. T. Murphy (✉)
Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism,
University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, USA
e-mail: smurphy@usc.edu

One of the earliest attempts at leveraging partnerships with people who write, produce and broadcast programs for entertainment-education (EE) purposes was a partnership between Population Control International, Televisa, and a very talented writer/producer, Miguel Sabido. When these parties first met in 1977, Miguel was already using a social content communication methodology that was based on Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT) which was subsequently renamed Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). Social Cognitive Theory—which states that audience members are much more likely to engage in a behavior they have seen being performed by someone they like and/or who is similar to them—remains the theoretical backbone of EE (Bandura, 2004). Miguel was directly responsible for several telenovelas (dramatic televised stories) that significantly reduced the Mexican birthrate, while increasing the sales of condoms and oral contraceptives as featured in *Acompáñame*. This was the first of a string of successes for Miguel Sabido, who is sometimes referred to as the “grandfather of entertainment-education” (see Sabido, 2021).

But Miguel did produce one earlier storyline whose results were more mixed. In 1975, Miguel created a telenovela, *Ven Conmigo* (*Come With Me*), that aimed to promote adult literacy by featuring a story that revolved around characters enrolled in an adult literacy class at their local library. One episode mentioned the national distribution center that provided free literacy booklets. The very next day, over 25,000 people showed up to get their booklets, which ran out after the first thousand. No one, including Miguel, had foreseen this problem. This taught Miguel a valuable lesson—don't get audience members motivated to change without making the necessary resources available. Being disappointed is a negative experience that may undermine an entire EE campaign.

I have made similar miscalculations. Lourdes Baezconde-Garbanati and I thought we were brilliant when we designed a beautiful campaign *Es Tiempo* (It's Time) based on the blooming of the jacaranda tree to remind women to get screened for cervical cancer in East Los Angeles. The campaign worked a little too well and when the jacarandas bloomed, Latinas from all over Los Angeles overwhelmed local clinics. They ended up scheduling appointments up to 6 months in advance, by which time the jacarandas were bare and fewer women remembered or were motivated to keep their appointments.

Lesson 2

Are there any key variables (e.g., gender, age, marital status, health, current behaviors, etc.) or confounding variables (e.g., lack of insurance results in fewer pap tests) that may strengthen or undercut the impact of your campaign? If so, be sure to measure them!

For another project, my colleague Lourdes Baezconde-Garbanati and I set out to design and conduct a large-scale quasi-experiment or “clinical trial” that would directly test the relative efficacy of the same health-related information presented in either a narrative or nonnarrative format. To determine the relative power of narrative over nonnarrative we deliberately chose a story about a young girl’s Quinceañera, or 15th birthday, traditionally celebrated in many Latinx households in Los Angeles where our study was conducted. Additionally, both the narrative film—*Tamale Lesson*—and nonnarrative film—*It’s Time*—featured primarily Latina actors. As a result, we predicted that not all women in our study would be similarly impacted by the films. Rather we predicted that, particularly for the narrative, the Mexican American women in our sample would identify the most with the characters, be the most transported into the story and as a result would show the greatest impact in terms of shifts from pretest to 6-month-posttest in cervical cancer-related knowledge, attitudes and behavior. And they did (Murphy et al., 2015).

In this study we deliberately included ethnicity as a factor in our quasi-experimental design and had equal numbers (300 each) of African American, European American and Mexican American women. However, other things could have mattered as well. For example, what if education level mattered in how women reacted? What if insurance coverage made women less likely to pay attention to *Tamale Lesson* because they could not afford to go to a doctor? Or income?

To address such potential confounds you have to make sure to include any variable that might make a difference in your study at the start. These are often what I call “the usual suspects” or standard demographics like age, gender, education level, marital status, number of children, ethnicity and others that may be specific to your study like acculturation level. I can’t tell you the number of times I’ve been brought into an evaluation of an EE campaign AFTER the data was already collected and asked to try to analyze the data. It never ends well.

Lesson 3

Work with a cultural advisor to help you develop your narrative, measure impact, and avert disaster.

Researchers and EE producers need to remember that for many EE projects you will work on, you are not a member of your target audience. For instance, even when I am designing an intervention for women in Los Angeles, I realize that my education level, ethnicity, age and socioeconomic status make it very unlikely that I can predict the impact of an intervention to increase the willingness of teenage Latinas from East Los Angeles to get vaccinated against HPV. Luckily, I am smart enough to realize I am clueless with respect to this population and need one or more cultural advisors, as the following example illustrates.

During our formative research for the *Tamale Lesson*, we conducted a survey that revealed that the two most frequently mentioned barriers for Mexican American women in Los Angeles were time and money. Some well-meaning soul at the National Cancer Institute decided that the obvious solution was to employ a fleet of medical trucks that would have the typical set up for a pap test inside. On the surface this made sense. If Latinas are too busy to come to a clinic to get screened for cervical cancer, then take the clinic to them. A woman could make an appointment, and the truck would pull up outside her house, and the woman could have her pap test there and then. NCI was rather proud of this solution and had made initial enquires into the purchase and outfitting of several medical vans to service East Los Angeles.

Fortunately, before they moved forward, I ran some focus groups of Latinas who had not been screened for cervical cancer in the past two years. At first, the women seemed fairly positive about the truck idea. But soon I began to notice snickering among the group which then erupted into uncontrollable laughter. I failed to see what was so funny. Finally, one embarrassed participant told me that one of the slang terms for a woman's genitals was *taco*. So what NCI was proposing was essentially a "taco truck," a term typically applied to the ubiquitous food trucks in LA. From that point on in the group, the participants became far less constrained in their opinions and revealed that while it may seem like a good solution, neither they nor their family and friends would ever consider entering such a truck for a whole host of reasons such as neighbors suspecting you had a sexually transmitted disease and explaining what the pap test actually entailed. And that was the end of NCI's *taco truck*.

Lesson 4

Pilot your materials with actual members of the intended target audience.

Even though we had a number of cultural advisors when developing two films to increase cervical cancer-related knowledge, attitudes and behavior, *Tamale Lesson* and the nonnarrative *It's Time*, it was still essential to pilot the intervention with actual members of the target audience. In this case our target audience was Latinas between the ages of 21–45 living in Los Angeles who had not had a cancer screening using a pap test (or *Papanicolaou*) in the past three years. We recruited several focus groups of eight to ten women each to watch the 11-minute films through and then discuss.

We discovered several problems with both our narrative and nonnarrative film that needed to be addressed. In *Tamale Lesson*, one of the main actresses used heavy eye liner. While this meant nothing to me or our cultural advisors, it was a clear sign of association with a local gang which made audience members wary and unlikely to identify with her. As EE experts you realize that if the audience fails to identify with the key character demonstrating the main behavior (here getting a pap test), the impact of the story is substantially weakened. As a result, we reshot with another actress before conducting the larger study.

We also realized a second problem during piloting. In the nonnarrative we used percentages to discuss the relative risk of cervical cancer among the different ethnic groups in our study. These formative focus groups revealed that some of the Latinas in our sample were unfamiliar with the concept of percentages, so we changed the script to avoid the term “50 percent” instead saying “almost half of women have HPV at some point in their lives.” When measuring the impact of the films on normative beliefs we likewise avoided percentages, instead asking “Out of one hundred women like you, how many do you think would have her daughter get vaccinated against human papillomavirus (HPV)?”

Lesson 5

Be aware of numeric literacy, random assignment and witchcraft.

This unfamiliarity with percentages is part of a larger methodological issue known as numeracy or numeric literacy. Not only are percentages often problematic, particularly in developing countries, but so are the concept of interval scales which we in the West use every day (e.g., On a scale

from 1 to 10, where 1 means strongly disagree and 10 means strongly agree). This makes measuring the impact of an intervention challenging, to say the least. One workaround is using verbal labels for each response option (e.g., Would you say you strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, slightly agree or strongly agree).

In addition to having little familiarity with percentages and interval scales, individuals in other cultures may be completely unfamiliar with the concept of random assignment. Two colleagues, Paul Falzone and Paul Sparks, gave the following account of using dice to randomly assign participants to receive different versions of an intervention. They were attempting to pilot an early version of Wanji Games, an interactive narrative format to teach health and livelihoods skills in the Teso region of Uganda. They had more participants than they needed so one of the researchers, Paul Sparks, brought out dice to help with random selection of participants. After some discussion in their native language, villagers were now refusing to participate, and wanted the researchers to leave. Moreover, the villagers later became uncooperative with other researchers saying that the Wanji Games folks tried to use witchcraft on them (referring to the dice)! The moral of this story is to remember that something that makes perfect sense methodologically to you (e.g. using dice for random assignment) may seem odd or suspicious to others.

Lesson 6

Use a “control group” to account for historical confounds.

One of the most common critiques of entertainment-education is that many projects, particularly early attempts, lacked a rigorous evaluation of their impact by an unbiased researcher. In the early days of EE, if there was any evaluation of impact at all, it was often an afterthought done by the same team that designed the narrative intervention. More recent EE projects have made a strong, unbiased, quantitative evaluation a requirement for funding. However, many EE evaluations still rely on a posttest only design where a sufficiently large sample of the target audience is either exposed to the narrative (experimental group) or not (control group).

But is exposing the control group to nothing always fair? Sometimes not. As most textbooks will tell you, almost all experimental designs contain a control group to whom the intervention has not been given (or, if appropriate, a placebo version lacking the active ingredient). So, for

example, to test whether embedding information in a story or “narrative” leads to stronger, longer-lasting effects in knowledge, attitudes and behavior we had to create a control nonnarrative that had the same facts but presented them in a nonnarrative format. Control groups allow researchers to account for the effect of history or other uncontrollable events that might impact your outcome measures.

A control group becomes essential if you have a posttest only design. One project I was involved with tried to “normalize” condom use in India. This was particularly challenging because condoms were kept behind the counter and had to be requested from the pharmacist and, to make matters worse, just saying the word “condom” in India was extremely taboo. The BBC developed an award-winning campaign of small vignettes run as Public Service Announcements (PSAs). Each PSA in the series used humor to position a male condom user as smart and another man who is scandalized by hearing the word “condom” in public look foolish (these PSAs can be found on BBC Media Action’s website). We carefully designed the impact study by releasing the series in certain television markets first, deliberately withholding the PSAs in other comparable areas to serve as our controls. Unfortunately for our experimental design, the PSAs became immediately popular, particularly one that allowed individuals to download a free “condom a cappella ringtone” which four million viewers did. The Indian government magnanimously decided that all of India should be allowed to see the PSAs immediately. There went our carefully constructed control group! We were forced to come up with a measure of how much young sexually active men were exposed to the campaign (how many they remembered, etc.). The research design was not ideal, but the campaign ultimately increased condom sales in India around 8 percent (Frank et al., 2012).

Lesson 7

Plan a pretest-posttest design (as opposed to a posttest only design), so you can salvage a study when something happens in the middle of your data collection.

The gold standard for establishing causality, however, is showing change at the individual level (in other words, surveying the same individuals twice—once at Time 1 to establish a pretest baseline measure and then again after the experimental intervention at Time 2 or posttest to assess the degree to which each person has changed their knowledge, attitudes and behavior). Although reaching the same person twice can be

challenging outside of the laboratory, it can control for the effects of “history” or the impact of something occurring outside of your intervention that may nevertheless impact your posttest measures.

Just such a “historical” effect occurred in June 2015, while my colleagues at Hollywood Health and Society (HH&S) Erica Rosenthal and Kate Folb and my student Traci Gillig and I were conducting a study designed to measure the impact of a transgender storyline on a medical show *Royal Pains*. The producers of *Royal Pains* alerted HH&S of an upcoming storyline that featured a transgender actress playing a transgender 16-year-old girl, Anna, who experiences health complications while self-administering estrogen in order to transition from male to female.

Approximately two weeks prior to the episode airing we collected pretest levels of attitudes toward transgender individuals, rights and policies such as sharing restrooms from 488 regular *Royal Pains* viewers. Our plan was to conduct a posttest immediately after the story aired on June 24th—with viewers who watched the episode the night it aired acting as our experimental group and those viewers who had not seen the episode serving as our control group.

Unfortunately for our well-laid plans, the *Royal Pains* transgender storyline aired the same month that former Olympic swimmer and reality TV star Caitlyn Jenner announced her transition (as described in more detail in Rosenthal & Folb, 2021). How could we ever disentangle the impact of the Jenner announcement from the effects of our *Royal Pains* storyline? After the initial panic subsided we realized that we had individual pretest data for each participant. Since we were going to analyze change in transgender attitudes from pretest to posttest, perhaps all was not lost. We added items to the posttest to measure the degree of exposure to Jenner’s announcement and other transgender storylines (such as *Transparent*). Luckily, our results showed that the Jenner announcement had not swamped the impact of our storyline and we were able to separate out exposure to the Jenner announcement from our transgender episode. Viewers who saw Anna’s transgender storyline reported more supportive attitudes toward transgender people and related policy issues (such as transgender high school students should be able to use the restroom that matches their gender identity) than those who did not see that episode. And interestingly, attitude change was cumulative across different transgender portrayals on different shows suggesting that the frequency of sympathetic portrayals matters (Gillig, Rosenthal, Murphy, & Folb, 2018). The moral of this story is that what at first glance appears to be a

methodological lemon is much easier to salvage with individual level pretest-posttest design that allows you to measure change before and after the intervention at the individual level (as well as exposure to any potential confounds here the Jenner announcement post).

LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

In the early days of entertainment-education, resources were often funneled almost exclusively into making the best possible narrative intervention with little thought given to evaluating its impact. Everett Rogers and his former student Arvind Singhal were involved in early ground-breaking EE projects such as *Hum Log (We People)*, the first serial or “soap opera” broadcast in India beginning in 1984 and continuing for over 30 years. *Hum Log* revolved around a middle-class family’s struggles and aspirations. But along the way, viewers learned about adult literacy, contraception and a legion of other social issues. When asked how they knew *Hum Log* was having the desired impact on viewers, the producers and research team pointed to the over 400,000 letters they had received. While this outpouring is incredibly impressive, it would not be sufficient for many current funders of EE projects. Today it is often required that an EE project should include a well thought out quantitative evaluation strategy, preferably conducted by independent researchers who will present an objective view of the project’s impact. The previous “lessons learned” were designed to be one small step toward helping help EE practitioners do just that.

The “lessons learned” discussed above can essentially be divided into one of two buckets. The first bucket requires understanding what type of quantitative evidence funders and journal editors expect in order to demonstrate your intervention produced the intended impact. These include strong study design (lesson 7) involving a control group who did not receive the intervention when appropriate (lesson 6), avoiding—or at least accounting for—potential confounds (lesson 2), as well as measurement issues (lesson 5). These methodological and measurement and statistical issues are perhaps the most straightforward and easiest to learn. One could take online classes in research methods and statistics or identify successful EE projects by researching articles subsequently published in peer-reviewed journals that describe the project and intervention measures in detail. Failing this, if no one on your team has experience in methods, measurement and statistics, I strongly recommend bringing on a

well-respected individual or team to help oversee the evaluation and analyses. It is vital that the evaluation should be integral to the intervention and be one of the earliest things you focus on, not an afterthought. If you are uncertain that your evaluation captures key constructs you could ask someone whose work in EE you admire to look over your proposed measures before you go into the field with project. Remember that your evaluation *will* be critiqued at some point—it is up to you whether that critique is a biopsy that identifies and removes problems at an early stage or an autopsy when data is already collected and nothing more can be done.

The second bucket involves common sense, something that can be orthogonal to academic achievements. Thinking ahead about possible outcomes both intended and unintended of your intervention (lesson 1) requires viewing the intervention through your target audience eyes and situation. Because much EE research is funded by international agencies and conducted by researchers from other cultures, it is essential to not only acknowledge ignorance but actively fill any relevant knowledge gaps by hiring cultural advisors (lesson 3) and piloting your intervention and measurement materials with members of the intended target audience (lesson 4). Remaining humble and keeping a sense of humor always helps. After all, what can possibly go wrong? And on the bright side, at least your last name is not Murphy.

REFERENCES

- Bandura, A. (2004). Social cognitive theory for personal and social change by enabling media. In A. Singhal, M. J. Cody, E. M. Rogers, & M. Sabido (Eds.), *Entertainment-education and social change: History, research, and practice* (pp. 75–96). Routledge.
- Frank, L. B., Chatterjee, J. S., Chaudhuri, S., Lapsansky, C., Bhanot, A., & Murphy, S. T. (2012). Conversation and compliance: Role of interpersonal discussion and social norms in public communication campaigns. *Journal of Health Communication, 17*(9), 1050–1067. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0/10810730.2012.665426>
- Gillig, T. K., Rosenthal, E. L., Murphy, S. T., & Folb, K. (2018). Do transgender portrayals change hearts and minds? The influence of media narratives on viewers' attitudes toward transgender people. *Sex Roles, 78*, 515–527. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-017-0816-1>
- Murphy, S. T., Frank, L. B., Chatterjee, J. S., Moran, M. B., Zhao, N., Amezola de Herrera, P., et al. (2015). Comparing the relative efficacy of narrative vs nonnarrative health messages in reducing health disparities using a randomized

trial. *American Journal of Public Health*, 105(10), 2117–2123. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2014.302332>

- Rosenthal, E. L., & Folb, K. L. (2021). Entertainment-education, American style: Informing and studying Hollywood's portrayals of social issues. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sabido, M. (2021). Miguel Sabido's entertainment-education. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if you modified the licensed material. You do not have permission under this licence to share adapted material derived from this chapter or parts of it.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.





Mind the Gap! Confronting the Challenges of Translational Communication Research in Entertainment-Education

Hua Wang and Arvind Singhal

The term “translational research” refers to research that makes it possible to translate abstract concepts into real-life applications (Romeroy & Sanfilippo, 2015). In medicine, translational research often involves the process where “basic research” is conducted by scientists in the lab to test out new ideas; then it moves onto “clinical trials” with human subjects; and if successful, the result is disseminated through industry and institutions such as pharmacies and hospitals to change population-level practice (Rubio et al., 2010; Woolf, 2008). Translational research in the field of communication involves applying interpersonal and technology-mediated solutions to engage stakeholders from different sectors and disciplines,

H. Wang (✉)

University at Buffalo, The State University of New York, Buffalo, NY, USA

e-mail: hwang23@buffalo.edu

A. Singhal

The University of Texas at El Paso, El Paso, TX, USA

Inland University of Applied Sciences, Lillehammer, Norway

e-mail: asinghal@utep.edu

implementing innovative methods and measures, and contributing to effective and sustainable efforts to improve people’s quality of life (Kreps, 2020). The focus of this chapter, the entertainment-education (EE) strategy, represents an intriguing area of translational communication research with wide-ranging implications for theory and practice of health promotion and social change.

Our pathway and purpose for this chapter are two-fold: (1) By chronicling the historical and recent developments of EE, we emphasize why EE researchers should not be shy of stepping out of their ivory towers to actively engage the communities being served; and (2) by sharing our experience with two EE projects, one in the United States and the other in India, we illustrate the wide gap that exists between the ideals that typically guide research design and the realities in the field. In so doing, we distill the lessons learned about building deeply trusting and mutually beneficial partnerships between researchers and other stakeholders; and the advantage of adopting a multi-method “bicycle design” that is relatively low cost, high yield, steadfast, and yet nimble enough to swiftly adapt to project needs.

ENTERTAINMENT-EDUCATION AS AN EVOLVING FIELD

In the past five decades, EE has evolved from being a creative field-centered approach aimed at addressing real-world problems to an established field of scholarship and praxis in social and behavioral change communication (SBCC) (SBCC Summit Report, 2018; Singhal, Wang, & Rogers, 2013; Storey & Sood, 2013).

History of the Rise of Entertainment-Education

EE gained currency by accident when a telenovela, *Simplemente María* (*Simply María*), took Peru by storm from 1969 to 1971 and subsequently swept across Central and South America (Singhal, Obregon, & Rogers, 1994). Its story revolved around the travails and triumphs of its protagonist, *María*, a rural-urban migrant who worked as a maid during the day and enrolled in adult literacy classes at night. She also developed seamstress skills using a Singer sewing machine and, as the plot twisted and turned, became a renowned fashion designer. *Simplemente María* attracted record-breaking ratings in Peru—on average about 85%. Surprisingly, the sale of Singer sewing machines skyrocketed as did enrollments in adult

literacy classes. Such phenomena occurred not just in Peru but in all countries of Central and South America where the telenovela was broadcast. What was supposed to be just another entertaining television serial on a commercial network turned out to be something with much wider social implications (Singhal & Rogers, 1999).

The *Simplemente María* fever sparked a moment of epiphany for Mexican television writer-producer-director, Miguel Sabido. Struck by the unprecedented audience success of *Simplemente María*, Sabido was convinced that mass-mediated dramatic storytelling had the potential to shape public discourses on important social issues and even change audience behavior. Sabido studied human communication theories in many disciplines: Eric Bentley's (1967) dramatic theory, Carl Jung's (1953, 1970) theory of archetypes, Paul MacLean's (1973) triune brain theory, and Albert Bandura's (1977, 1986) social learning/cognitive theory. Backed by an interdisciplinary conceptual foundation, Sabido actively began experimenting with social use of melodramatic serials on television. Through trials, evaluation research, and constant incorporation of learnings, he produced seven EE telenovelas between 1975 and 1982 to promote issues like adult literacy, family planning, and gender equality (Sabido, 2004). There was evidence to suggest that Sabido's telenovelas significantly boosted enrollments in adult literacy classes and led to increased adoption of condoms, pills, and other reproductive health services (Poindexter, 2004; Singhal & Rogers, 1999). And the method he developed to produce EE serial dramas began to be called the Sabido methodology.

Over the next couple of decades, EE and the Sabido methodology snowballed globally, inspiring the development of television soap operas such as *Hum Log (We People)* in India (Singhal & Rogers, 1988) and radio soap operas such as *Twende Na Wakati (Let's Go with the Times)* in Tanzania (Vaughan, Rogers, Singhal, & Swalehe, 2000). The Sabido methodology was adopted and adapted far and wide in countries of Latin America, Asia, and Africa, championed mainly by the international non-profit, Population Communication International, and Johns Hopkins University's Center for Communication Programs (Singhal & Rogers, 1999). While early EE practice centered around serving communities in developing countries with reproductive health and HIV prevention messages (Singhal, Cody, Rogers, & Sabido, 2004), EE now tackles a wide range of complex social issues around the world (Sood, Riley, & Alarcon, 2017), such as domestic violence (Yue, Wang, & Singhal, 2019),

post-genocide group prejudice (Paluck, 2009), cancer prevention (Murphy et al., 2015), organ donation (Morgan, Movius, & Cody, 2009), and environmental sustainability (Reinermann, Lubjuhn, Bouman, & Singhal, 2014). With Sabido's trials and experiments with EE drama serials in Mexico, and also their global adoption and adaptation, EE represents a worthy case of translational communication research.

Keeping with the Times: Changing Definition of Entertainment-Education

In its early years, the primary spread of EE occurred through entertainment genres in radio and television. EE practitioners mainly worked with government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and creative professionals to develop prosocial drama serials. In that context, EE was defined as “the process of purposely designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate, in order to increase audience knowledge about an educational issue, create favorable attitudes, and change overt behavior” (Singhal & Rogers, 1999, p. 9; also see Singhal et al., 2004, p. 5). The focus was to find the “sweet spot” that helped balance the entertaining and the educational elements in the story so the audience members would relate to the plots, fall in love with the characters, not feel they were being preached at, and could see new possibilities to enhance their lives.

At the turn of this century, with the internet becoming more accessible and popular, storytelling on web-based platforms with immersive environments rose rapidly. EE evolved with the capacities and possibilities that accompanied digital and interactive technologies. EE scholars also called for more theoretical development and diversity in EE research (Singhal & Rogers, 2002). In 2009, we proposed a reformulated definition to emphasize that EE is “a theory-based communication strategy for purposefully embedding educational and social issues in the creation, production, processing, and dissemination process of an entertainment program, in order to achieve desired individual, community, institutional, and societal changes among the intended media user populations” (Wang & Singhal, 2009, pp. 272–273). This reformulation of the definition was necessary for at least three reasons: (1) EE programs expanded beyond radio and television dramatic serials to include music videos, cartoons, comic books, web series, and digital games; (2) EE initiatives spread from developing countries to include vulnerable audience groups in industrialized

developing countries and media saturated markets; and (3) EE research broadened its conceptual and methodological scope (Singhal, 2013; Singhal, Cody, et al., 2004; Singhal, Wang, et al., 2013; Wang, Choi, Wu, & DeMarle, 2018; Wang & Singhal, 2016).

Through the lens of translational communication research, we now propose an updated definition of EE: Entertainment-education is a social and behavioral change communication (SBCC) strategy that leverages the power of storytelling in entertainment and wisdom from theories in different disciplines—with deliberate intention and collaborative efforts throughout the process of content production, program implementation, monitoring, and evaluation—to address critical issues in the real world and create enabling conditions for desirable and sustainable change across micro-, meso-, and macro-levels. Specifically, the following points deserve emphasis:

1. EE is an SBCC strategy that has been applied and embraced by global, national, and local change makers to serve the interests of underserved communities.
2. EE is characterized by deliberate intention and requires sustained creative efforts to seamlessly incorporate educational content with enabling features into the entertainment programming.
3. EE practice is situated in and derived from theories in human communication and other social science disciplines; it will continue to widen and deepen and become more nuanced with time.
4. EE purposely tackles real-life complex social problems and should engage key field-based stakeholders to foster trusting partnerships to enable desirable and sustainable change at the individual, community, institutional, and societal level.

In essence, EE is an instrumental and field-based practice, drawing upon theories from different disciplines (Wang & Singhal, 2021). As diverse applications of EE occur across geographic regions, cultural contexts, and communication platforms, translational researchers need to recognize the following.

First, often scholars and practitioners loosely appropriate the term EE to refer to any entertainment program that happens to address a health or social issue. Despite the noble intentions of intervention designers and media producers, such programs are *not* EE. They are not created with a deep understanding of the theoretical foundation of EE, nor do they

employ theory-based principles to interweave educational messaging with the dramatic storytelling, the audience/user experience, and/or the program evaluation.

Furthermore, as EE converges with experimental research in narrative persuasion, translational scholars should fiercely guard against methodological partisanship that view textbook lab experiments and inferential statistics as the gold standard. Much of the empirical research on narrative persuasion has been conducted with a uni-method approach and a sample bias characterized as “WEIRD,” that is, Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic (Eden et al., 2014, p. 514). These WEIRD biases become insidious when scholars fail to acknowledge the fundamental limitation of their research—the lack of ecological validity.

In contrast to lab experiments on narrative persuasion, EE is applied and translational by nature. Its very existence and evolution reside in its mission to purposely address the unmet needs of societal underdogs and tackle complex social problems in real-world settings. Recognizing this salient aspect of EE, that is, its purposive alignment between theory and practice, is vitally important.

GAPS IN EXEMPLARY ENTERTAINMENT-EDUCATION PROJECTS

We discuss two recent EE projects—*East Los High* in the United States and *Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon* (*I, A Woman, Can Achieve Anything*) in India—to illustrate the gaps that we pointed out in translational EE research.

Testing Narrative Persuasion in East Los High

One pioneering example of EE is the award-winning Hollywood web series *East Los High* (*ELH*), which ran on Hulu from June 2013 to December 2017. On the surface, *ELH* could be any popular Latinx teen drama set in a fictional high school in East Los Angeles. However, the producers purposely incorporated role modeling and credible resources about safe sex, family planning, and women’s reproductive rights while addressing the social stigma and cultural barriers that young Latinx routinely face in the United States. *ELH* represents an effort of, by, and for the Latinx community (Wang & Singhal, 2016; Wang, Singhal, et al., 2019).

The story world of *ELH* comprised the flagship web series and multiple associated narrative elements that were strategically rolled out across nine other digital platforms: (1) extended *ELH* scenes to deepen character development and issue engagement; (2) *The Siren*, the school student newspaper that gave young people a voice to tell their own stories; (3) “Ask Paulie”—a platform that allowed Paulie, a funny and lovable character, to answer embarrassing questions about sexuality; (4) Ceci’s vlogs which opened up a channel through her video blogs so that viewers could follow her teen pregnancy journey of dilemmas, options, and social support; (5) Tia Pepe’s Mexican cooking recipes for tasty and healthy meals; (6) dance tutorials of the high school’s Bomb Squad with signature moves as they prepare for the Big Five competition; (7) *La Voz* with Xavi to take pride in exploring cultural activities in East Los Angeles; (8) comic strips for trendy but important social topics; and (9) public service announcements delivered by *ELH* lead actors on behalf of partnering organizations such as StayTeen.org to inform and spur action among Latinx youth about health and social topics. These transmedia narrative experiences were further extended through resource links and widgets on the *ELH* website along with other audience engagement strategies on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (Wang, Singhal, et al., 2019).

In order to assess the audience reach, engagement, and impact of *ELH*, our research team used a multi-method approach to capture the audience experience by conducting a viewer survey, an experiment differentiating various narrative experiences, digital analytics tracking, social network analyses, as well as participant observation and in-depth interviews with young Latinx couples at *ELH* watch parties. The program evaluation design, process, and results are well documented in terms of the broad geographic and sociodemographic reach among the *ELH* viewers, their enthusiastic response to the authentic stories and characters in *ELH*, and the potential of using narrative elements across digital platforms to meaningfully engage the audience and bring out positive change (Sachdev & Singhal, 2015; Wang & Singhal, 2016; Wang, Singhal, et al., 2019; Wang, Xu, Saxton, & Singhal, 2019).

One finding on *ELH* that we have not reported previously is a translational gap we observed while testing a theory of persuasion in the field. As background, in the early 2000s, as part of its theoretical development and diversification, EE research started to converge with the growing body of experimental research on narrative persuasion in media psychology (Wang & Singhal, 2021). A number of theoretical concepts and models were

introduced to explain and predict the ways in which media users process the information embedded in narratives and how it affects their perceptions. For example, “narrative transportation” focused on the mental process that explains why people can get “lost” in the world of stories, losing the sense of their immediate surroundings and feeling that they have traveled to different places and times (Green & Brock, 2000). Another example was “identification with media characters,” an imaginative process through which an audience member can put him/herself in the character’s shoes to look at the world, consider the situation, and feel the emotions (Cohen, 2001).

Building on the theoretical development of narrative transportation and character identification, Slater (2002) argued that using stories in entertainment media for persuasion was fundamentally different from the dual (central and peripheral) information processing approach that Petty and Cacioppo (1986) called elaboration likelihood model (ELM). Instead, Slater and Rouner (2002) proposed an extended elaboration likelihood model (E-ELM) to help explain how EE stories persuade their intended audiences to change. They argued that factors like storyline appeal and quality of production would influence audience’s narrative transportation and character identification, which in turn would affect their perceptions. Lab experiments with college students had shown considerable evidence on how narrative transportation and character identification led to story-consistent attitudes, beliefs, and behavioral intentions (e.g., Bilandzic & Kinnebrock, 2009; Green, Strange, & Brock, 2002; Moyer-Gusé, 2008). Therefore, we wanted to see how well E-ELM applied to the *ELH* audience survey data.

We reported the sample characteristics and key measures in the *ELH* audience survey in Wang and Singhal (2016). For applied theory-testing of E-ELM, we used an advanced analytical technique called structural equation modeling. This technique allowed us to test multiple research hypotheses at the same time by examining each individual relationship while assessing how well the overall conceptual model fit the data with goodness-of-fit measures and modification indicators for model optimization. The final results after iterative model testing and modification are summarized in Fig. 14.1.

In each model, “behavioral intention” was tested as five separate outcome variables—use of condoms, emergency contraception, abortion health service recommendation, pregnancy testing, and pregnancy testing recommendation. Remarkably, all final models met the criteria for overall

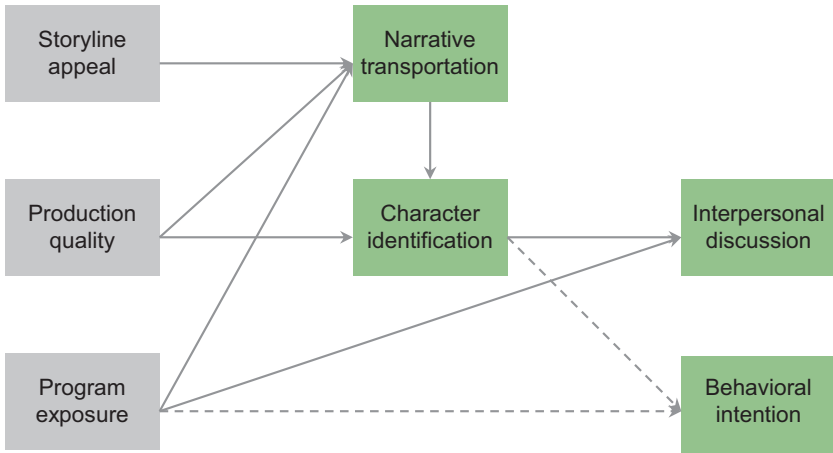


Fig. 14.1 Summary of *East Los High* viewer survey results of structural equation modeling

goodness-of-fit. However, not all individual hypotheses were supported. Solid arrows indicate the relationships that were consistently significant across all models. Dotted arrows indicate the relationships that were not significant in most models, therefore, not supported with sufficient empirical evidence.

More specifically, storyline appeal, production quality, and program exposure significantly predicted audience's narrative transportation into the *ELH* story world. Production quality significantly also predicted audience's identification with the main characters in *ELH*. Program exposure also significantly predicted interpersonal discussion about *ELH*. Character identification appeared to be a full mediator between narrative transportation and interpersonal discussion. There was no support for a direct link from interpersonal discussion to behavioral intention during the model modification process. The links from program exposure and character identification to behavioral intention were not significant in most models with the exceptions of (1) a significant link from program exposure to behavioral intention regarding pregnancy testing recommendation and (2) a significant link from character identification to behavioral intention regarding pregnancy testing recommendation.

Simply, our *ELH* results point to the chasm that exists in doing lab-based experiments and fieldwork. Published lab experiments conducted by

media psychologists routinely show that exposure to narrative stimuli leads to statistically significant story-consistent attitudes, beliefs, and behavioral intentions. However, while our field-based survey data among the *ELH* audience provided evidence of interpersonal discussion about the show, it did not indicate any direct or immediate effects on behavioral intentions. In essence, a sharp distinction existed between findings of a textbook clean research design in a well-controlled lab environment where data is collected right after respondents are exposed and what we found in a field survey with “real” respondents. While lab experiments valorize internal validity of findings, translational researchers will do well to test the ecological validity of results. That represents the key translational challenge in EE—that is, meeting the intended audience members where they are, systematically gathering information while minimizing biases, and triangulating findings through multi-method research designs.

Nimbly Adapting Fieldwork in Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon

We were also involved in the program evaluation of another exemplary EE initiative—*Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon/MKBKSH* (*I, A Woman, Can Achieve Anything*) in India. From March 2014 to September 2019, three seasons of *MKBKSH* comprising some 183 episodes were broadcast on Doordarshan, the Indian national television network, and hundreds of All India Radio stations as well as mobile and community networks to reach “media dark” rural areas (Wang & Singhal, 2018). *MKBKSH* challenged entrenched regressive gender norms and advocated for women’s empowerment through the positive role modeling of its protagonist, Dr. Sneha Mathur, who leaves behind a lucrative medical practice in Mumbai and returns to her home village to tackle multiple social ills—child marriage, sex selection in favor of male offspring, violence against women, and multiple manifestations of gender inequality.

MKBKSH was the first EE intervention to use an interactive voice response system (IVRS) across all three seasons to invite and engage audience members at scale and in real time, allowing them to access and interact with curated *MKBKSH* content, answer questions, and share personal opinions and actions inspired by *MKBKSH* (Wang & Singhal, 2018). The IVRS represented a “voicebook” for millions of audience members, especially the rural, the socioeconomically poor, and the less privileged (Wang & Singhal, 2018). Further, *MKBKSH*’s story world was supplemented with a series of mini-documentaries titled “Reel to Real” documenting Dr.

Sneha visiting real communities where the impact of *MKBKSH* was profound. Two other miniseries, *Kishor Ka Shor* (The Voice of Youth) and *Satya Ki Adalat* (The Truth Court), were carved out of *MKBKSH*'s television content, extending the storyline on *MKBKSH*'s Facebook page and YouTube channel. In Season 3, a new transmedia extension was added by launching a chatbot called *SnehAI* (for Sneha AI) on the *MKBKSH* Facebook page via the Messenger app. This chatbot helped create a safe, non-judgmental, and private platform for India's youth to seek counseling services about sexual and reproductive health. Such services are virtually non-existent in India.

An interesting translational issue in program evaluation was observed in our *MKBKSH* field research. To understand the issue, a little background on EE program evaluations may be useful. Traditionally, EE program evaluations have relied heavily on audience reception surveys and have been criticized for participants' self-selection bias (Sherry, 1997). Over the past 25 years, scholars and practitioners have made extra efforts to secure resource and conduct assessments using more rigorous designs such as field experiments (e.g., Banerjee et al., 2019; Paluck, 2009; Vaughan et al., 2000). A recent meta-analysis on the use of EE narratives to promote safer sexual behaviors of youth from 1985 to 2017 only found 10 qualified publications using either a full or a quasi-experimental design in the field (Orozco-Olvera, Shen, & Cluver, 2019). Thus, in our research design of *MKBKSH* Season 3 program evaluation, we purposely included an experimental component with repeated measures in order to better understand whether the exposure to the storylines and the underlying educational themes made any difference among the audience as compared to those without any exposure. By visiting the same participants more than once, we hoped to track any individual-level changes over time.

We carefully selected the villages of Kanpur Dehat in India's most populous Uttar Pradesh state (population 200 million people with a total fertility rate of 3.1) as the site for the field experiment. The residents of Kanpur Dehat represent the characteristics of the *MKBKSH* intended audience with respect to both the theme of hygiene and sanitation and reproductive health and family planning. Working closely with our local NGO partner, Shramik Bharati, representative villages were identified to establish viewer versus non-viewer groups. We ensured that the non-viewing respondents were outside the broadcast area of the community radio station, which previously had broadcast the radio versions of *MKBKSH* Seasons 1 and 2.

Based on respondent selection guidelines provided by us with respect to gender and marital status, the field researchers of Centre for Media Studies (CMS), our data-collection partner, and our local NGO collaborator, Shramik Bharati, crafted a recruitment instrument to identify viewers and non-viewers at T1 baseline. This recruitment instrument took into account potential respondents' ownership of television sets, availability of the Doordarshan channel on which *MKBKSH* was broadcast, their viewing habits with respect to television serials, and a reasonable availability of power supply, as power outages in rural India are common. So far, so good.

Further, T1 baseline data were collected in January 2019 prior to *MKBKSH* Season 3 launch on Doordarshan with 302 participants based on their gender and viewership status. Based on the preliminary results, a swift sampling adjustment was made in February 2019 to add 30 more participants to the viewer group who did not have a toilet at home to (1) balance out the participants' toilet ownership in the entire sample and (2) account for potential high attrition rate of *MKBKSH* viewership at T2.

After the T1 baseline data collection, random manipulation checks carried out by CMS and Shramik Bharati gave us confidence that the non-viewers did not have any exposure to *MKBKSH* Season 3. However, alarmingly, the same checks showed that *MKBKSH* viewership was very low even among our designated viewers (ranging from 10% to 15%). This meant that our small sample of viewers could doom our experimental design. On a war footing, we mobilized our local NGO partner Shramik Bharati to make another swift adjustment prior to T2 data collection, that is, after the broadcast of the first half of Season 3. Numerous individual and group viewing sessions (Fig. 14.2) were held with the designated viewers, so they were able to view at least five key sanitation episodes. These episodes focused on the sanitation plotline, the desired sanitation behaviors, including respect and compassion for sanitation workers, who are at the bottom of India's caste hierarchy. This swift field adjustment saved our experimental design—albeit temporarily.

Manipulation checks post T2 reconfirmed that low viewership to the second half of *MKBKSH* Season 3 continued, and so we had to further make a swift adaptation to our research design. Prior to T3, an 86-minute edited *MKBKSH* Season 3 film containing the key reproductive health and family planning messages were shown to all designated viewers (Fig. 14.2), ensuring that each respondent had at least the 86-minute film as minimal exposure. And T4 was cut out due to resource constraints.



Fig. 14.2 *MKBKSH* Season 3 viewing sessions among villagers facilitated by Shramik Bharati

Thanks to our ability to leverage field-based partnerships and respond swiftly to field-based contingencies, a total of 514 residents in Kanpur Dehat participated in at least one, if not all three, in-person field surveys administered before, during, and after the broadcast of Season 3—in January, June, and November, 2019: T1 had 332 participants, T2 had 442 participants, and T3 had 421 participants. T1 served as the pretest for the first half of *MKBKSH* Season 3 featuring the theme of sanitation and gender equality; T2 served as the posttest on sanitation-related assessments and pretest for the second half of *MKBKSH* Season 3, featuring the theme of family planning and gender equality; T3 served as the follow-up on selected sanitation-related questions and posttest on family planning-related assessments.

Our *MKBKSH* experience reinforces how difficult it is to reconcile a rigorous research design with shifting ground-based dynamics. If we had pursued a textbook clean experimental design and simply contracted our research partners to collect data, our T1, T2, and T3 data would have been useless. A lot of time, effort, and resources would have gone down a meaningless drain. Instead, our research team spent a lot of time building strong and trusting partnerships between our data-collection agency (CMS) and local NGO partner, Shramik Bharati, weaving in several feedback and feedforward loops. Transparent open communication marked the research journey, problem-solving was a collaborative process. In its

absence, we would have not have been able to discover the confounding factors in a timely manner, adjust our sampling strategy at baseline, or adapt to the unfolding realities in the villages to reduce the attrition rate over time in order to have sufficient quality data for meaningful program evaluation.

Cross-pollination from *ELH* to *MKBKSH*

While we were able to implement a multi-method approach to assessing *ELH*, we missed a precious opportunity to evaluate its direct impact by a whisker. This costly lesson underscores how in the field, unlike a textbook lab experiment, things often fall through the cracks despite good planning and the noble intentions of partners. Remarkably, our NGO partner behind StayTeen.org worked closely with the *ELH* production team to embed widgets on the *ELH* webpage to enable motivated viewers to take actions, for example, search additional health information or seek a referral to a provider. For instance, a viewer could use a widget to type in their zip code to find local health clinics that provided a service featured in the show. While the entered zip codes were anonymous entries, they represented concrete health information-seeking behaviors directly resulting from the watching of *ELH*. Unfortunately, no such information was recorded. If the producers and writers had shared this possibility up front with the researchers and the NGO partners, a concerted effort could have been made to capture the anonymous entries of the zip codes that *ELH* viewers used to look up for local resources, providing some of the best evidence in EE program evaluation.

Learning from this incredibly unfortunate missed opportunity, while working on *MKBKSH*, when our NGO partners obtained the approval from the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare to provide their national toll-free helpline number to access information on sexual and reproductive health, we were able to work with the team to set up in the Snehai chatbot analytics database to track the number of unique users and clicks on the helpline link and accumulate the evidence from thousands within a few short weeks. Our *ELH* to *MKBKSH* journey demonstrates that while translational “gaps” may emerge within the container of a project, the learnings gained in one project can inform the planning and execution of another that follows.

LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

EE represents an intriguing area of translational communication research for health promotion and social change. It holds the potential to interrogate theoretical concepts and models with creative practices in message design, intervention implementation, and program evaluation. Our experience with the two projects—*ELH* and *MKBKSH*—points to the following lessons learned about translational communication research in EE:

Lesson #1: Strive for internal *and* external validity and interrogate the strengths and weaknesses of lab experiments with fieldwork. A large gap exists between what is found in a well-controlled lab environment where data is collected right after respondents are exposed to a narrative persuasion intervention, and what is found in the applied theory-testing in the real world with a diverse set of respondents. Translational researchers should pay attention to the internal validity of lab-based findings but not be shy about stepping out of the ivory towers to constantly interrogate them in the field. Ultimately, translational scholars wish for their interventions to have high degrees of external and ecological validity.

Lesson #2: Build deeply trusting and mutually beneficial partnerships among all key stakeholders. The effectiveness of EE program evaluation is highly dependent on open and trusting communication among the team of program evaluators and representatives of field agencies and local partners. Field immersion of program evaluators is essential for them to not treat the field as a neat textbook research lab, but to understand the daily rhythms of respondents, including their sowing and harvest seasons, local electoral calendars, and the like. Regular feedback and feedforward exercises, including manipulation checks and data monitoring, should be carefully built into the research process. Even experienced field research agencies must understand the value of making swift adjustments with respect to sampling strategies, including modifying, as needed, the nature of program intervention and treatment conditions to respond to field-based contingencies. Goodwill represents an important currency especially if budgets are limited, as they often are.

Lesson #3. Adopt a multi-method approach with nimble cost-effective “bicycle” research designs. This way, the findings can be triangulated from different types of input to provide a deeper understanding of what works and why, and what does not, and why. It is important for translational researchers of EE to not put all their eggs in one basket. Our

research experience with *ELH* and *MKBKSH* suggests that when budgets are scarce, nimble cost-effective “bicycle” research designs may provide richer insights than an expensive uni-method “Cadillac” research design.

Lesson #4: Privilege a multi-theoretical framework to EE scholarship and praxis. EE translational research should go beyond just audience reception and media effects studies grounded in the subfields of psychology (i.e., social psychology and media psychology). As our *ELH* and *MKBKSH* research demonstrates EE can benefit tremendously from the knowledge and integration of resources in other related fields such as public health (e.g., promoting sexual and reproductive health among underserved population groups), sociology (e.g., using social network analysis to examine individual and organizational connections), information systems (e.g., digital tracking and IVRS for large-scale real-time audience engagement), and artificial intelligence (e.g., use of chatbots). The interdisciplinary nature of EE requires a multi-theoretical and multi-method approach so that the learnings and attributions can span the micro-meso-macro levels—from individual behavioral changes to community-, society-, and policy-level praxis.

REFERENCES

- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Prentice-Hall.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Prentice-Hall.
- Bentley, E. (1967). *The life of drama*. Atheneum.
- Banerjee, A., La Ferrara, E., Orozco-Olvera, V. H. (2019, September). *The entertaining way to behavioral change: Fighting HIV with MTV*. Policy Research Working Paper 8998, Development Impact Evaluation Group, World Bank Group.
- Bilandzic, H., & Kinnebrock, S. (2009). Narrative experiences and effects of media stories: An introduction to the special issue. *Communications*, 34(4), 355–360. <https://doi.org/10.1515/COMM.2009.022>
- Cohen, J. (2001). Defining identification: A theoretical look at the identification of audiences with media characters. *Mass Communication and Society*, 4, 245–264. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327825MCS0403_01
- Eden, A., Tamborini, R., Grizzard, M., Lewis, R., Weber, R., & Prabhu, S. (2014). Repeated exposure to narrative entertainment and the salience of moral intuitions. *Journal of Communication*, 64, 501–520.
- Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2000). The role of transportation in the persuasiveness of public narratives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79, 701–721. <https://doi.org/10.1037/00223514.79.5.701>

- Green, M. C., Strange, J. J., & Brock, T. C. (Eds.). (2002). *Narrative impact: Social and cognitive foundations*. Erlbaum.
- Jung, C. G. (1953). *The collected works of C. G. Jung. Vol. 12. Psychology and alchemy*. Bollingen Foundation Inc.
- Jung, C. G. (1970). *Archetypes and the collective unconscious*. Editorial Paidos.
- Kreps, G. L. (2020). Engaged communication scholarship: The challenge to translate communication research into practice. In H. D. O'Hair & M. J. O'Hair (Eds.), *The handbook of applied communication research: Volume I* (pp. 93–102). John Wiley & Sons.
- MacLean, P. D. (1973). A triune concept of the brain and behavior, including psychology of memory, sleep, and dreaming. In V. A. Kral et al. (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Ontario Mental Health Foundation meeting at Queen's University*. University of Toronto Press.
- Morgan, S. E., Movius, L., & Cody, M. J. (2009). The power of narratives: The effect of entertainment television organ donation storylines on the attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors of donors and nondonors. *Journal of Communication*, 59, 135–151.
- Moyer-Gusé, E. (2008). Toward a theory of entertainment persuasion: Explaining the persuasive effects of entertainment-education messages. *Communication Theory*, 18, 407–425. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2008.00328.x>
- Murphy, S. T., Frank, L. B., Chatterjee, J. S., Moran, M. B., Zhao, N., de Herrera, P. A., et al. (2015). Comparing the relative efficacy of narrative vs. nonnarrative health messages in reducing health disparities using a randomized trial. *American Journal of Public Health*, 105, 2117–2123.
- Orozco-Olvera, V., Shen, F., & Cluver, L. (2019). The effectiveness of using entertainment education narratives to promote safer sexual behaviors of youth: A meta-analysis, 1985–2017. *PLOS ONE*, 14(2), e0209969.
- Paluck, E. L. (2009). Reducing intergroup prejudice and conflict using the media: A field experiment in Rwanda. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96, 574–587.
- Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). *Communication and persuasion: Central and peripheral routes to attitude change*. Springer-Verlag.
- Poindexter, D. O. (2004). A history of entertainment-education, 1958–2000. In A. Singhal, M. J. Cody, E. M. Rogers, & M. Sabido (Eds.), *Entertainment-education and social change: History, research, and practice* (pp. 21–38). Erlbaum.
- Reinermann, J.-L., Lubjuhn, S., Bouman, M., & Singhal, A. (2014). Entertainment-education: Storytelling for the greater, greener good. *International Journal of Sustainable Development*, 17, 176–191.
- Romeroy, C., & Sanfilippo, F. (2015). How research can and should inform public policy. In S. A. Wartman (Ed.), *The transformation of academic health centers: Meeting the challenges of healthcare's changing landscape* (pp. 179–191). Elsevier.

- Rubio, D. M., Schoenbaum, E. E., Lee, L. S., Schteingart, D. E., Marantz, P. R., Anderson, K. E., et al. (2010). Defining translational research: Implications for training. *Academic Medicine*, *85*, 470–475.
- Sabido, M. (2004). The origins of entertainment-education. In A. Singhal, M. J. Cody, E. M. Rogers, & M. Sabido (Eds.), *Entertainment-education and social change: History, research, and practice* (pp. 61–74). Erlbaum.
- Sachdev, A., & Singhal, A. (2015). Where international, intranational, and development communication converge: Effects of East Los High, an entertainment-education web series, on sexual decision-making of young Latino/a couples. *The Journal of Development Communication*, *26*(2), 15–34.
- SBCC Report. (2018). *Shifting norms, changing behavior, amplifying voice that works: 2018 International SBCC Summit, featuring entertainment-education*. Retrieved from https://sbccsummit.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/SBCC_Summit2018_report.pdf
- Sherry, J. L. (1997). Prosocial soap operas for development: A review of research and theory. *Journal of International Communication*, *4*(2), 75–101.
- Singhal, A. (2013). Fairy tales to digital games: The rising tide of entertainment education. *Critical Arts*, *27*, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02560046.2013.766971>
- Singhal, A., & Rogers, E. M. (1988). Television soap operas for development in India. *Gazette*, *41*, 109–126.
- Singhal, A., & Rogers, E. M. (1999). *Entertainment-education: A communication strategy for social change*. Erlbaum.
- Singhal, A., & Rogers, E. M. (2002). A theoretical agenda for entertainment-education. *Communication Theory*, *12*, 117–135.
- Singhal, A., Cody, M. J., Rogers, E. M., & Sabido, M. (2004). *Entertainment-education and social change: History, research, and practice*. Erlbaum.
- Singhal, A., Obregon, R., & Rogers, E. M. (1994). Reconstructing the story of “*Simplemente María*”, the most popular *telenovela* in Latin America of all time. *Gazette*, *54*, 1–15.
- Singhal, A., Wang, H., & Rogers, E. M. (2013). The rising tide of entertainment-education in communication campaigns. In R. Rice & C. Atkin (Eds.), *Public communication campaigns* (pp. 321–333). Sage.
- Slater, M. D. (2002). Involvement as goal-directed strategic processing: Extending the elaboration likelihood model. In J. P. Dillard & M. Pfau (Eds.), *The persuasion handbook: Developments in theory and practice* (pp. 175–194). Sage.
- Slater, M. D., & Rouner, D. (2002). Entertainment-education and elaboration likelihood: Understanding the processing of narrative persuasion. *Communication Theory*, *12*, 173–191.
- Sood, S., Riley, A. H., & Alarcon, K. C. (2017). Entertainment-education and health and risk messaging. In J. F. Nussbaum (Ed.), *Oxford research encyclopedia of communication*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.245>

- Storey, D., & Sood, S. (2013). Increasing equity, affirming the power of narrative and expanding dialogue: The evolution of entertainment education over two decades. *Critical Arts*, 27, 9–35.
- Vaughan, P. W., Rogers, E. M., Singhal, A., & Swalehe, R. M. (2000). Entertainment-education and HIV/AIDS prevention: A field experiment in Tanzania. *Journal of Health Communication*, 5, 81–100.
- Wang, H., Choi, J. H., Wu, Y., & DeMarle, A. (2018). *BREAKAWAY*: Combating violence against women and girls through soccer video game and youth camps. *Health & New Media Research*, 2(4), 159–184.
- Wang, H., & Singhal, A. (2009). Entertainment-education through digital games. In U. Ritterfeld, M. J. Cody, & P. Vorderer (Eds.), *Serious games: Mechanism and effects* (pp. 271–292). Routledge.
- Wang, H., & Singhal, A. (2016). *East Los High*: Transmedia edutainment to promote the sexual and reproductive health of young Latina/o Americans. *American Journal of Public Health*, 106, 1002–1010. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2016.303072>
- Wang, H., & Singhal, A. (2018). Audience-centered discourses in communication and social change: The “voicebook” of *Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon*, an entertainment-education initiative in India. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 13, 176–191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17447143.2018.1481857>
- Wang, H., & Singhal, A. (2021). Theorizing entertainment-education: A complementary perspective to the development of entertainment theory. In P. Vorderer & C. Klimmt (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of entertainment theory* (pp. 819–838). Oxford University Press.
- Wang, H., Singhal, A., Quist, C., Sachdev, A., & Liu, S. (2019). Aligning the stars in *East Los High*: How authentic characters and storylines can translate into real-life changes through transmedia edutainment. *SEARCH Journal of Media and Communication Research*, 11(3), 1–22.
- Wang, H., Wu, Y., Choi, J. H., & DeMarle, A. (2019). Players as transitional characters: How youth can “*BREAKAWAY*” from gender-based violence. *Well Played*, 8, 27–40. Retrieved from <http://press.etc.cmu.edu/index.php/product/well-played-vol-8-no-1/>
- Wang, H., Xu, W., Saxton, G. D., & Singhal, A. (2019). Social media fandom for health promotion? Insights from *East Los High*, a transmedia edutainment initiative. *SEARCH Journal of Media and Communication Research*, 11(1), 1–15.
- Wolf, S. H. (2008). The meaning of translational research and why it matters. *JAMA*, 299, 211–213.
- Yue, Z., Wang, H., & Singhal, A. (2019). Using television drama as entertainment-education to tackle domestic violence in China. *The Journal of Development Communication*, 30(1), 30–44.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if you modified the licensed material. You do not have permission under this licence to share adapted material derived from this chapter or parts of it.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.



PART IV

From Concept to Implementation



Entertainment-Education, American Style: Informing and Studying Hollywood's Portrayals of Social Issues

Erica L. Rosenthal and Kate Langrall Folb

It has become something of a cliché to say that entertainment has the power to influence hearts and minds, engage audiences on a massive scale, and inspire them to create lasting culture change. Decades of research have shown that because of the bonds we form with beloved characters, the emotions evoked by visual narratives, and our immersion into serial story worlds, entertainment can overcome the resistance we experience to more overt persuasive messages (Moyer-Gusé, 2008). As a result, entertainment is an attractive medium for communication campaigns that seek to reach mass audiences. Entertainment-education (EE), the intentional embedding of social or health messages in entertainment content, has been practiced since the late 1960s using television and radio, largely in the developing world (Singhal & Rogers, 2002). Due to the nature of the American entertainment industry—profit-driven and relatively impermeable to outside influences, particularly from the government—the EE tradition was somewhat slower to emerge in the US.

E. L. Rosenthal (✉) • K. L. Folb
The Norman Lear Center, USC Annenberg School for Communication and
Journalism, Los Angeles, CA, USA
e-mail: erosenth@usc.edu; langrall@usc.edu

One of the earliest entrants into the new American EE space was the University of Southern California’s Norman Lear Center and its Hollywood, Health & Society program (HH&S). The Lear Center was founded in 2000 with a generous gift from Norman Lear—a trailblazer in the creation of TV programs with a social conscience—with the mission of both studying and shaping the impact of entertainment on society. We study entertainment through a program of research on the content of entertainment narratives, the characteristics of the audiences who consume them, and their impact on knowledge, attitudes, norms, and behavior. In addition, we shape entertainment narratives impact through a collaborative relationship HH&S has developed and cultivated with the Hollywood creative community over the course of twenty years.

In this chapter, we tell the story of the emergence and evolution of a uniquely American form of EE. We discuss how the HH&S approach differs from both traditional EE as practiced in the developing world and the strategies of advocacy groups in the US. We share several case studies from our outreach to the creative community and research on the content and impact of entertainment narratives. These stories are shared from the perspective of Kate Langrall Folb, an early pioneer in American EE and the director of HH&S since 2012, and Erica Rosenthal, a communication researcher who led HH&S research from 2011 to 2019 and currently oversees the broader Lear Center research portfolio. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of lessons learned and best practices.

HOLLYWOOD, HEALTH & SOCIETY

The Emergence of EE in the US

In the late 1990s, the “Entertainment Media and Public Health” program at the Kaiser Family Foundation was the only true EE effort in the US. The Foundation partnered with MTV and BET to co-create public health TV specials and PSA campaigns based on HIV and reproductive health research. Around the same time, scores of advocacy groups arrived in Hollywood, hoping to influence TV and film depictions. Preventing addiction, reducing gun violence, smoking cessation, gender equality, securing rights for people with disabilities, and the LGBTQ community: these were just a few of the topics on which these advocates lobbied TV showrunners and movie screenwriters. For some content creators, the pressure was overwhelming. In search of accuracy without an agenda,

writers began contacting the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) and other government agencies for help with their scripts. In 1998, the CDC established a small unit within its Office of the Director to act as liaison for Hollywood inquiries and to collaborate on academic studies of entertainment's impact on audiences.

However, the volume of inquiries led the CDC in 2000 to put out a request for proposals for a cooperative agreement between the agency and a non-government entity to handle the requests and act as a liaison between the creative community and the CDC. The contract was won by the newly established Norman Lear Center at the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism in Los Angeles, the capital of the US entertainment industry. With this five-year award, the Lear Center launched the HH&S project. Its dual purposes were to serve as a "one-stop shop" to connect writers seeking health information for their scripts with experts at CDC and elsewhere, and to conduct research on the effects of entertainment on audiences.

The HH&S Approach

As defined by Singhal and Rogers (2002), EE is the process of purposefully designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate, in order to increase audience members' knowledge about an educational issue, create favorable attitudes, shift social norms, and change overt behavior. In this sense, HH&S is not a traditional EE program. Whereas EE is designed to educate from the outset, HH&S works with existing TV programs to inform and inspire accurate portrayals of health, safety, and security. Instead of developing a new show and hoping to attract an audience, HH&S goes where the audiences already are—watching the most popular shows along with millions of other viewers—and offers to help its creators ensure accuracy and integrate additional, relevant information into their scripts. We don't press writers to take a particular point of view; we only advocate for the truth, the science, and the data.

HH&S offers a variety of services to writers, producers, showrunners, network and studio executives, actors, and even art departments. Our methods include a response team that fields calls and emails on demand from writers—connecting them with information and experts from around the country, tip sheets covering an assortment of topics, a quarterly newsletter, expert panel discussions, screenings and talk-backs, "On Location" field trips designed to give writers an intimate look inside a subject area,

and social media support for episodes and storylines. We sponsor the annual Sentinel Awards which recognize exemplary achievements in TV storylines that inform, educate, and motivate viewers to make choices for healthier and safer lives. The awards serve as an incentive, as well as an opportunity to promote the winning shows, their stars, and the writers—who are rarely celebrated in Hollywood. HH&S is considered by the industry to be a valuable support organization, officially partnered with the Writers Guild of America, West (WGAW) and East (WGAE), the Television Academy and the Producers Guild. Since its inception, HH&S has held over 4000 consultations with TV writers from hundreds of shows spanning dozens of broadcast networks, cable, and streaming channels.

Around 2011, HH&S began expanding its reach beyond topics traditionally classified as health. The first new focus was climate change, a growing concern at CDC as well as other funders. Later, through a grant from the California Endowment, HH&S presented the realities of the Affordable Care Act, which had just been passed into law and would start in the coming years. This included dispelling myths and misinformation that had permeated the national conversation leading up to its passing, as well as helping writers understand the status of immigrants in relation to health coverage. In 2015, through a grant from N Square, HH&S began a campaign to inform and inspire storylines around nuclear weapons proliferation, nuclear policy, and national security. Today, HH&S also focuses on the social determinants of health including racial equity, homelessness, and access to care.

Challenges of Working with US Entertainment Industry

The US entertainment industry is unlike that of other countries—particularly the developing world. Traditionally, EE programs have been supported through collaborative efforts between US government agencies such as CDC, United Nations agencies such as UNICEF, and other philanthropic organizations, and often have the support of local government broadcasting agencies (Singhal, Cody, Rogers, & Sabido, 2004). The US television entertainment business is a profit-based enterprise, largely independent, where the financial bottom-line is the guiding factor in decision-making. Entertainment value—what will garner the most eyeballs—is paramount. Writers—as well as networks—want viewers, and will do what it takes to get them and keep them. Only then will they consider a public health message. However, erroneous depictions can cause backlash,

previously in the form of letter writing campaigns and more recently through social media. Thus, it behooves writers to strive for accuracy if only to keep their viewers engaged.

Research

Since its beginnings, HH&S has collaborated with other health communication scholars to study the impact of the fictional TV storylines on which it consulted. This research has addressed a variety of topics from HIV and other STIs (Kennedy, O’Leary, Beck, Pollard, & Simpson, 2004) to cancer (Hether, Huang, Beck, Murphy, & Valente, 2008) and more. Drawing upon the theoretical frameworks of Moyer-Gusé, Slater and Rouner (2002), and others, this research has incorporated mechanisms of narrative influence such as narrative transportation, character identification, and emotional responses to entertainment (Murphy, Frank, Moran, & Patnoe-Woodley, 2011). We have studied the impact of shows explicitly designed to educate and promote behavior change, such as *East Los High* (Walter, Murphy, & Rosenthal, 2018), as well as those for which entertaining the audience is of paramount importance, such as the 2008 *90210* reboot (Rosenthal, Buffington, & Cole, 2018). In addition to impact research, since 2003 we have conducted content analysis of representations of health and other public interest issues on TV (Murphy, Wilkin, Cody, & Huang, 2008). In 2013, with the establishment of the Media Impact Project (MIP), the Lear Center expanded its research enterprise beyond HH&S-informed TV storylines. MIP partners with media organizations, advocacy groups, and philanthropic partners to study the ways in which a variety of media—including documentary and feature films (Blakley, Huang, Huh, Nahm, & Shin, 2016; Blakley, Huang, Nahm, & Shin, 2016), journalism (Karlin, Chapman, & Saucier, 2018), and virtual reality (Karlin, Kim, Kelly, Blakley, Brenner, & Riley, 2018)—serve the social good.

CASE STUDIES

Below, we share case studies describing our outreach to the entertainment industry and research on four issues of public interest. For climate change and nuclear threats, we describe the outreach process, but highlight relevant research findings. Case studies on transgender inclusion and immigration focus primarily on research, including how we partner with other

organizations to study the impact of their “narrative strategy” work. For each topic, we highlight specific challenges and considerations.

Climate Change

HH&S began its Climate Change Initiative in 2011 to enable TV writers, producers, and other entertainment industry professionals to accurately portray the ways that climate change impacts human health in TV, film, and streaming storylines. The effort faced several challenges, the first of which was the entertainment industry’s lack of understanding of climate change in general, and beyond that, how to tell stories that would illustrate this perceived slow-moving phenomenon. At the home of Lyn and Norman Lear, we held a series of salons with high-level entertainment industry decision-makers and notable climate change advocates, scientists, and NGOs (e.g. Bill McKibbin of 350.org, Jim Hansen of Columbia University, and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon). We also held industry screenings and talk-backs of relevant films including *Racing Extinction* by Louis Psyhoyos, panel discussions with experts like Anthony Leiserowitz of the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication and retired Brigadier General W. Christopher King, and “On Location” trips taking writers to NASA-JPL or Santa Cruz Island to learn about climate research and the people behind it. The purpose of all these activities was to inspire TV storytellers, filmmakers, event producers, and others to incorporate climate change into their work however and whenever possible.

Another challenge was resistance from the TV networks to air storylines or even brief mentions of climate change. We were never told the reason for their hesitancy, but we speculate that between concern for the range of political perspectives that make up their audiences and fear of backlash from advertisers, networks were reluctant to feature anything related to the issue. Nevertheless, certain showrunners and writers with enough clout were able to get a few storylines on the air, though they were sometimes watered down.

For example, through HH&S outreach and consultation, the CBS *Madam Secretary* episode, “Face the Nation,” included a minor storyline about extraction of the Amazonian oil supplies and their potential effect on the climate. As Secretary of State Elizabeth McCord (played by Téa Leoni) is having her blood drawn, an intern briefs her on the situation. The intern becomes queasy and struggles to get through her presentation, eventually running out of the room in distress. The scene is comical and

seems to lessen the impact of the information presented. A subsequent scene shows Secretary McCord uncharacteristically shouting at the Chinese ambassador. Referencing the Amazon rainforest, she cries, “If we chop it all down, we pretty much guarantee the planet overheats, and our kids will live in a totally destabilized world!” After the outburst, she faints due to what is later determined to be PTSD, thus minimizing the point. HH&S also encouraged a 2014 *Doc McStuffins* (Disney Jr.) episode “The Big Storm,” which features the wise owl saying “I was reading about this: as the earth gets warmer and warmer, big storms get bigger and bigger.” The line was contested by the network, but ultimately allowed.

While we never studied the impact of an HH&S-informed climate change storyline, we examined the frequency and context of these issues on prime-time TV from 2012 through 2018 as part of our TV Monitoring Project. Unpublished data from this project suggest that climate change has been very infrequently discussed or even mentioned on prime-time broadcast TV. There have been numerous storylines involving severe weather such as hurricanes, blizzards, and wildfires, but rarely do these stories draw an explicit connection between the frequency and severity of extreme weather events and climate change. We did see evidence of what is termed “greening the set” in corporate social responsibility parlance: visual cues of environmental sustainability with little or no related dialogue. Homes may have solar panels installed. Trash cans are replaced with recycling bins. Characters carry reusable water bottles or shopping bags, and occasionally walk or take public transit.

As outreach efforts continued, though there was no measurable increase in the number of storylines, we anecdotally saw a greater emphasis placed on climate change in some shows. A notable trend has been the portrayal of climate scientists or environmentalist characters as villains or otherwise worthy of derision. For example, the *Modern Family* episode “Under Pressure” features Mitchell and Cam’s neighbor, Asher (guest star Jesse Eisenberg), an extreme environmentalist. The episode opens as Asher comments that Mitchell’s air conditioner is constantly running. When Mitchell responds “Oh, my partner runs a little hot,” Asher sarcastically replies, “Not as hot as our planet.” The episode revolves around Mitchell’s quest to prove to Asher that he also cares about the planet. The substantive climate messages in this episode are undercut to some extent by the portrayal of Asher as pedantic and “holier-than-thou.”

More recently, we have seen some substantial climate change storylines. In 2019, with the help of HH&S, *Madam Secretary* aired “The New

Normal,” in which a massive typhoon dubbed Blessing is headed toward the US. NASA confirms that it will be the most powerful storm in history, but due to global warming it also represents a “new normal.” Eventually, the storm changes course, moving instead toward the small island nation of Nairu. Secretary McCord must convince the island’s president and all its people to evacuate permanently, while also hoping to develop a resiliency fund to help other countries devastated by this new normal. The president is reluctant to take the matter to Congress, not denying the existence of climate change, but worrying that a “no” vote would shut down the entire environmental agenda for years. This season 5 episode provided a sobering take on climate change and even pointed out how the government had ignored warnings of climate scientists in the past. Live and DVR ratings indicated that 8.2 million people watched (Wikipedia, n.d.-b).

Nuclear Threats

In 2015, HH&S began an effort to inform and inspire TV storylines on the threat nuclear weapons and nuclear proliferation pose to the American public and the world (Fig. 15.2). We consulted with a number of shows including *The Black List*, *NCIS: Los Angeles*, *MacGyver*, *Hawaii Five-O*, *Magnum P.I.*, and *Madam Secretary*. While most of these shows created episodes that touched on the issue, the writers at *Madam Secretary* were particularly passionate about exploring the topic. HH&S brought a number of nuclear experts into the show’s writers’ room, including former US Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz, to discuss the issues in detail.

The season 4 finale, “Night Watch,” features President Dalton announcing a retaliatory nuclear strike on a nation that has launched missiles at the US. The strike is aborted with only seconds to spare after it is discovered to be a simulation gone awry. The Secretary of State squares off against the administration and Pentagon officials over long-standing and outdated nuclear launch policies and advocates to end the hair-trigger alert on land missiles. According to ratings data, viewership of this episode was 8.73 million including live and DVR viewing (Wikipedia, n.d.-a). HH&S developed a comprehensive campaign that included real-time social media posts in concert with the show, CBS and the nuclear non-proliferation community causing *Madam Secretary* to trend for two hours on Twitter. The campaign also included a Reddit “Ask Me Anything” session with Secretary Moniz and executive producer David Grae with 6000 tuning in,



Fig. 15.1 HH&S Director Folb (left) with former Sec. of Defense William Perry (center) and journalist and filmmaker Eric Schlosser (right) at the nuclear initiative kickoff event

and a screening party and panel discussion at the WGAW, co-hosted with the Ploughshares Fund, for more than 100 attendees from the entertainment industry.

To measure the impact of this storyline, we conducted a pretest/post-test survey of regular *Madam Secretary* viewers. After controlling for political party affiliation, exposure to nuclear issues through the news, and other demographic variables, we found an increase in knowledge about hair-trigger alert (Kim & Rosenthal, 2020). Further, differences in ideology and core beliefs appear to have driven responses to the storyline; it had a greater impact on knowledge among the subgroup of more liberal, anti-war, and anti-nuclear viewers.

Transgender Inclusion

HH&S has supported storylines on a variety of LGBTQ issues throughout our 20-year history. In fact, the impetus for the program originated



Fig. 15.2 Kate Folb, Director of HH&S with former CIA agent Valerie Plame Wilson at the nuclear initiative kickoff event

from the CDC's HIV prevention effort in 1998. Since then, we have consulted on dozens of storylines beyond HIV that affect the LGBTQ community, including transgender health on *Grey's Anatomy*, *How to Get Away with Murder*, and others.

In June 2015, in the midst of what has been called the “transgender tipping point” (Steinmetz, 2014), the long-running USA Network series *Royal Pains* contacted HH&S for consultation on a storyline about a transgender teen named Anna, who is experiencing health complications associated with her transition. HH&S connected the show's writers with Dr. John Turco, an expert in transgender hormonal therapy. Rather than stick to a purely medical story, the writers chose to have lead character Dr. Hank Lawson model empathy and compassion toward Anna. Initially hesitant to let Anna continue hormonal treatment because of a clotting disorder that is exacerbated by estrogen, Hank ultimately realizes these risks must be balanced against the risks to Anna's mental health of being unable to align her physical appearance with her gender identity. Notably, Anna was played by transgender actor and youth activist Nicole Maines.

This storyline provided a unique research opportunity for a number of reasons. First, while several shows at the time prominently featured transgender characters (e.g., *Transparent*, *Orange Is the New Black*), these were predominantly streaming shows with fairly niche audiences. *Royal Pains*, on the other hand, was a soapy basic cable series about a disgraced former ER doctor, who works under the table as a “concierge doctor” in the Hamptons. It ran for nine seasons to no major critical acclaim, and had no particular history of addressing LGBTQ issues. Because this 11-minute storyline was a secondary storyline in the episode, it was not teased ahead of time. Thus, we had no reason to expect the episode would draw an audience already supportive of transgender inclusion. Second, the episode aired in the context of an extremely high-profile real-life transition—that of former Olympian and reality TV star Caitlyn Jenner. Nearly 17 million people watched Jenner announce her transition on *20/20* on April 24, 2015, *Vanity Fair* released its “Call Me Caitlyn” cover on June 1, the *Royal Pains* episode aired on June 23, and the E! reality series *I Am Cait* premiered on July 26. The timing of the episode provided an opportunity to measure the impact of exposure to this storyline alongside exposure to the Jenner transition in the news and other shows with transgender characters.

In collaboration with USC Annenberg faculty and graduate students, we conducted a study of the impact of this brief storyline on regular viewers of *Royal Pains* (Gillig, Rosenthal, Murphy, & Folb, 2018). By virtue of HH&S’ proximity to TV writers, we often have advanced knowledge of upcoming storylines. We were able to obtain the script ahead of time, but did not have sufficient notice to develop and implement a pretest survey. USA Network did, however, work with the research team to distribute the survey link via the show’s social media platforms following the episode. To maximize comparability, all participants were required to be regular viewers of *Royal Pains*, defined as having seen at least one of the three most recent episodes.

We found that *Royal Pains* viewers who saw the 11-minute storyline about Anna’s transition had more supportive attitudes toward both transgender people and related policies. Exposure to transgender stories in the news, including the ubiquitous Caitlyn Jenner story, had no such impact on attitudes. As expected, political ideology was a primary driver of responses to the storyline. Liberal viewers were more likely to feel hope or identify with Anna, whereas conservative viewers were more likely to react with disgust. Further, while news stories were not able to overcome

ideological bias, entertainment depictions were. The more shows with transgender characters viewers saw, the more positive their attitudes toward transgender people and policies. This impact was particularly pronounced among ideologically conservative viewers who saw two or more shows with transgender characters.

The study was published online in August 2017, a time when transgender policy issues were very much in the news. President Trump had just pronounced that the US military would no longer allow transgender individuals to serve. To maximize the reach of this research beyond academia, we published a piece in *The Conversation* (Rosenthal & Gillig, 2017), a media outlet for academic researchers to translate their findings for lay audiences. The article was picked up by a number of outlets including *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *The Washington Post*, and *Newsweek*, drawing both positive attention and controversy.

Immigration

Through the Media Impact Project (MIP), the Lear Center conducts research on entertainment storylines that HH&S did not help to inform, and partners with advocacy groups to study the impact of their entertainment outreach. In 2017, we were approached by Define American, an organization focused on using “the power of storytelling to transcend politics and shift the conversation about immigrants, identity, and citizenship in a changing America” (Define American, n.d.; see Borum Chattoo’s chapter in this volume for more about Define American). The Opportunity Agenda had just published its own report on immigrant representation on TV (2017), and Define American was interested in building upon this study by tracking the stories being told about immigrants and immigration longitudinally. In partnership with Define American, we have been studying this content since the 2017–2018 television season.

In 2017–2018, we analyzed the demographic, socioeconomic, and social representations of immigrant characters depicted, as well as the context and use of terms relating to immigration (Blakley, Rogers, Saucier, Watson-Currie, & Trotta-Valenti, 2018). For the 2018–2019 season, we developed a more systematic sampling frame to include all known immigrant characters. We analyzed depictions of 129 unique immigrant characters across 97 episodes of 59 shows, examining both the nature of depictions of immigrants and the broader storylines in which these characters sometimes featured. The report “Change the Narrative, Change the

World” (Rosenthal, Rogers, Peterson, Watson-Currie, & Shin, 2020) compares the data against both the 2017–2018 findings and real-world immigration statistics. Relative to reality, we found that Asian Pacific Islander and senior immigrants (over the age of 65) were under-represented, and Middle Eastern immigrants were over-represented. Only a small percentage of immigrant characters had an explicitly identified religion, but of these, nearly a third were Muslims, largely due to the role of religion in the Hulu series *Ramy*. Twenty-two percent of immigrant characters were associated with a crime, a substantial drop from the 34% of TV immigrant characters associated with a crime in 2017–2018, but still vastly over-represented relative to the real world. Finally, of those characters with an identified immigration status, 63% were undocumented immigrants or asylum seekers. This number is much higher than both 2017–2018 and reality.

For the 2018–2019 season, we also analyzed the impact of three key immigration storylines from *Madam Secretary* (CBS), *Orange is the New Black* (Netflix), and *Superstore* (NBC). The *Madam Secretary* storyline, which spanned two episodes, addresses family separation in an immigrant detention center near the border. On *Orange*, the immigration storyline focuses on an ICE detention center alongside the primary prison setting, and runs throughout the entire seventh season. The storyline also features a harrowing scene of deportation hearings involving young children unable to speak English and without legal counsel. *Superstore* is the only one of the three shows to feature a regular immigrant character, Mateo, an undocumented worker whose fellow employees shelter him from an ICE raid (see Borum Chattoo, 2021 for more information about this storyline, on which Define American consulted).

For all three shows, those who saw the immigration storyline had more inclusive attitudes toward immigrants and were more likely to take associated immigration-related actions than viewers of the relevant show who did not see the relevant storyline. Further, those who experienced negative emotions while watching had more inclusive attitudes toward immigrants and were more likely to take immigration-related actions. This was due in part to being transported (Green, 2021) into the story world. Among those who saw the *Madam Secretary* storyline, attitudes toward immigrants were more inclusive than those who did not, but only among viewers who were not very religious, and particularly for those living in rural settings. Additionally, for *Madam Secretary* viewers, those who experienced empathy had greater immigration knowledge and more inclusive

attitudes, particularly among those whose entertainment choices were *not* primarily driven by a desire for pleasure or fun. Finally, viewers of the *Superstore* storyline who experienced parasocial interaction—a sense of friendship—with Mateo were more likely to support an increase in immigrants coming to the US, particularly among those who had little or no real-life contact with immigrants.

LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

Collaboration over Confrontation

The US creative community is inimitably American in that it rejects being told what to do. Mandates by networks and studios can backfire and result in insincere depictions or satire that mocks the initiative and sends the opposite message. As such, HH&S approaches its work with the entertainment industry from a place of collaboration, not confrontation. There are hundreds of advocacy groups watching Hollywood who make their voices heard in the event of inaccurate or biased programming. Viewed by the industry as an ally and a supportive resource, HH&S is in a unique position to help writers “get it right” without blaming, shaming, or forcing the issue. Our desire to maintain a positive relationship with the entertainment industry means we are hesitant to take on work that aims to use research findings as a “stick” rather than a “carrot.” The hands-off approach of providing accurate, proven scientific information allows writers to come to their own conclusions about what kinds of stories they choose to tell, and simultaneously addresses many of the advocates’ concerns. It’s a longer game, but the resulting stories are more authentic, nuanced, and compelling.

Balancing Rigor and Feasibility

The Lear Center has always strived to apply rigorous research methods and academic theory to the study of entertainment, often in real time. Over the past ten years, efforts to “change the narrative” around public interest issues have gained traction and transitioned away from being a primarily academic endeavor in the field of health communication. These practical efforts, sometimes described as social impact entertainment or narrative strategy (Borum Chattoo, 2021), have become a collaborative effort across the entertainment industry, the philanthropic sector, and

activist and advocacy organizations. Many practitioners in this world shun the EE label, which may be perceived as too pedantic or inauthentic. Others may find the collaborative approach of HH&S inadequate, preferring a more “disruptive” strategy to promote radical change in the entertainment industry.

With the founding of MIP in 2013, the Lear Center sought to be more responsive to the measurement needs of this burgeoning field. Whereas HH&S research has traditionally been internally initiated and intended for publication in academic journals, MIP research is largely client-driven and intended for dissemination to the entertainment industry and other practitioners in highly digested and actionable reports. The primary objective of MIP research is delivering data-driven insights that content creators can apply toward the goal of telling inclusive and authentic stories that serve the greater good.

In both HH&S and MIP research, we seek a balance between meeting client needs, often in terms of budget and timeline, and maintaining a high level of rigor. In many cases, this means prioritizing ecological validity (the realism and authenticity of the research context and tasks) over internal validity (maintaining strict control to allow for causal conclusions). Content creators typically want to know how their actual audience responds in a real-world viewing context. Thus, we usually conduct pretest/posttest surveys of regular viewers (or in some cases posttest only), rather than tightly controlled experimental research. Further, we rarely have the opportunity to conduct longitudinal research on the impact of entertainment narratives, due to the expense associated with participant follow-up and attrition.

Another major challenge in media impact research, particularly when studying natural audiences, is addressing selection bias. Those who choose to watch, for example, a documentary like *Waiting for “Superman”* may start out with much different attitudes and behavior than those who bypass this content. It is not appropriate to simply compare viewers against non-viewers, so we sometimes use propensity score methods (Blakley & Nahm, 2018) to generate a matched comparison group. Each exposed participant is paired with a corresponding unexposed person who has an equal propensity or likelihood of seeking out the content, based on other factors that predict exposure. In this way, we are essentially able to compare “apples to apples.”

Entertainment in the COVID and Post-COVID Era

The COVID-19 pandemic and widespread protests around racial injustice in policing following the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery have pulled back the curtain on government failures and structural inequities in unprecedented ways. While none of these inequities are new, many Americans are grasping these effects for the first time, and public opinion is changing rapidly (Parker, Horowitz, & Anderson, 2020). How will the entertainment industry respond to the tumultuous events of 2020?

In the short term, the pandemic presents a unique set of challenges, compounded by uncertainty around production protocols. In mid-March 2020, virtually all TV and film production ground to a halt, with the exception of some talk shows, late-night comedy, and animation. Some shows were able to wrap their story arcs early while others simply stopped, hoping to complete the season in the coming months. Many writers' rooms, after a short break, resumed virtually, even without a definitive return to production date and HH&S has continued to consult with them. At the start of the shutdown, HH&S partnered with the WGAE and WGAW to host a series of weekly, online panels on a range of topics affected by the pandemic. At the time of this writing, HH&S has hosted sixteen virtual panels, many of which featured up-to-date information on COVID-19 (such as the search for a vaccine) or its intersection with other health issues like mental health, addiction, and HIV. Others have explored the impact of racism on democracy, maternal health, and the criminal justice system. HH&S strives to keep TV content creators up to date with important developments on COVID-19, but this is challenging due to rapidly changing information. Before the pandemic, the time between an episode's conception and its airing could be several months to a year. As a result of the production shutdown, delays are likely to be significantly longer, and some information may be outdated by the time it airs. However, some soap operas resumed production in June and July, and HH&S continues to support them.

In a series of interviews conducted with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (Jauriqui, 2020), we asked entertainment industry leaders and subject matter experts how they anticipated the COVID-19 crisis would affect Hollywood in the long term. Some speculated that the pandemic, combined with the Black Lives Matter movement, would push entertainment to shine a light on the systemic issues

being brought to the fore, with shifts toward greater diversity in storytelling and correction of historical inaccuracies, including around slavery and the founding of this nation. Several shows, including *Grey's Anatomy*, *Station 19* (ABC), *Doc McStuffins* (Disney Junior), *Kung Fu* (The CW), *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* (Netflix), *This Is Us*, and *Law and Order: Organized Crime* (NBC), have already decided to tackle COVID-19 in their storylines and have contacted HH&S for help. Other experts predict we will see a rise in escapist stories, as audiences seek refuge from the reality of daily life. At a recent entertainment conference, a representative from Creative Artists Agency (CAA) said, "Don't bring us any dystopian, post-apocalyptic or pandemic-related projects. We're not even going to read them" (Anonymous, personal communication, July 14, 2020). Still others believed it was too early to know. "It's really hard to ask people how they're going to process the car accident when they're still in the midst of it" (Jauriqui, p. 17), said John David Coles, executive producer of NBC's *New Amsterdam*. At this time, only one thing seems certain; when future creators and cataloguers of culture look back on this era, they will speak of the world in pre- and post-2020 terms.

REFERENCES

- Blakley, J., Huang, G., Huh, J., Nahm, S., & Shin, H. (2016). Preaching to the choir? Measuring the impact of *Waiting for "Superman"*. USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center. Retrieved from <https://learcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/WaitingForSupermanReport.pdf>
- Blakley, J., Huang, G., Nahm, S., & Shin, H. (2016). Changing appetites & changing minds: Measuring the impact of *Food, Inc.* USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center. Retrieved from <https://learcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Food-Inc-Summary-Report.pdf>
- Blakley, J., & Nahm, S. (2018). Accounting for taste: Using propensity score methods to evaluate the documentary film, *Waiting for "Superman"*. In R. Rajan & I. C. O'Neal (Eds.), *Arts evaluation and assessment measuring impact in schools and communities* (pp. 271–295). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Blakley, J., Rogers, A. A., Saucier, C., Watson-Currie, E., & Trotta-Valenti, L. (2018). Immigration nation: Exploring immigrant portrayals on television. A report to Define American. USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center. Retrieved from http://www.mediaimpactproject.org/uploads/5/1/2/7/5127770/immigration_nation_report_final_1.pdf
- Borum Chattoo, C. (2021). Entertainment-education as social justice activism in the United States: Narrative strategy in the participatory media era. In L. Frank

- & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Define American. (n.d.). Define American: About. Retrieved from <https://www.defineamerican.com/about>
- Gillig, T. K., Rosenthal, E. L., Murphy, S. T., & Folb, K. L. (2018). More than a media moment: The influence of televised storylines on viewers' attitudes toward transgender people and policies. *Sex Roles*, 78, 515–527. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-017-0816-1>
- Green, M. (2021). Transportation into narrative worlds. In L. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hether, H. J., Huang, G., Beck, V., Murphy, S. T., & Valente, T. W. (2008). Entertainment-education in a media-saturated environment: Examining the impact of single and multiple exposures to breast cancer storylines on two popular medical dramas. *Journal of Health Communication*, 13(8), 808–823. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10810730802487471>
- Jauriqui, V. (2020). Understanding poverty in mass media: Opinions and insights. A report to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center.
- Karlin, B., Chapman, D., & Saucier, C. (2018). Pressing for change: The role of action buttons in online news engagement. USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center. Retrieved from http://www.mediaimpactproject.org/uploads/5/1/2/7/5127770/pressing_for_change.pdf
- Karlin, B., Kim, H. T., Kelly, R., Blakley, J., Brenner, C., & Riley, P. (2018). Does medium matter? Exploring the role of virtual reality in journalism. USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center. Retrieved from http://www.mediaimpact-project.org/uploads/5/1/2/7/5127770/frontlinevrreport_final.pdf
- Kennedy, M. G., O'Leary, A., Beck, V., Pollard, W. E., & Simpson, P. (2004). Increases in calls to the CDC National STD and AIDS hotline following AIDS-related episodes in a soap opera. *Journal of Communication*, 54(2), 287–301. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2004.tb02629.x>
- Kim, G., & Rosenthal, E. L. (2020, October). “Nightwatch”: Effects of a Nuclear Risk Storyline on the Popular Show *Madam Secretary* on Viewers' Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviors [Conference workshop]. National Conference on Health Communication, Marketing, and Media, Atlanta, GA. <https://nphic.confex.com/nphic/2020/meetingapp.cgi/Paper/2170>
- Moyer-Gusé, E. (2008). Toward a theory of entertainment persuasion: Explaining the persuasive effects of entertainment-education messages. *Communication Theory*, 18(3), 407–425. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2008.00328.x>
- Murphy, S. T., Frank, L. B., Moran, M. B., & Patnoe-Woodley, P. (2011). Involved, transported, or emotional? Exploring the determinants of change in knowledge, attitudes, and behavior in entertainment-education. *Journal*

- of *Communication*, 61(3), 407–431. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2011.01554.x>
- Murphy, S. T., Wilkin, H. A., Cody, M. J., & Huang, G. C. (2008). Health messages on primetime television: A longitudinal content analysis. In A. Jordan, D. Kunkel, J. Manganello, & M. Fishbein (Eds.), *Media messages and public health: A decisions approach to content analysis* (pp. 173–191). Routledge.
- The Opportunity Agenda. (2017). Power of POP: Media analysis of immigrant representation in popular TV shows. The Opportunity Agenda. Retrieved from https://www.opportunityagenda.org/sites/default/files/2017-06/PopCultureReport-FINAL_06.14.pdf
- Parker, K., Horowitz, J. M., & Anderson, M. (2020, June 12). Amid protests, majorities across racial and ethnic groups express support for the Black Lives Matter movement. Pew Research Center: Social & Demographic Trends. Retrieved from <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2020/06/12/amid-protests-majorities-across-racial-and-ethnic-groups-express-support-for-the-black-lives-matter-movement/>
- Rosenthal, E. L., Buffington, S. C., & Cole, G. (2018). From the small screen to breast cancer screening: Examining the effects of a television storyline on awareness of genetic risk factors. *Journal of Communication in Healthcare*, 11(2), 140–150. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17538068.2018.1438766>
- Rosenthal, E.L., & Gillig, T. (2017, August 8). Can transgender TV characters help bridge an ideological divide? *The Conversation*. Retrieved from <https://theconversation.com/can-transgender-tv-characters-help-bridge-an-ideological-divide-81914>
- Rosenthal, E., Rogers, A., Peterson, E., Watson-Currie, E., & Shin, H. (2020). Change the narrative, change the world: How immigrant representation on television moves audiences to action. A report to Define American. USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center. Retrieved from <https://download.defineamerican.com/2020/09/Change-the-Narrative-Change-the-World.pdf>
- Singhal, A., Cody, M., Rogers, E., & Sabido, M. (2004). *Entertainment-education and social change: History, research, and practice*. Erlbaum.
- Singhal, A., & Rogers, E. M. (2002). A theoretical agenda for entertainment-education. *Communication Theory*, 12(2), 117–135. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2002.tb00262.x>
- Slater, M. D., & Rouner, D. (2002). Entertainment-education and elaboration likelihood: Understanding the processing of narrative persuasion. *Communication Theory*, 12(2), 173–191. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2002.tb00265.x>
- Steinmetz, K. (2014, May 29). The transgender tipping point. *Time*. Retrieved from <http://time.com/135480/transgender-tipping-point/>

- Walter, N., Murphy, S. T., & Rosenthal, E. L. (2018). Narrative persuasion in a new media environment: The impact of binge watching and second-screening. *Communication Research Reports*, 35(5), 402–412. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08824096.2018.1525348>
- Wikipedia. (n.d.-a). *Madam Secretary* (season 4). Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madam_Secretary_\(season_4\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madam_Secretary_(season_4))
- Wikipedia. (n.d.-b). *Madam Secretary* (season 5). Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madam_Secretary_\(season_5\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madam_Secretary_(season_5))

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if you modified the licensed material. You do not have permission under this licence to share adapted material derived from this chapter or parts of it.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.





Challenging the Forcefield: Crafting Entertainment-Education Transmedia Campaigns

*Joyee Shairee Chatterjee, Ragini Pasricha,
Radharani Mitra, and Lauren B. Frank*

As media platforms have increased and become more complex, crafting entertainment-education (EE) interventions has become an even more challenging process. In essence, “the multi-device, multi-platform, multiple-media environment that many media users inhabit today as digital natives means that basic conceptual definitions such as media, audience, and effects are in flux” (Ramasubramanian & Banjo, 2020, p. 2). Moreover, audiences

J. S. Chatterjee (✉)
Asian Institute of Technology, Phatum Thani, Thailand
e-mail: joyecc@ait.asia

R. Pasricha • R. Mitra
BBC Media Action India, New Delhi, India
e-mail: ragini.pasricha@in.bbcmmediaaction.org; radharani.mitra@in.bbcmmediaaction.org

L. B. Frank
Portland State University, Portland, OR, USA
e-mail: lfrank@pdx.edu

live in societies marked by socioeconomic and political inequities, disparities in access, and structural barriers. Given this backdrop, we use the critical media effects (CME) framework to analyze a transmedia EE intervention and highlight our learnings for the field.

Transmedia describes the use of multiple different media channels to tell stories in ways that allow for greater audience engagement and participation. “Part of the art of transmedia storytelling, then, involves the meaningful chunking of bits of narrative information to ensure that each segment is meaningful on its own terms but also involves the development of a blueprint for how the parts fit together so that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts” (Jenkins, Lashley, & Creech, 2017, p. 1065). In the context of EE, this implies building a coordinated story world across different media platforms to better engage the audience and leverage narrative elements to create a cohesive experience (Wang & Singhal, 2016). What sets contemporary transmedia initiatives apart from traditional multi-channel EE campaigns is the changing nature of storytelling and universe building across platforms. The capacity to move seamlessly across media platforms, reinventing the central idea to be platform- and output-specific without merely translating the same message or content (as is common in traditional advertising campaigns), is a new technological affordance, and we are only at the start of the journey to leverage this and grapple with its unfolding challenges.

CASE STUDY: *ADHAFULL*

To address crosscutting gender and adolescent issues on rights, education, nutrition, and health, UNICEF partnered with BBC Media Action in India to develop a large-scale transmedia intervention in 2015–2017. The formative research by the BBC Media Action team revealed the guiding insight that the lives of Indian adolescents were inhibited by a forcefield of social expectation (Pasricha, Mitra, & Whitehead, 2018). These normative boundaries, enforced by family, peers, neighbors, teachers/mentors, and society in general, shape their lives, ambitions, relationships, and their very identities. Many of the prevailing inequitable gender and social norms are rarely questioned. Thus, the intervention’s goal was to encourage the target audience to question these inequitable norms and power relationships, break through a culture of silence and compromise, and rethink their autonomy and gendered stereotypes.

The intervention featured a 78-episode EE television program, *AdhaFULL* (a Hindi-English word for half-full that the main characters

adopt to describe their team). The show used a mystery genre in which three adolescents (Kitty, Tara, and Adrak) worked as detectives to solve crimes each week. For example, in the first week, the trio joined forces to expose a con-artist while also challenging Kitty's parents' goals of arranging her marriage before she was legally old enough to marry. Following traditional EE theory, the show incorporated positive role models and highlighted transitional characters who became more supportive of gender equality over time. *AdhaFULL* becoming the highest-rated TV show on *Doordarshan* (the national television channel) averaging more than one million viewers per episode. A randomized experiment in which boys and girls watched either *AdhaFULL* or a control television drama showed that boys who watched *AdhaFULL* had greater self-efficacy and more support for gender equity than boys who watched the control (Frank et al., [under review](#)). Additionally, qualitative focus groups with youth and in-depth interviews with their parents provided insight into viewer engagement.

On *AdhaFULL* one key aspirational role model was the schoolteacher Roshni, who hosted a radio show as RJ Nikki. The second transmedia platform was a cross-over radio show, *Full On Nikki*, that in contrast to the fictional television narrative, used real-life role models, celebrities, experts, and rock bands. The radio show created a link between fiction and reality. Additionally, an interpersonal communication toolkit, created specifically for more rural and media dark audiences, included all the television show episodes with accompanying discussion guides about *AdhaFULL* for viewer clubs, ten graphic novels featuring *AdhaFULL* characters, and an activity book to help younger adolescents negotiate gender issues.

For audiences with digital access, a complimentary Android phone game app, *Nugget*, personified the pressure points in an adolescent's life as subsequent levels of a game. The game featured animated arms that echoed characters from the television show who restrict adolescent autonomy. Players had to swipe past the arms to make it to the next level. *Nugget* was downloaded more than 115,000 times. Finally, to engage urban youth, the transmedia intervention employed a social media hashtag, #BHL (#BigdiHuiLadki/Ladka—girl/boy gone bad). Saying a girl has gone bad is a judgment frequently deployed against girls. For the intervention, #BHL was introduced by Kitty in a video on social media and the popular youth portal, *Youth ki Awaz*. Kitty reclaimed the phrase to describe herself and celebrated it as indicating she had a mind of her own. Audience members were encouraged to share their own stories on challenging traditional gender norms. In this way, #BHL opened new possibilities and

invalidated older descriptions of what was unacceptable. The design embedded several “conversation starters”—social media videos/graphics created to elicit narratives—released purposefully throughout the social media campaign and featured fictional characters and real-life celebrities. These videos promoting #BHL reached more than 2.3 million people (Pasricha et al., 2018). However, challenges in budgeting and designing a comprehensive evaluation of all aspects of transmedia limit the claims about the overall, combined intervention effectiveness.

CRITICAL MEDIA EFFECTS FRAMEWORK

The critical media effects (CME) framework proposed by Ramasubramanian and Banjo (2020) works to bridge the communication subfields of media effects and critical cultural communication. In particular they propose the concepts of *power*, *intersectionality*, *context*, and *agency* as central pillars of the framework. Although they forwarded this theoretical framework after the intervention period, we find it meshes with the key concepts—agency, autonomy, identity, and relationship—which guided the creative team in conceptualizing the design of *AdhaFULL*. Thus, we use CME to guide us in examining what we learned from conducting a transmedia EE intervention.

The first pillar of the CME framework, power, highlights that different groups in society hold varying levels of power. This asymmetry shows up in how media represents people and also in how scholarship reinforces such hierarchies. In particular, the CME perspective acknowledges that “meaning construction and dominant discourses are often shaped by powerful media institutions and members of society who hold class privilege, political capital, and ideological influence” (Ramasubramanian & Banjo, 2020, p. 7). For the creative team, acknowledging these power differentials was important, including their own positionality *vis a vis* the audience. Before beginning content development, they conducted in-depth qualitative research to understand the context, the power relationships, and the normative discourse about gender roles which shape the adolescent audience’s lives.

The second key concept in the framework is that of agency, which accounts for audiences actively responding to and participating in media, rather than simply passively receiving it (Ramasubramanian & Banjo, 2020). This conceptualization of agency is particularly well-suited to transmedia interventions, as it builds on Jenkins’ ideas about production

of media by consumers and sharing through social media (Jenkins & Deuze, 2008). The team took a nuanced approach to understand the active ways in which different adolescents engage with diverse forms of media. Understanding adolescent agency and impacting their sense of identity through the transmedia intervention were key project goals. While not all media platforms lend themselves equally to participatory frameworks, the social media campaign, hosted on an interactive youth platform, was designed to amplify adolescent voices and allow the audience to reflect on restrictive gender norms encountered in their own lives. Similarly, the radio show was designed to explicitly bring in real-life role models and voices.

The third pillar of the framework is context and recognizes that multiple levels of context, from the viewing environment to the political structures and cultural norms, influence how media affect audiences. For instance, the intervention explicitly aimed to spark dialogue, as previous work has shown the importance of talking about campaigns in enacting social and behavior change (Chatterjee, Bhanot, Frank, Murphy, & Power, 2009; Frank et al., 2012). The entire intervention was designed with a deep cultural understanding of not only the socio-political, familial context of gender issues in India, but specifically the context of adolescent life. As part of this process, the creative team was composed of people who reflected the same cultural milieu. Diversity in the composition of the creative team was thus an important element of ensuring authenticity and audience engagement.

The fourth conceptual pillar is intersectionality or acknowledging the “overlapping and mutually constructed intersectional identities dynamicity of sociocultural political factors which impact the media experiences” (Ramasubramanian & Banjo, 2020, p. 6). Simply put it is the need to account for multiple grounds of identity to understand the lived experience (Crenshaw, 1991) of our intended audiences. In other words, the intervention couldn’t examine gender alone; instead, gender inequities also overlapped with inequities around age, location (rural or urban), and caste. An intersectional approach was integral to unpacking the web of privilege and marginalization that surrounds these adolescents and shapes their autonomy. For example, while young boys may have low autonomy with respect to choices in their careers (deferring to the wishes of their parents), they are very often in a privileged gender position compared to their female peers. Within the household, this further translates into hierarchical relationships between brothers and sisters, with brothers often

surveilling and enforcing strict gender norms on their sisters as a culturally acceptable and encouraged practice. Nuances with respect to intersections of gender marginalization coupled with economic marginalization (poverty) or social marginalization (caste) also formed necessary backdrops to exploring and raising the issue of adolescent rights and well-being through this intervention. Although not all aspects of social positions could be explored in depth, many of these were woven in as minor and major storylines on the television and radio show. For instance, while caste-based discrimination was not a central theme, one story arc on the television program dealt with the issue of students being discriminated against by a teacher based on caste, which the *AdhaFULL* trio help reveal and resolve.

BREAKING THE FORCEFIELD

The metaphor of challenging the forcefield guided the design and implementation of the *AdhaFULL* intervention. However, that metaphor is equally apt in thinking of the constraints on EE production and evaluation. In adopting a transmedia approach, the team attempted to challenge the norms that constrain traditional EE models.

(Re)Designing the Grant

The transmedia journey begins with the design of the grant and the response to a call from the funders. In the case of *AdhaFULL*, we reimagined a call for a communication intervention with multiple components as a transmedia intervention building a narrative world through varied platforms. The original request for proposals (RFP) was focused on adolescent and menstrual health, but in responding to it, the team reimagined its scope in form and content, addressing key adolescent challenges of growing up in a deeply gendered society and the related systemic issues including gender stereotyping and socialization, gender-based violence, and silence around menstruation, and other health issues. An RFP itself thus comes with its own opportunities and limitations, and proposing a transmedia project needs rethinking from the ground-up, stretching the opportunities while simultaneously working within the limitations.

Transmedia initiatives give an unparalleled opportunity to create a rich story world. Yet the ambitions across outputs and platforms have to be tempered with critical evaluation of where and how to use available resources. If we have five components in our transmedia basket, are we

adequately resourced to optimally implement all five things? Relatedly, does our design allow for us to be able to measure whether each of these components has worked individually as well as additively? The crux of a transmedia show is to be able to create a complex, yet unified universe. As we evolve in our use of transmedia, the next challenges for the field are to evolve our resource allocation, implementation plan, and research design to account for this complexity.

Further, we have to align our creative freedoms to lived realities. As development practitioners, we have to anticipate how far we can push the envelope with respect to the wish-list and expectations of funders and the people implementing the project. Similarly, in the narrative outputs, when dealing with entrenched social norms resistant to change, how far can we push the creative envelope and lead our audience to re-examine everyday life, yet keep them engaged?

(Re)Imagining the Audience

Where previous generations of EE were typically broadcast in contexts with one or two dominant media outlets, very often state-owned media (Chatterjee, Sangalang, & Cody, 2017), the reality today, whether broadcasting in the Global North or the Global South, is a fragmented audience and multiplicity of media outlets. *AdhaFULL* faced a similar challenge. There were multiple audiences for the *AdhaFULL* intervention: the adolescent age group was divided into younger and older adolescents, and differing social axes of gender, location (rural/urban), class, and caste. These stratifications have a significant impact on who has access to which media (including issues of digital inequities) and what genre of programming and platforms would appeal to which audience. The variety and disparities embedded in the audiences required thinking through each component. For *AdhaFULL*, the solution was a grid that mapped the rural/urban divide with age and access disparities (see Fig. 16.1). The target groups were not equally accessing all platforms. Here the early intersectional framework and understanding of the audience allowed for strategic leveraging of each component of the intervention. In other words, different components need to talk to different people.

Contextual understanding and audience feedback were incorporated through the human-centered design process that the team followed in developing the different components. For example, for the mobile phone game, boys in India have easier access to smartphones and data plans than

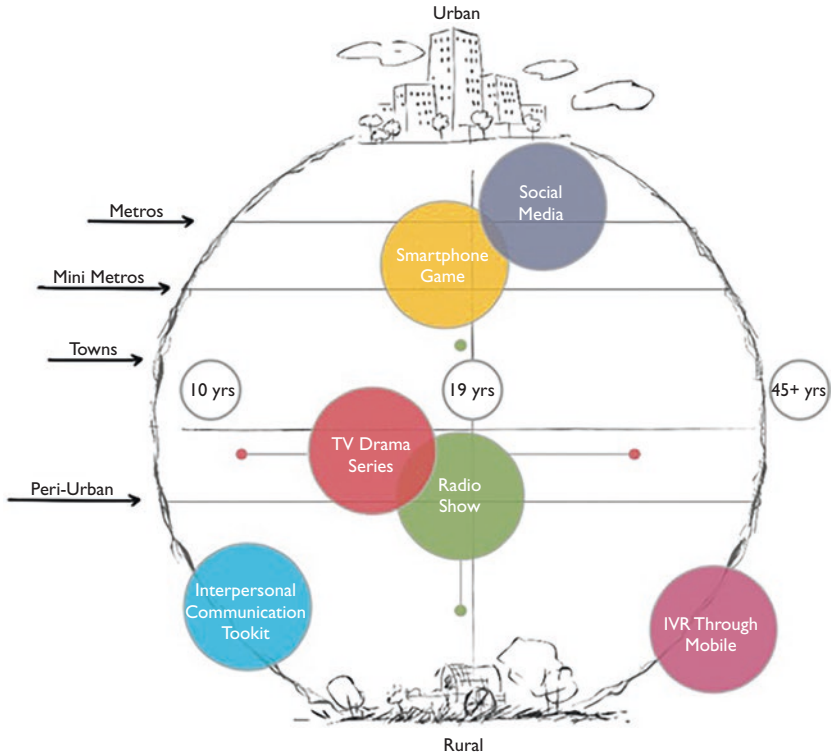


Fig. 16.1 Transmedia axes: age by geography (Pasricha et al., 2018)

girls, and there are age differences as well. Adolescent phone use is typically on a shared family device, and they have limited choice about time spent on the phone, use of data, and storage. All of these were important design considerations in developing the game to be simple yet engaging, freely downloadable, with little space, data, or time required to play. Understanding the context of media use in this population was crucial to the success of the game with its intended audience.

Together with mapping the media use of the audiences, we also identified the central themes that would remain consistent across the varying outputs and the different platforms building the cohesive story—world. These themes needed to be consistent, but also to be refreshed for each platform. Here, we broke down the challenges the adolescents faced with

relation to gender norms into the central narrative themes of agency, autonomy, identity, and relationship curtailed within the forcefield of social expectations.

Planning, Planning, Planning

The design and implementation of a transmedia intervention have to go together, like an orchestra led by a master conductor with each instrument coming in at the correct time and following the overall tone and tempo to allow for a rich, complex symphony to emerge. This is quite challenging. An innovative tool was created by the team in response to the complex planning needs of the transmedia intervention. The team devised a matrix—dubbed the Dashboard—to guide content development and monitor coverage of topics across the media components. This one-stop document synchronized research, content development, program management, monitoring, and evaluation. Structurally, it was organized and color-coded to map the central themes, intended audiences, goals of the intervention/platform, objectives (indicators to guide evaluation), as well as other research and creative inputs needed for decision making against each other. The narrative could vary but the core issue being addressed, why it is problematic, and what could be done about would be consistent by using the Dashboard as a touchstone. This living document helped keep track of the evolution of the intervention and the various components in real time. Its flexibility allowed for both a big picture overview and the minutia planning of an episodic story arc, contributing to the cohesiveness of the intervention.

Adapting on the Go

One of the biggest challenges was implementing the intervention. However, potential problems became an opportunity for innovation and creative problem-solving. For instance, the original plan, as developed with the funder, was to partner with the government-owned radio broadcaster. However, when the original partnership plans did not come to fruition, the team had to look for alternate platforms. As a solution, we moved to community-based radio platforms and state-owned school networks. Changing the radio partners necessitated shifting the timing of the pieces, with the radio platform rolling out in a staggered manner rather than timed with the television program. Notwithstanding the immense effort,

it took to identify and implement this alternative, in hindsight it ultimately enabled the radio program to be played across 30 community radio stations, 11 private FM channels, and more than 15,000 schools, enhancing community engagement (Pasricha et al., 2018).

The social media campaign that evolved and proved highly successful with urban youth was another adaptation, as the original proposal did not have a separate social media campaign. A limitation of this component not being part of the original design meant that the hashtag could not be embedded in the TV drama, and the cross-reference worked only one way with the online campaign using characters and references to the television show. However, it also illustrates the strength of engagement and cross-over audiences across platforms. The social media content that got the most views (2.5 million on YouTube) and engagement was the one that featured the central protagonists from the show, evidencing the popularity and resonance of these characters with the audiences (for comparison, some of the other social media pieces featured famous celebrities like movie star and UNICEF ambassador Priyanka Chopra). For transmedia interventions, the cross-over of format and ideas is thus very important to realize the potential of a rich story universe.

One of our fundamental lessons is that platform choices come with unexpected or unanticipated curve balls beyond the control of the team. Multiple platforms inherently mean multiple challenges. Each media platform will have its own regulations, market logic, structural advantages and disadvantages, and much of it changes as technologies and regulations evolve in real time. Thus, EE creators will find themselves working with multiple regulatory bodies and media markets, adding further nuance and complexity to the need to understand audience media ecology. Rigorous planning and execution are fundamental to success, but so is flexibility.

THE FORCEFIELD PUSHES BACK

Media has the power to craft parallel new realities. When they endorse these new norms, audiences are able to redefine their own attitudes and views and begin to create social change. However, pushing boundaries on social norms and challenging entrenched hierarchies through our interventions is never without creative and other forms of pushback. Looking back critically at the limits to creative license, walking the fine line between provocation for the audience without alienating or violating expectations, we identify instances where it was not possible to depict the issues in a

manner which subverted existing norms completely. To that extent, the social forcefield equally constrains and limits the boundaries of where our narratives can go. For instance, on the issue of gender-based violence, we wanted to depict the issue in more depth and in a gritty, stark manner in the TV series. However, the bounds of what would be acceptable to the audience and broadcast partners led to a less provocative tone and more implicit depiction than the team originally intended. Similarly, issues of teenage romance with respect to sexual and reproductive health choices, although touched upon, were not explored in a comprehensive manner, as these were deemed culturally sensitive. Thus, the agency and autonomy of the EE content creators are similarly circumscribed by socio-political-economic concerns in much the same way as those of the audiences for whom we create our interventions.

We recognize that some of these structural challenges also arise from the limited time of such an intervention. While the transmedia intervention set up an ambitious story—world—and created the foundation for the evolution of the complexity of the characters and issues, the reality of funding cycles left much of this potential unrealized. There were other aspects of gender inequality, including going beyond a binary understanding of gender or delving deeper into intersectional aspects of gender in the Indian context, which could have been addressed had program and budget plans permitted. The ability of a media intervention to engineer viewer engagement—especially when dealing with complex issues and entrenched norms which defy any easy solution and immediate behavior change—gets undermined when it meets the reality of short-term interventions and budgetary constraints. In contrast with commercial programs, loyalty and ratings do not necessarily translate into additional seasons and show renewals. Paradoxically, while normative change needs sustained engagement, project cycles don't always allow for it. Funding power hierarchies dictate much of what potential is realized and what is not.

LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

As we learn from this project, in recognizing and challenging the boundaries we encounter, we create the space for reimagining our work and look toward the future. To sum up, we pose a series of questions for the field and ourselves. We see the attempt to answer these questions as forging pathways for new boundary-pushing work on transmedia EE interventions.

The first question is the need to think about **how to theorize transmedia interventions**. Do our existing theoretical models adequately capture the scope of transmedia interventions? More importantly, drawing from the CME framework, can we think beyond individual-level behavior change to allow us to incorporate issues of social context, power hierarchies, and intersectional marginalization? Do our intervention designs account for audience agency and resistance and counter-narratives? While our designs and platforms are becoming increasingly complex, many of our theoretical models don't allow for capturing these kinds of nuances and look largely toward discrete behavior change. When dealing with complex social issues, we may need to go beyond behavior change and traditional media effects models. Conversely, there are existing theoretical concepts which remain underutilized and under-theorized in the field of EE. For instance, interpersonal discussion becomes especially important in the intertextual context of transmedia interventions. *AdhaFULL* was not just about what happens to individuals—real or imagined—but also about lived, everyday social and cultural reality and challenging the ideologies underpinning it. The evaluation methodologies we typically adopt do not respond to easily capturing findings of this level of nuance or abstraction.

Second, we need to reconsider how we conceptualize the **design and funding of transmedia projects**. Short-term funding cycles impact the nature and scope of such projects. The value from creating an elaborate story world is not optimized when it doesn't align with design goals. Fundamentally, transmedia approaches use more than multiple platforms; they also imply multiple audiences. Not everyone sees all components of a transmedia intervention. That means that the expectations of funders with respect to audience and messaging may not always find a fit with the transmedia approach. Here we also acknowledge the power dynamics that play out among not only the audience and the content creators but also the funding partners, implementors, research team, and creative teams—all of which continue to shape how the field evolves.

Finally, a key question which enfolds both the previous questions relates to **how we effectively evaluate transmedia interventions**. At one level, it leads us to questions of how do we define exposure in the context of a transmedia intervention. While the transmedia approach allows us to tailor and respond to the issue of fragmented audiences and multiple platforms, it still begs the question of how we allow for this same complexity to be reflected in our theoretical and evaluation models. Within the broader field of development, experiments are currently in the spotlight. Yet,

experiments by nature are designed to minimize internal variability and look for direct, causal relationships. How then do we design our evaluation research to account for nuances embedded in socio-political contexts and the myriad pathways through which social change takes place? As Green (2021) notes, snapshot experiments cannot fully capture change that happens over time. To assess differing engagement and impact of the various components of a transmedia intervention, we must plan for a complex evaluation that meets audiences where they actually use media and is tied directly to the planning of the overall intervention.

As social change practitioners, storytellers, and researchers embedded in the *AdhaFULL* universe, taking this self-reflexive analytical journey allowed us to examine the limits of our own agency in doing this work and to assess the societal, institutional, organizational, and external boundaries we needed to adhere to or break through in our quest to advocate for social change. We hope these learnings encourage our readers and fellow EE enthusiasts to continue to challenge and innovate beyond the boundaries of EE and transmedia as we know them today.

REFERENCES

- Chatterjee, J. S., Bhanot, A., Frank, L. B., Murphy, S. T., & Power, G. (2009). The importance of interpersonal discussion and self-efficacy in knowledge, attitude, and practice models. *International Journal of Communication*, 3, 607–634.
- Chatterjee, J. S., Sangalang, A., & Cody, M. J. (2017). Entertainment-education. In P. Rossler, C. A. Hoffner, & L. Zoonen (Eds.), *The international encyclopedia of media effects* (pp. 1–12). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118783764.wbieme0067>
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>
- Frank, L. B., Chatterjee, J. S., Chaudhuri, S., Lapsansky, C., Bhanot, A., & Murphy, S. T. (2012). Conversation and compliance: Role of interpersonal discussion and social norms in public communication campaigns. *Journal of Health Communication*, 17(9), 1050–1067. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10810730.2012.665426>
- Frank, L. B., Chatterjee, J. S., Mitra, R., Pasricha, R., Mamun, A., & Gowland, S. (under review). The effects of an entertainment-education drama promoting gender equity in India. *Mass Communication & Society*.

- Green, D. (2021). In search of entertainment-education's effects on attitudes and behaviors. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jenkins, H., & Deuze, M. (2008). Convergence culture. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 14(1), 5–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856507084415>
- Jenkins, H., Lashley, M. C., & Creech, B. (2017). A forum on digital storytelling! Interview with Henry Jenkins. *International Journal of Communication*, 11, 1061–1068.
- Pasricha, R., Mitra, R., & Whitehead, S. (2018). Challenging gendered realities with transmedia for Indian adolescents. *The Journal of Development Communication*, 29(1), 81–100.
- Ramasubramanian, S., & Banjo, O. O. (2020). Critical media effects framework: Bridging critical cultural communication and media effects through power, intersectionality, context, and agency. *Journal of Communication*, 70(3), 379–400. <https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqaa014>
- Wang, H., & Singhal, A. (2016). East Los High: Transmedia edutainment to promote the sexual and reproductive health of young Latina/o Americans. *American Journal of Public Health*, 106(6), 1002–1010.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if you modified the licensed material. You do not have permission under this licence to share adapted material derived from this chapter or parts of it.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.





Youth and Entertainment-Education

Sebastián Cole and Jessica Taylor Piotrowski

Readers of this book undoubtedly understand that entertainment can be a particularly potent way of persuading audiences, mostly attributable to entertainment's resistance-reducing characteristics (Slater & Rouner, 2002). With well-studied and prepared narratives and messages, audiences can easily become involved with the story and the characters, and in doing so, are less likely to counter-argue and easier to persuade (Moyer-Gusé, 2008). Since the concept of entertainment-education (EE) formalized in the 1970s with the Latin American soap opera *Simplemente María*, the uses and applications of EE are also developed. At the time of this writing, EE is practiced in multiple countries, in multiple contexts, with multiple aims following similar design structures. Today's formal EE campaigns focus upon an *intended persuasive goal* (Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010) and are created with an educational or prosocial behavior in mind; they aim to provide information, influence awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and/or behaviors related to the topic of the message. At its core, EE assumes the creation of a moral framework and value grid that works for the topic and the geographical area where the message will be broadcast; a theory that informs the creation process and the content; and research to develop and test the message, as well as evaluate its success and effect afterward (Singhal

S. Cole • J. T. Piotrowski (✉)
University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands
e-mail: s.colepomamurialdo@uva.nl; J.Piotrowski@uva.nl

& Rogers, 2001). And indeed, well-designed EE campaigns work, as now-classic examples such as *Soul City* in South Africa and *Puntos de Encuentro* in Nicaragua have shown (Lacayo, Obregón, & Singhal, 2008; Rodríguez, 2005; Singhal & Rogers, 2001).

Today, EE has achieved a wide range of results focusing on diverse issues and topics. Since its inception, EE campaigns have aimed to affect attitudes, norms, and behaviors related to many topics, such as domestic violence, homosexuality, and rape, and more recently EE has been highlighted as a tool for health communication interventions for adults (Lacayo et al., 2008; Obregón & Mosquera, 2005; Piotrow & de Fossard, 2004; Storey & Sood, 2013; Tufte, 2005). However, we would argue that while the vast body of literature that has been coined “entertainment-education” has indeed focused on social and behavioral change for adults, there is another body of literature that squarely fits in this space: namely, campaigns for *young audiences* that focus on *cognitive and social-emotional skills*. This chapter aims to overview the main characteristics of this content for young audiences and how they overlap with traditional EE.

EDUCATIONAL MEDIA FOR YOUTH

Despite the common application of EE for adult-focused health and behavioral messages, there is another application that relies on the same principles of EE but many times does not appear in the same literature searches: *educational television for children and adolescents*. Just like EE, educational television programs for youth rely on the theorizing of behavioral change, formative research processes to gain knowledge of the audience and intended concepts, and summative evaluation processes to measure the impact of the messages. However, while adult-focused EE typically aims to raise awareness about diseases or health behaviors, youth media most often focuses on the development of cognitive (e.g., school readiness) and social-emotional (e.g., executive function) skills (Fisch, 2004).

Theorizing of Behavioral Change

Educational television for children differs from adult EE by focusing on cognitive and social-emotional skills, but they do tend to overlap in their theoretical core. The theoretical base in EE, for example, is heavily connected to social-psychological theories of behavior (Orozco-Olvera, Shen,

& Cluver, 2019; Storey & Sood, 2013). Similarly, educational media for children is also largely based on this type of theory (see also Piotrowski, 2018). Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (Bandura, 2009), for example, proposes that in order to learn a certain behavior, four processes are necessary: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. This means that, for educational media for children, the characters and stories must be engaging so that they are motivated to retain and replicate behaviors enacted by the characters. Specifically, viewers engage and identify with characters through diverse cognitive processes, such as parasocial interactions and relationships (Jennings, 2018; Moyer-Gusé, 2008). In this way, children both have conversations and build friendships with on-screen characters that directly talk to them. Research has also shown that children learn more from television when they are more familiar and have a stronger relationship with the characters they are interacting with (Jennings, 2018). Then, if the opportunity is present, the goal is that children will apply the modeled behaviors, which ideally will be reinforced and motivated by their parents. Bandura's theory has been suggested to be the backbone of both EE and children's media (Piotrowski, 2018; Singhal & Rogers, 2001; Storey & Sood, 2013).

However, research on youth media also brings new theories that could benefit E-E. For instance, Fisch's (2000) Capacity Model (CM) (with roots in other information processing theories) is an often-applied theory in the youth media space. Here, the theory is based on the supposition that working memory is limited and—when faced with the choice between processing entertainment and educational content in a narrative—entertainment always wins. This “narrative dominance,” however, can be overcome by limiting the distance between the educational and entertainment message. In other words, if a designer can ensure that the content is so inextricably linked that one cannot be processed without the other, then the likelihood for processing and retaining the educational content is greatly increased. Even more, the theory highlights different contextual and content strategies that can help users differentially allocate more of their working memory to the educational lessons. In recent years, there has been a growing body of evidence supporting the use of this theory for effective educational media design. Considering that the limits of memory and cognitive capacities are seldom considered in reviews of EE (Orozco-Olvera et al., 2019; Storey & Sood, 2013), it seems that there is room to consider the opportunities of Capacity Model (or other information processing theories) as we think forward about EE.

Knowledge of the Audience and Intended Concepts Through Formative Research

Beyond understanding the diverse theoretical frameworks regarding behavioral change and media, it is important to have a vast knowledge of the intended audience and the concepts that will be included in the campaign. In other words, successful EE campaigns for both children and adults should extensively use formative research to get to know the current knowledge and context of the audience, as well as test the messages that will be included in the campaign. Fisch and Bernstein (2001) highlight that formative research is necessary in educational shows especially for its practical purposes, and ideally it should be “quick” and “clean.”

The now-classic *Sesame Street* (1969), as well as other shows that followed its steps (*Barney & Friends* (1992) and *Blue's Clues* (1996)), has used empirical formative research to design its programs (Anderson et al., 2000; Fisch, Truglio, & Cole, 1999; Singer & Singer, 1998). *Sesame Street*, for instance, was developed to help support the school readiness skills of at-risk youth by merging educational lessons into an entertaining and engaging format (Fisch & Truglio, 2001). Relying on a practice of bringing together educational experts, media designers, and researchers, the show managed to effectively bridge research and practice, making its content both educational from a scientific standpoint and engaging and fun for its target audience. On the *Sesame Street* set, for example, formative research and scientific collaboration includes finding out what children already know about a topic, if a specific segment is comprehensible and appealing, and even testing early versions of the show with live audiences. Such research has led to many key aspects of the show, including the inclusion of the show's now-famous Muppets (Fisch & Bernstein, 2001; Truglio, Lovelace, Seguí, & Scheiner, 2001).

Examples of EE for children around the world have shown similar practices. The creators of *Meena* in South East Asia, for example, held consultations with local governments, NGOs, and artists, as well as over 100 focus groups and in-depth interviews with children, parents, and community members over a period of eleven years (McKee, Aghi, Carnegie, & Shahzadi, 2004). It must be noted that this is not only to pretest the content but also to develop the show before its creation. Many of the stories in *Meena* are based on real cases, and formative research is necessary to make sure that the content and design will be in line with the current knowledge and needs of the target audience. In this way, shows like *Meena*

are not based on the creators' preconceived attitudes and beliefs but based on a collaboration with the target audience that will later consume the final product.

Summative Evaluation

After the period for formative research and field testing is done and the show has aired, it is essential for an EE campaign to test and evaluate the impact of the campaign. *Sesame Street* and other similar children's educational shows rely on empirical tests after their completion to make sure that its goals have been achieved (Fisch & Truglio, 2001; Piotrowski, 2018). These evaluations have demonstrated strong effects on the development of children's academic and social skills (Anderson et al., 2000; Crawley, Anderson, Wilder, Williams, & Santomero, 1999; Fisch et al., 1999; Jennings, Hooker, & Linebarger, 2009; Mares & Pan, 2013; Piotrowski, 2018; Singer & Singer, 1998). For *Sesame Street*, for example, evaluations have shown that viewers of the show spent more time reading and engaging in educational activities, not only as children but also as teens years later (Fisch et al., 1999; Huston, Anderson, Wright, Linebarger, & Schmitt, 2001).

While research with non-American programming is less often peer-reviewed and instead more likely to appear in evaluation reports, data echoes these positive findings. For example, evaluations of *My Village* in Laos (Wridt, 2017) and the aforementioned *Meena* have used interviews, focus groups, field observations, and surveys to show that these shows have a great potential to influence their viewers. Studies by UNICEF that evaluated *Meena* have shown that children and adults like the characters and the stories, and that the show has a positive effect on children, shifting their attitude and behaviors, making them more expressive, imaginative, spontaneous, and fair (McKee et al., 2004; UNICEF, 2020). This reflects how these educational programs can be used not only for their intended educational purposes but also for a wider EE related goal, to encourage social change.

MOVING FROM TRADITIONAL MEDIA TO NEW MEDIA

Since the emergence of *Sesame Street*, there have been numerous examples of television programs designed to support cognitive and social development of youth. But today, *it's not just broadcast media*. The digital

revolution brought new ways to gratify media-related needs and to experience EE, by enhancing, for instance, interactivity and social connection (Lutkenhaus, Jansz, & Bouman, 2019; Wang & Singhal, 2009). And, considering that young children are often the quickest adopters of new technology, it makes sense that media developers are already jumping on the new media train when it comes to educational media. For example, educational apps and games have gained significant popularity among young children, proving to be engaging, appealing, and educationally effective (Dore et al., 2019; Li, 2018; Piotrowski & Meester, 2018). Similarly, augmented reality apps have also been tested as a way to teach the possible effects of climate change to ninth-grade students (Smørdal, Liestøl, & Erstad, 2016). At the same time, we have seen numerous applications for gaming—including the development of a game to teach children to live with diabetes and bring attention to issues such as immigration and global warming (Singhal & Rogers, 2002; Wang & Singhal, 2009).

Looking ahead, one of the potentially most powerful spaces for the future of EE may be teens and social media. Undoubtedly, narrative is powerful—this is clear from the numerous examples in this chapter and other chapters in the book. But social media, when used well, can augment this power. How? Consider, for example, that over half of teenagers in the USA consider themselves to be content creators (Wang & Singhal, 2009). Now consider the fact that other research has suggested that participatory culture that creates a space for sharing and participating can heighten the intended effects of EE (Lutkenhaus et al., 2019; Wang & Singhal, 2009). Merge this together. There is a clear potential for teens to play a key role in the spreading of EE messages in which the changing media landscape brings a new boost to the mouth-to-mouth element of storytelling (Lutkenhaus et al., 2019).

In other words, while the power of the engaging story will always be central in EE, relying on social media to reach teens can help ensure spreadable EE messages. For example, even with low levels of storytelling, HIV-related tweets by young males have been related to higher levels of prevention in certain geographical areas (Stevens et al., 2020). At the same time, we see an increasing number of campaigns that are actively trying to support educational or prosocial change for teens via social media. For example, the STD/AIDS Foundation in the Netherlands (SAFN) collaborated with social influencers to reach out to online beauty and fashion communities and created a series of YouTube videos with the experiences of the members of these communities (Lutkenhaus et al., 2019) in order

to encourage audiences to spread SAFN's message and their own versions of the message. And, closer to more traditionally styled EE soap operas, the web series *Victor and Erika* was created for hard-to-reach Latino audiences in Maryland, USA (Andrade et al., 2015). Using focus groups as formative research, the web series was created with a group of teens and focused on health-related risk behaviors. Therefore, not only were teens the audience of the web series, but they were also actively involved in its production. Taken together, the literature suggests a unique opportunity to use new media as part of EE to increase the reach and the effect of campaigns.

LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

Youth media has been part of EE all along, although sometimes with a different name. EE campaigns are most often known for their efforts to affect social and behavioral change, particularly in the health sector with adults (Piotrow & de Fossard, 2004; Storey & Sood, 2013; Tufte, 2005). And while there are exceptions to this, campaigns that focus on cognitive and emotional skills which target younger audiences are not often the first content one considers when reflecting on EE. However, educational content for children and t(w)eens not only follows similar guidelines and principles as EE, but has also proven to be as successful as educational campaigns for adults. This highlights an easy opportunity for the future of EE: closing the gap between these two fields in order to strengthen the empirical space of each. Moreover, we would argue there is room for practitioners and researchers to explore areas that they might not have considered before. For instance, the methods used for formative and summative research are mostly the same for EE and youth educational media, but the theoretical backgrounds sometimes differ. While the base theories are similar, the clearest difference is the use of information processing theories that seems more consistently present in work with children. In particular, the Capacity Model was designed for television content for children, but might provide valuable insights to adult-focused EE content as well.

Furthermore, as the amount of digital EE for youth grows, its future potential is revealed. While digital campaigns seemed to lack a clear EE structure, new digital campaigns for youth have shown that it is possible to bring the existing EE knowledge to the digital realm (Bouman, 2021). Youth are quickly becoming the distributors of the very messages that target them—particularly in their tween and teen years. While the use of

formative and summative processes in this space seems less present, there is room to work on this in future projects. At the same time, digital EE outside of the youth space is also varied in its use and popularity. It may be here—the bridging of digital media and EE—where the related fields of youth media and EE can find a powerful meeting ground. With youth quickly responding to digital content, they are a clear target audience for such outreach. If this can be augmented with best practices in EE campaign design and execution, whereby interdisciplinary theories across fields are used in conjunction with formative and summative processes, the potential for meaningful effects seems an achievable and meaningful goal. We look forward to witnessing the next generation of EE unfold, and hope to see the power of young voices in this process.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, D. R., Bryant, J., Wilder, A., Santomero, A., Williams, M., & Crawley, A. M. (2000). Researching Blue's Clues: Viewing behavior and impact. *Media Psychology, 2*(2), 179–194. https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532785XMEP0202_4
- Andrade, E. L., Evans, W. D., Edberg, M. C., Cleary, S. D., Villalba, R., & Batista, I. C. (2015). Victor and Erika Webnovela: An innovative generation @ audience engagement strategy for prevention. *Journal of Health Communication, 20*(12), 1465–1472. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10810730.2015.1018648>
- Bandura, A. (2009). Social cognitive theory of mass communication. In J. Bryant & M. B. Oliver (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (pp. 94–124). Routledge.
- Bouman, M. (2021). A strange kind of marriage: The challenging journey of entertainment-education collaboration. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Crawley, A. M., Anderson, D. R., Wilder, A., Williams, M., & Santomero, A. (1999). Effects of repeated exposures to a single episode of the television program Blue's clues on the viewing behaviors and comprehension of pre-school children. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 91*(4), 630–637.
- Dore, R. A., Shirilla, M., Hopkins, E., Collins, M., Scott, M., Schatz, J., et al. (2019). Education in the app store: Using a mobile game to support U.S. pre-schoolers' vocabulary learning. *Journal of Children and Media, 13*(4), 452–471. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482798.2019.1650788>
- Fisch, S. M. (2000). A capacity model of children's comprehension of educational content on television. *Media Psychology, 2*(1), 63–91. https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532785XMEP0201_4

- Fisch, S. M. (2004). *Children's learning from educational television: Sesame Street and beyond*. Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Fisch, S. M., & Bernstein, L. (2001). Formative research revealed: Methodological and process issues in formative research. In S. M. Fisch & R. T. Truglio (Eds.), *"G" is for growing: Thirty years of research on children and Sesame Street* (pp. 39–60). Erlbaum.
- Fisch, S. M., & Truglio, R. T. (Eds.). (2001). "G" is for growing: Thirty years of research on children and *Sesame Street*. Erlbaum.
- Fisch, S. M., Truglio, R. T., & Cole, C. F. (1999). The impact of *Sesame Street* on preschool children: A review and synthesis of 30 years' research. *Media Psychology*, 1(2), 165–190. https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532785xmep0102_5
- Huston, A. C., Anderson, D. R., Wright, J. C., Linebarger, D. L., & Schmitt, K. L. (2001). *Sesame Street* viewers as adolescents: The recontact study. In S. M. Fisch & R. T. Truglio (Eds.), *"G" is for growing: Thirty years of research on children and Sesame Street* (pp. 131–143). Erlbaum.
- Jennings, N. A. (2018). Why do kids think Dora the explorer is their friend? In N. A. Jennings & S. R. Mazzarella (Eds.), *20 questions about youth and media*. Revised Edition (pp. 125–135). Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Jennings, N. A., Hooker, S. D., & Linebarger, D. L. (2009). Educational television as mediated literacy environments for preschoolers. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 34(3), 229–242. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439880903141513>
- Lacayo, V., Obregón, R., & Singhal, A. (2008). Approaching social change as a complex problem in a world that treats it as a complicated one: The case of Puntos de Encuentro, Nicaragua. *Investigación & Desarrollo*, 16(2), 126–159.
- Li, X. (2018). Design and application of children's entertainment education software in preschool education. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning (IJET)*, 13(07), 201. <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijet.v13i07.8809>
- Lutkenhaus, R. O., Jansz, J., & Bouman, M. P. A. (2019). Toward spreadable entertainment-education: Leveraging social influence in online networks. *Health Promotion International*, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/daz104>
- Mares, M.-L., & Pan, Z. (2013). Effects of *Sesame Street*: A meta-analysis of children's learning in 15 countries. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 34(3), 140–151. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2013.01.001>
- McKee, N., Aghi, M., Carnegie, R., & Shahzadi, N. (2004). Cartoons and comic books for changing social norms: Meena, the South Asian girl. In A. Singhal, M. J. Cody, E. M. Rogers, & M. Sabido (Eds.), *Entertainment-education and social change: History, research, and practice* (pp. 331–349). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Moyer-Gusé, E. (2008). Toward a theory of entertainment persuasion: Explaining the persuasive effects of entertainment-education messages. *Communication Theory*, 18(3), 407–425. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2008.00328.x>

- Moyer-Gusé, E., & Nabi, R. L. (2010). Explaining the effects of narrative in an entertainment television program: Overcoming resistance to persuasion. *Human Communication Research*, 36(1), 26–52. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.2009.01367.x>
- Obregón, R., & Mosquera, M. (2005). Participatory and cultural challenges for research and practice in health communication. In O. Hemer & T. Tufté (Eds.), *Media & glocal change: Rethinking communication for development* (pp. 233–246). Publicaciones Cooperativas.
- Orozco-Olvera, V., Shen, F., & Cluver, L. (2019). The effectiveness of using entertainment education narratives to promote safer sexual behaviors of youth: A meta-analysis, 1985–2017. *PLoS One*, 14(2), e0209969. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0209969>
- Piotrowski, P. T., & de Fossard, E. (2004). Entertainment-education as a public health intervention. In A. Singhal, M. J. Cody, E. M. Rogers, & M. Sabido (Eds.), *Entertainment-education and social change: History, research, and practice* (pp. 39–60). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Piotrowski, J. T. (2018). Is educational media an oxymoron? In N. A. Jennings & S. R. Mazzarella (Eds.), *20 questions about youth and media*. Revised Edition (pp. 149–160). Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Piotrowski, J. T., & Meester, L. (2018). Can apps support creativity in middle childhood? *Computers in Human Behavior*, 85, 23–33. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.03.030>
- Rodríguez, C. (2005). From the Sandinista revolution to telenovelas: The case of Puntos de Encuentro. In O. Hemer & T. Tufté (Eds.), *Media & glocal change: Rethinking communication for development* (pp. 367–384). Publicaciones Cooperativas.
- Singer, J., & Singer, D. (1998). Barney & Friends as entertainment and education: Evaluating the quality and effectiveness of a television series for preschool children. In J. Asamen & G. Berry (Eds.), *Research paradigms, television, and social behavior* (pp. 305–367). <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483328201.n11>
- Singhal, A., & Rogers, E. M. (2001). The entertainment-education strategy in communication campaigns. In R. E. Rice & C. Atkins (Eds.), *Public communication campaigns* (3rd ed., pp. 343–356). <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452233260.n28>
- Singhal, A., & Rogers, E. M. (2002). A theoretical agenda for entertainment-education. *Communication Theory*, 12(2), 117–135. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2002.tb00262.x>
- Slater, M. D., & Rouner, D. (2002). Entertainment-education and elaboration likelihood: Understanding the processing of narrative persuasion. *Communication Theory*, 12(2), 173–191. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2002.tb00265.x>

- Smørdal, O., Liestøl, G., & Erstad, O. (2016). Exploring situated knowledge building using mobile augmented reality. *Qwerty—Open and Interdisciplinary Journal of Technology, Culture and Education*, 1(1), 26–43.
- Stevens, R., Bonett, S., Bannon, J., Chittamuru, D., Slaff, B., Browne, S. K., et al. (2020). Association between HIV-related tweets and HIV incidence in the United States: Infodemiology study. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 22(6), e17196. <https://doi.org/10.2196/17196>
- Storey, D., & Sood, S. (2013). Increasing equity, affirming the power of narrative and expanding dialogue: The evolution of entertainment education over two decades. *Critical Arts*, 27(1), 9–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02560046.2013.767015>
- Truglio, R. T., Lovelace, V. O., Seguí, I., & Scheiner, S. (2001). The varied role of formative research: Case studies from 30 years. In S. M. Fisch & R. T. Truglio (Eds.), *“G” is for growing: Thirty years of research on children and Sesame Street* (pp. 61–79). Erlbaum.
- Tufte, T. (2005). Entertainment-education in development communication: Between marketing behaviours and empowering people. In O. Hemer & T. Tufte (Eds.), *Media & glocal change: Rethinking communication for development* (pp. 159–174). Publicaciones Cooperativas.
- UNICEF. (2020). UNICEF Bangladesh formative evaluation of Meena communication initiative 2019. UNICEF SPEAR Section.
- Wang, H., & Singhal, A. (2009). Entertainment-education through digital games. In U. Ritterfeld, M. J. Cody, & P. Vorderer (Eds.), *Serious games: Mechanisms and effects* (pp. 271–292). Routledge.
- Wridt, P. (2017). *My village (ECD TV) programme evaluation report* (pp. 1–48). Unicef Lao PDR. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/laos/media/296/file/UNICEF%20Lao%20PDR.pdf>

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if you modified the licensed material. You do not have permission under this licence to share adapted material derived from this chapter or parts of it.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.





How to Make a Living Legend: Bibliobandido as Literacy Movement Building

Marisa Morán Jahn

We'd been waiting by the side of the road for some time, scanning the horizon. I was anxious how people would react. Would they throw things, thinking he was really out for pillage and plunder? Or worse, would they simply ignore him? Finally, from far off I could see two burros kicking up a sun-lit storm of dust, illuminating the profile of a masked rider that we'd named Bibliobandido ("story thief") who was fabled to eat stories (see Fig. 18.1).

For the past few days, I'd been plotting with The Library Club of El Pital on details to convince little kids that Bibliobandido was really a menace. We initiated a handful of kids ages 9 to 11 on the secret, knowing they were likely too old to believe in Bibliobandido and could be the first to denounce he wasn't real. Now our extended group of about a dozen kids and adults clandestinely worked day and night to sew costumes, choreograph who would say what, prepare bookmaking materials, and tea-stain paper to resemble a parchment scroll outlining the demands Bibliobandido

M. M. Jahn (✉)
Parsons/The New School, New York City, NY, USA
e-mail: marisa@studiorev.org



Fig. 18.1 Bibliobandido riding in El Pital, 2010. (Photo by Marisa Morán Jahn)

would put forth. Designed to resemble the signs from cops and robbers movies or Spaghetti Westerns, we created our own colorful “Wanted” posters and pasted them throughout the one-road town to alert the 1000 residents of this Honduran community: “Cuidado! Hombre Peligroso! Bibliobandido—Come Cuentos” (“Warning! Dangerous Man! Bibliobandido—Story Eater!”). We liberally spread rumors that nearby villages reported hearing Bibliobandido’s ferocious growl from within the forest. When asked about the gastrointestinal mechanics of what it means to eat stories, we kept the answer vague, saying something like, “Well, we all love a good story but I hear this BB guy just takes it a bit farther. Apparently, he inhales them on the spot but doesn’t really take them away. I guess we’d better quench his appetite by feeding him stories!”

Now, as Bibliobandido galloped past the first house marking the edge of the village, a woman cried out in fear, shutting her windows and running inside. We learned later that she was the one who called the cops—a minor but important detail that later contributed to the sense that

Bibliobandido was “real.” Bibliobandido now fast approached the center of the village which consisted of small one-story homes, two bodegas, a school, and the largest library in Northern Honduras, a 600 square foot room with a single shelf of books. The high school and library had been built in the past few years, thanks to Un Mundo, the same organization that invited me here to do an art and literacy workshop. Prior to my invitation, Un Mundo involved middle school kids and adults in surveying their community about their needs. The survey revealed that alongside a health clinic and eco-friendly toilets, the community saw literacy as a way to “lift them out of their poverty cycle” (Goetz, Elly, personal communication, 2010). Self-identifying the importance of literacy meant that community members committed to non-traditional strategies to overcome the limitations of Honduras’ enfeebled education infrastructure.

In the late 1990s, Honduras was pummeled by a succession of storms including Hurricane Mitch which, in 1998, caused approximately 11,000 fatalities in the region (Castillo, 2011). The hurricanes ravaged much of the region’s infrastructure, including the single road connecting El Pital to other communities more remotely situated up the mountain. This had widespread effects. For example, after the storms, the school teacher who worked in La Muralla commuted via bus from the nearby city of Ceiba for an hour each way. To reach the community’s one room schoolhouse, she had to ford two rivers. La Muralla’s increased inaccessibility meant that only a handful of books remained in their schoolroom.

In addition to the storms, Honduras’ imperialist entanglements with the United States explain its status for many years as the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, just behind Haiti. Established in the late nineteenth century as the original “banana republic” where raw goods and fruit were sold to American entrepreneurs, Honduras has played a key role as a regional ally to the United States. After the Cold War, Honduras functioned as an American regional foothold, supporting Salvadorian regime changes and the Contras opposing Nicaraguan Sandinistas.

Then and now, Honduras has functioned as staging grounds for narco-traffickers and hosts one of the largest deployments of US Special Operations forces outside the Middle East (Shorrock, 2016). Around 2010, Eastern Honduras was fast becoming a new route for drug cartels running cocaine northbound from South America. Within five years, 90% of all cocaine originating from Venezuela and Columbia bound for the United States passed through Central America. A third of the narcotics passed through Honduras (Shanker, 2012), mostly in the Easternmost

region of Miskito, whose dense jungles provided cover. Soldiers and government officials either turn a blind eye or act in direct complicity.

Homicides in urban areas earned Honduras the reputation as the murder capital of the world (Sherwell, 2013), a moniker which disincentivizes foreign investment and tourism. The rate of homicides is especially high for journalists, environmental activists, and indigenous rights leaders such as Berta Cáceres, who was murdered immediately after receiving the Goldman Environmental Prize in 2015. While violence is concentrated in Honduras' urban areas, the radical chilling of free speech extends throughout the country. Elected officials are not held accountable, and journalists covering government corruption find themselves censored, threatened, or much worse. As a result, issues impacting El Rio Cangrejal, the region in which El Pital sits, go under-reported. For journalists and artists in Honduras, professional video cameras are a liability; alternative and imaginative forms of expression become imperative.

For those in a place like El Pital, located in Northern Honduras, the specters of geopolitical violence hardly surface. While you shouldn't go walking by yourself in the forest or at night, mellow El Pital feels quite safe. But underlying tensions and rampant government corruption register in the form of entrenched poverty and the conspicuous absence of resources. Throughout El Rio Cangrejal, it was common to see schools that either had no resources or had simply ceased to exist.

Against this backdrop, ways to provide educational resources—as well as nuanced perspectives articulating the subtleties of life in Honduras—acquire urgency. Imaginative approaches dignify lived experiences, transform the everyday, and invite seeing things otherwise. To be starving for stories, like *Bibliobandido*, refers to the desire to be nourished by others' stories and reciprocally feed others. To hunger for stories refers to the right to gluttonously insist on the right to intellectual stimulation and creative agency despite a fractured education system.

By now, *Bibliobandido*'s galloping burros slowed to a cant as he approached El Pital's school. Still mounted, BB roared as he rubbed his belly and peered into the eyes of the kids around him. He handed a parchment scroll to the crowd of kids, who jostled to read the message aloud to the others. "Soy Bibliobandido! Tengo ganas de comer cuentos! Los que no me alimentan, ten cuidado!" ("I am *Bibilobandido*! I am ravenous to eat stories! Those that don't nourish me, beware!"). A handful of moms and teens, key members of the Library Club, pretended to tremble with fear while little kids looked about, wondering what to do.

After a few minutes of uncertainty, a member from the Library Club stepped up and announced, “Bibliobandido, you come back in one hour. We will have fresh stories prepared for you.” As BB rode off, Library Club members formed a huddle with little kids. Our plants in the crowd shared gossip that they’d heard from a neighboring village that the stories already bound in the library were too stale and only stories written by little kids could requite his insatiable appetite.

To prepare the freshest offering of stories, we broke the crowd of forty kids into smaller groups whose teen leaders I had already trained to lead simple bookmaking activities with accompanying writing prompts. One group imagined two characters from different stories inside the villain’s stomach. Would those characters duke it out? Have tea? Enjoy a few laps in BB’s stomach as the liquids sloshed around? Others create an illustrated menu imagining BB’s ideal five course meal (see Fig. 18.2). Gory delicacies like “Blood of Snow White Soup” were followed by Pinocchio’s nose,



Fig. 18.2 Bibliobandido’s menu, Library Club of El Pital, 2010. (Photo by Marisa Morán Jahn)

grilled and served up in a hot dog bun. Pop-up books unfolded to impart step-by-step instructions sharing the kids' expertise in cooking beans, spear fishing, or gathering the best firewood. Origin stories speculated on BB's home, family, and network of villains. Agile and resourceful leaf cutter ants, which proliferated here in the semi-tropics, appeared as a constant motif. Gritty and uncensored, these literary activities became foundational staples for the youth-led Bibliobandido storycrafting rituals that centered around El Pital for a decade onward, spreading into nearby communities clustered around the Cangrejal river. Later, leaders of the Library Club would bring the legend to other communities in Central and North America that also needed a Bibliobandido.

By now, an hour had passed. Anticipating BB's return to El Pital, we'd put the finishing touches on our stories. When he arrived, belly rumbling, a few junior members of the Library Club circled the younger ones around the bandit. As the kids shared their stories, BB's audible lip smacking and sounds of contentment were muffled slightly by the bandana which concealed the identity of Coki, the only adult male member of the Library Club. Coki himself did not quite know how to read; he'd had to leave school early in order to sow and harvest beans to support his family. For him, literacy was therefore precious, and as an adult, Coki would take time off from working in the fields to participate in the Library Club. For years after, playing the role of Bibliobandido was an honor that he protected; the loveable outlaw was a coveted role that kids and adults clamored to play.

What happens next in the sacrificial ritual—the exit strategy—varies according to context. At Hola NYC, a Spanish-immersion preschool in New York City who “stewarded” Bibliobandido for a few years, we adapted the legend so that while being fed, Bibliobandida (our bandit was feminized since Hola NYC was women-led) eventually starts to nod off into a deep food coma. Toddlers would have to poke Bibliobandida awake and send her on her way in order to continue their regular school day. In other places, the dramaturgy ends when Bibliobandido needs to catch the next subway train, or his invisible neighing getaway vehicle suddenly demands attention.

But back in 2010, the denouement of this very first episode in El Pital came about as two policemen armed with semi-automatics showed up. Someone explained to me that the cops never come for anything, so the fact that they came for Bibliobandido signified to the kids that the story-eating bandit was in fact a real menace. As the cops handcuffed

Bibliobandido in the library, we shooed out the kids. Behind closed doors, Elly Goetz, community organizer and director of Un Mundo, explained to the cops: “Officers, this is all part of an art and literacy movement. This is Marisa. She’s an artist from the U.S. We’re making art right now.” She invited them to stay to watch—we could even give them a role to play—but that they needed to let Coki ride away as Bibliobandido. We asked them if they could grumble something about how, if we all continued to feed BB, we could avert general calamity. They did as they were told, and BB galloped off. The cops left shortly thereafter, leaving kids and adults milling in the road outside the schoolhouse. Despite the fact that there wasn’t a television in El Pital, someone from the crowd piped up that someone they knew had seen BB on the news. Like the cops, the news rarely paid any mind to El Pital, so BB’s television cameo meant big time. In the Bibliobandido episodes to come, breaking news headlines, the sudden appearance of cops, head librarians, the president of the United States, and other signifiers of authority continued to play key roles in legitimating BB as a real threat while subversively poking fun at power itself.

To cap things off and send everyone home, members of the Library Club announced that BB would likely appear the next month for his monthly harvest of stories. We discussed that it was in fact an honor, because BB only comes to communities with the juiciest of stories—and so we’d better not disappoint. The thrill of Bibliobandido’s return animated the kids in a new way.

Previously, for those kids who didn’t like to write, performing literacy could be frustrating and/or humiliating. But writing for a greater cause—the salvation of your community—removes hesitation and perfectionism to make way for the practice of writing. Young authors become galvanized to defeat a common enemy; the monthly repetition becomes a rite that preserves an order—“not curative, but preventative” (Girard, 1977, p. 102). The atavistic logic of sacrifice with storysharing at its core becomes a way to maintain peace.

The next day I had to return to the United States. Before leaving, I met with the Library Club to finish sharing bookmaking and storycrafting skills. I explained what I’d gleaned from Howard Gardner’s (1983) theory of multiple intelligence which points out that the two intelligences most emphasized in schools emphasizing rote education—linguistic and logical/mathematical—left out six additional kinds of aptitudes, including kinesthetic, interpersonal, existential, naturalist, visual, and musical intelligence. Gardner’s theory suggested to me that if I could hook kids by

exercising a wider range of intelligences via live dramaturgy, dialogue, sewing costumes, and oral storytelling, I could leverage those interests toward what was often most daunting for active kids—writing. I’d already seen this work back in the United States, where I’d been teaching bookmaking to several hundred k-12 kids from historically underserved communities. And I’d seen this work when I piloted a bookmaking workshop in El Pital two years prior. What I’d learned then was that we needed something so sticky and captivating that the kids would continue authoring their own stories after I left. This time around, what we sought to instill was an inquiry-led *literacy movement*. A literacy connected to “auto-estima,” a term which suggests a self-regard created from a sense of autonomy conjoined with self-reliance. The English version of the word, which imperfectly translates to “self-esteem,” carries feel-good connotations instead of the inflections of dignity carried by its Spanish cognate.

Indeed, Bibliobandido caught on throughout the Rio Cangrejal region. For the next ten years, the Library Club of El Pital would invent new “episodes” of Bibliobandido on the third Wednesday of each month and enact them on the following Sunday with one of the surrounding 19 participating rural communities whose parents and school teachers had signed up to host the villain. Members of The Library Club eventually brought Bibliobandido to communities in El Salvador and Nicaragua. Meanwhile, I was invited to bring Bibliobandido to thousands of kids via workshops and teacher trainings at the Seattle Public Library, Pérez Art Museum Miami, Studio Museum of Harlem, Sugar Hill Museum of Art and Storytelling, Queens Museum, elementary schools, and dozens of other libraries and grassroots community groups in Central and North America (see Fig. 18.3).

In each place, new characters, obstacles, getaway vehicles, and corroborators were spawned. Many communities invented patron saints bearing local customs, traits, and features. In a workshop sponsored by the Queens Museum located in a New York City neighborhood principally accessed through a long ride on the purple or violet-colored 7 subway line, we invented a patron saint named “La Dama Violeta” (The Lady in Violet). Outfitted in a purple-hued cape and hat, La Dama Violeta publicly states that she protects subway riders whose newspapers and books render them vulnerable to Bibliobandido’s snatching. However, according to the legend, commuters often discover scrambled sentences or paragraphs from their literature; it’s speculated that La Dama Violeta herself is a secret word-snacker.

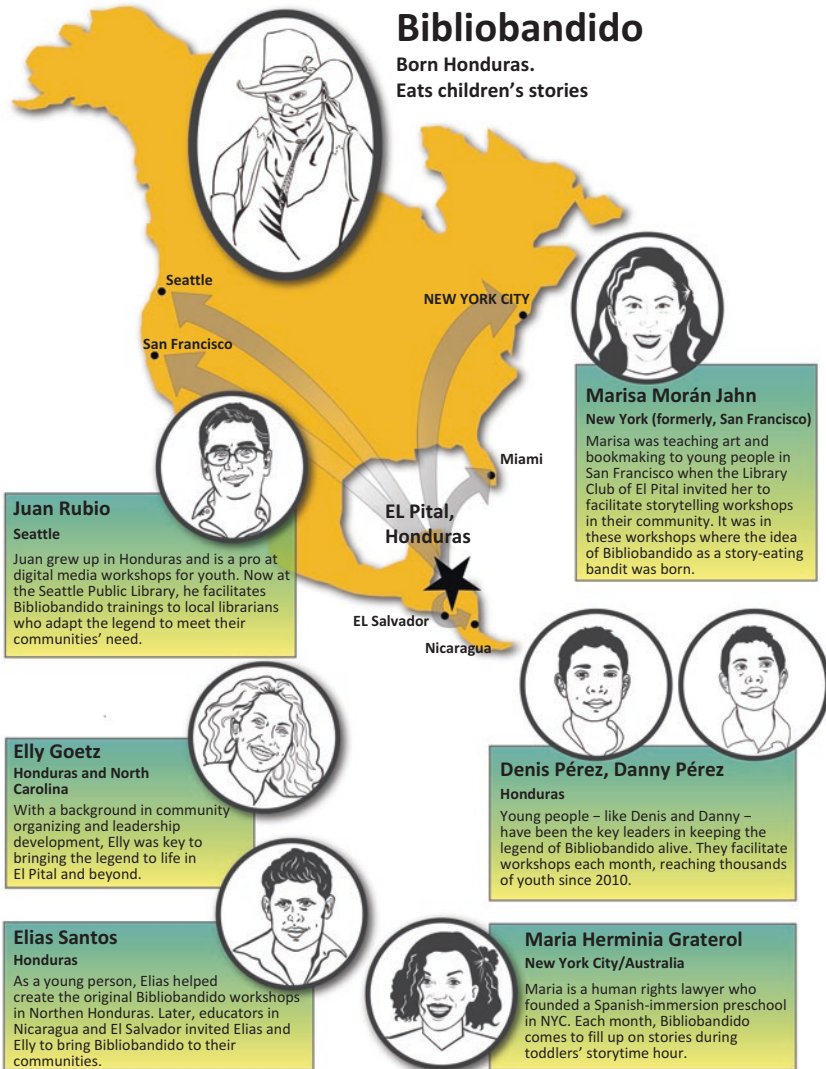


Fig. 18.3 Bibliobandido Diaspora, 2018. (Graphics by Marisa Morán Jahn)

BELIEVING “AS IF”

The exhilaration of Bibliobandido comes when we recognize the fun and function of believing in something. It’s fun to (at least pretend to) believe in something because it conjoins you with those around you, bringing you into a fellowship with those inside and apart from your community (i.e., being baptized, which presumes that you are a believer, brings you into communion with a fellowship of other believers). In a conversation I overheard at the bus stop on the outskirts of El Pital, one small girl said to another, “We celebrate Bibliobandido. What about you all?”

Even if you don’t believe or fully believe in an ideology or supernatural character, participating in the structures of belief *in the minimum* might still do the work of cultural transformation (i.e., coming-of-age ceremonies celebrated in a religious contexts by secular non-believers still mark an important social transformation from childhood to adulthood). And perhaps, despite all your resistances, going through the rituals of belief might still bring about a transformation or psychic/spiritual liberation.

Besides conviviality and possibly catharsis, believing “as if” brings certain rewards (i.e., if you believe in the Tooth Fairy, Santa Claus, or Easter Bunny, your parent rewards you with gifts, holiday treats, and their affection). In the case of Bibliobandido, pretending to believe he is an actual menace means you get to have a role in a community-wide pageantry, make artwork with your friends, and get things you wouldn’t normally get like ribbons or colored pencils to decorate your pop-up book. If you’re one of the kids who brought Bibliobandido to other participating communities, you got the rare opportunity to leave your own village, see where and how other people lived, ride the bus or hike with your friends, and receive a sack lunch or novel snacks made by other people.

Elly Goetz described the experience of being part of the Bibliobando cosmology as akin to being in the Boy Scouts in the United States, only more fantastical, intense, urgent, and the most vivid fabric cohering the complex lives of the young people involved. Believing “as if” provided youth with the opportunity to act as civic participants and in doing so, critically reflect on that self-same social order. As Slavoj Žižek writes,

What we call “social reality” is in the last resort an ethical construction; it is supported by a certain “as if” (we act as if we believe in the almightiness of bureaucracy, as if the President incarnates the Will of the People, as if the Party expresses the objective interest of the working class...). As soon as the

belief (which, let us remind ourselves again, is definitely not to be conceived at a “psychological level”: it is embodied, materialized, in the effective functioning of the social field) is lost, the very texture of the social field disintegrates. (Žižek, 1994, p. 318)

In other words, for youth in El Pital and other regions, believing in Bibliobandido is simultaneously world-building (envisioning new worlds) and critical while maintaining cognitive and psychic coherence.

SUBVERSIVE PLAY, THE LOGIC OF RITUALS, THE CARNIVALESQUE

Since many of the Latinx communities that Bibliobandido reaches are Catholic, and since I was always fascinated by ecclesiastical structures growing up, my own interpretation of the Bibliobandido cosmology syncretizes a Catholic imaginary with broader anthropological systems of worship to give logic to various roles (e.g., patron saints), gestures (Bibliobandido’s return or ascendance), and histrionic sacrifices (e.g., the juiciest of stories). But as inventors of the fantasy itself, we willfully break and invent the hierarchy as we go, the triumph of play over power.

In the world of Bibliobandido, even spectators became folded into the world of Bibliobandido pageantry as witnesses, corroborators, believers, alibis, or deniers. Mikhail Bakhtin (1984) describes the blurring of spectator/actor roles in experiencing the carnivalesque:

In fact, carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators ... Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. While carnival lasts, there is no other life outside it. During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom. It has a universal spirit; it is a special condition of the entire world, of the world’s revival and renewal, in which all take part. Such is the essence of carnival, vividly felt by all its participants. (pp. 7–8)

Explaining the experience of time that Bakhtin puts forth in his writing on the carnivalesque, Michael Holquist writes,

Carnival must not be confused with mere holiday or, least of all, with self-serving festivals fostered by governments, secular or theocratic. The sanction for carnival derives ultimately not from a calendar prescribed by church

or state, but from a force that preexists priests and kings and to whose superior power they are actually deferring when they appear to be licensing carnival. (Holquist in Bakhtin, 1984, p. xvii)

Those who have harnessed the power of Bibliobandido have done so by allowing participants and the community to undergo a series of experiences markedly different from normative time. Through repeated rituals including suiting up characters, writing and bookbinding stories, songs, and more, youth prepare for and then experience a transformational experience.

ASSETS-BASED, INVITATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT-EDUCATION

Entertainment-education is a genre of scholarship emerging from the field of communication that focuses on social change impact. Entertainment-education typically employs media (e.g., soap operas, video games, social media) produced for consumption. The “medium” of Bibliobandido’s legend in Honduras has been two modes of high touch, low-tech media: real-time, in-person performative improvisation alongside a “rumor economy” (Wright, Stephen, personal conversation, 2017). Adopting the theoretical frameworks of entertainment-education, however, to include these kinds of media used in low-tech infrastructures like El Pital enables us to understand the conditions contributing to Bibliobandido’s quick uptake, or stickiness. For example, one assets-based approach of entertainment-education referred to as “positive deviance” shifts focus away from what’s going wrong in a community toward enabling communities to identify and amplify their existing strengths to solve problems in ways that may deviate from the social norm (Singhal, Wang, & Rogers, 2016). In Bibliobandido, community members sought to redress their community’s education gap through storycrafting, costume-making, and improvisations that engendered their creative agency and buy-in to the project.

A second strategy of “Invitational” entertainment-education upends traditional persuasive approaches, adopting instead a pull strategy that activates individuals’ willing engagement and active participation (Singhal et al., 2016). The secretive nature of Bibliobandido, its irresolvable poetic crux, and its porous invitation to participate in world-building ensure that youth and adults’ investment remained high.

A NOTE ON THE ARTIST'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY

As an artist, I draw upon my experience as the daughter of a Chinese father and Ecuadorian mother to inform my work producing creative media and public art with low-wage workers, immigrants, youth, and women. Pushing back against notions of putative objectivity, I work self-reflexively from within a system, foregrounding myself as an embodied subject influencing and influenced by my surrounds. When working with cultures outside of my own, I work only at the invitation of others, and communities that recognize their key role as hosts. I also only work with communities that have self-identified the need for creativity and who embrace cultural contact between local and outside communities.

In the case of the Bibliobandido public art and literacy movement, I was invited by the Library Club of El Pital, Honduras, after a key leader, Rachel McIntire, learned of my work both as an artist and as an educator teaching literacy through bookmaking to school-age youth. A US-born artist and educator from the United States, Rachel had been leading art workshops in El Pital for over a decade and was critically involved in the library of El Pital. The community's high regard for the arts was modeled by a number of community leaders including its founders, key leaders, and members who are predominantly from El Pital and the surrounding region.

Funding for my involvement in El Pital initially came through two bake sales led by Rachel and a group of high school students which raised \$700—enough to pay for my plane ticket and a year's supply of bookmaking supplies in Honduras. Later, Bibliobandido workshops in North America took place at the invitation of organizations who invited me to be a part of their community. A few times, the host organizations in North America offered me small stipends for my participation which I distribute among Bibliobandido teacher-facilitators in the United States and in Honduras. Many times, I would teach for free in exchange for someone looking after my toddler who has thus grown up as a Bibliobandido believer and secret agent. My involvement with the community in El Pital significantly formed my understanding of the preconditions for creative, transformational change which are explored throughout this essay.

LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

In places where Bibliobandido catches on the strongest, a few determinants have been important.

Involving Local Leaders

It only takes a few charismatic members within the community to get kids excited about something they may be uncertain about. In El Pital, besides Elly Goetz, two other key individuals played important roles to introduce me to the community and signal the importance of Bibliobandido. The invitation of Rachel McIntire, a long-time Un Mundo board member and artist-educator beloved by the community, ensured kids that they'd have a good time and signaled to parents that responsible adults were involved. Dolores, a self-confident mother with whom I stayed and member of the Library Club, introduced me to other moms and helped me find local resources.

Stakeholders' Ongoing Involvement

Buy-in from local teachers and parents also become important to shape Bibliobandido activities to help meet youths' identifiable needs in the long term. In El Pital, school teachers told us that they needed fun ways to encourage kids to edit their own writing. Accordingly, we invented "La Inspectora," a picky story eater who only eats perfectly tidy and grammatically correct texts (see Fig. 18.4). When readers meet the standards of this gourmand, they are rewarded with Inspectora's lip-smacking delight.

Authentic Youth Voice and Leadership

Second, youth-led leadership groups like the Library Club of El Pital root the Bibliobandido legend in what other kids like and give it an authenticity. At the Seattle Public Library, which in 2015 adapted Bibliobandido as a mascot for their digital media programs, a youth group provides feedback on curricula that we introduce and encourage local branches to adapt the legend.

Avoid Coddling, Embrace Grit

It's worth pointing out that in the United States, some educators are wary of suggesting that Bibliobandido terrorizes; they marvel how we could have

Fig. 18.4 La Inspectora played by Yaquira, 2012. (Photo by Marisa Morán Jahn)



been so bold in El Pital. I have often recounted that when we were first inventing Bibliobandido, some members of the Library Club thought that we should create a “good” character because the last thing Honduras needed was yet another villain. Others thought that kids didn’t need to be coddled (think of Roald Dahls’ delightfully terrifying stories). This group also recognized that kids love to pretend that they’re scared (e.g., ghost stories) and that mock fear can bring us together. In the end, the very reason for Bibliobandido’s success was because he’s a villain we all love to hate.

In *Hola NYC* in New York, there was one kid who was not terrified of Bibliobandido specifically, but terrified of masks in general. So we created a ritual wherein the teacher would sit down in the center of the carpet and ask the kids to help put on her costume—vest, bandana, gloves, hat, and lastly, the bandana. At the point where the kids handed the teacher the bandana and she started roaring, the kids would pretend that they were scared.

In a Bibliobandido-inspired adaptation intended for homeless infants and toddlers throughout Greater Boston, some social workers felt that the kids might be traumatized by a masked bandit Bibliobandido. The other half of the group felt that it was actually critical that these youth be allowed to experience these emotions in a safe environment because it allows them to gain confidence in navigating their own real-life situations. In the end, we created a developmentally appropriate variant named Mister Miss Match Cha-Cha-Cha (see Fig. 18.5). Because kids at this age are not yet processing along narrative lines, this character was said to crave patterns,



Fig. 18.5 Mister Miss Match Cha-Cha-Cha, 2018. A character who craves rhythm and rhyme but can't keep a beat

rhythm, and rhyme—but can’t keep a beat. The activities we created involved kids in recognizing, creating, and singing patterns to “feed” to Mister Miss Match.

Porous Authorial Structure and Mutable Roles

Creating a porous structure whose variegated roles provide community members with different ways and levels of engagement fosters community buy-in and agency within the legend. Allowing the roles to augment and accommodate new desires and needs enables the cosmology to dynamically expand. For example, recognizing that many young boys wanted to also run around with a handkerchief and cowboy hat, the Library Club of El Pital created a sub group called Los Bandiditos who were ostensibly the sons or nephews of Bibliobandido. They would often run ahead of Bibliobandido to announce his arrival or bring back news. At the Sugar Hill Museum of Art and Storytelling in Harlem, New York City, we introduced a new character named Jalapeanut (see Fig. 18.6). Half jalapeno, half peanut, this character reflects the ethnic hybridity of kids in the region and New York City as a whole.

Building Others’ Creative Leadership Capacity + Coda

Many often think it’s me that dresses up each time as Bibliobandido. I’ve always insisted that Bibliobandido should be played by others in the community. Figuring out how Bibliobandido would move, growl, and demand a sacrifice of stories—playing a naughty role, especially for women in culturally conservative communities—is transformative and renders the community dramaturgically self-reliant.

As for my role, I sometimes negotiate with the terrorist, receiving his written demands, interpreting his gesture, translating when he will return. I see my function within the Bibliobandido cosmology akin to John the Baptist, a figure who pointed to and announced Christ’s appearance. If John the Baptist is a witness serving as a transitional figure to Christ and Christianity, my role is as the bystander on the sidelines, mouth agape, pointing others to see Bibliobandido, believe, and play as if.



Fig. 18.6 The Jalapeanut, 2016. Half jalapeño, half peanut, this character was used to talk with young kids in New York City about the way that we are all “mix-ies” coming from different cultures. (Photo by Marisa Morán Jahn)

REFERENCES

- Bakhtin, M. (1984). *Rabelais and his world* (H. Iswolsky, Trans.). Indiana University Press.
- Castillo, M. (2011, October 19). Ongoing Central American rains a reminder of Mitch. *CNN*. Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2011/10/19/world/americas/central-america-flooding/index.html>
- Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*. Basic Books.
- Girard, R. (1977). *Violence and the Sacred* (P. Gregory, Trans.). The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Shanker, T. (2012, May 5). Lessons of Iraq help a U.S. fight a drug war in Honduras. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/06/world/americas/us-turns-its-focus-on-drug-smuggling-in-honduras.html>
- Sherwell, P. (2013, November 16). Welcome to Honduras, the most dangerous country on the planet. *Daily Telegraph*. Retrieved from <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/centralamericaandthecaribbean/honduras/10454018/Welcome-to-Honduras-the-most-dangerous-country-on-the-planet.html>
- Shorrock, T. (2016, April 5). How Hillary Clinton militarized US policy in Honduras. *The Nation*. Retrieved from <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/how-hillary-clinton-militarized-us-policy-in-honduras/>
- Singhal, A., Wang, H., & Rogers, E. (2016). The rising tide of entertainment-education in communication campaigns. In R. Rice & C. Atkin (Eds.), *Public communication campaigns*. Sage Publications.
- Žižek, S. (Ed.). (1994). How did Marx invent the symptom. In *Mapping ideology*. London: Verso.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if you modified the licensed material. You do not have permission under this licence to share adapted material derived from this chapter or parts of it.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.





When Your Audience Is Your Channel: Facebook for Behavior Change

Drew Bernard and Sarah Francis

As we write this chapter in the summer of 2020, a growing list of advertisers are participating in a boycott of Facebook. Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook, appeared before the US Congress again to testify on how Facebook uses its data and interacts with other social media applications. Questions fly through the news about how powerful Facebook is and how its applications can be used for harm and disseminating misinformation. But what if the same characteristics that make Facebook so effective for spreading false information were instead harnessed for social good? For years, nonprofits have watched as the Internet and mobile technology have transformed society and communication. They recognize the promise that Facebook and other social media hold for serving audiences and changing behavior but have struggled to use the platform to drive measurable, real-world, impact. Many practitioners still point to meaningless

D. Bernard (✉)
Upswell, Portland, OR, USA
e-mail: drew@teamupswell.com

S. Francis
Upswell, Seattle, WA, USA
e-mail: sarah@teamupswell.com

metrics such as the number of people reached or even fan counts to justify their investments. Yet platforms such as Facebook can be remarkably efficient and effective channels for delivering measurable behavior change outcomes. Founded by Drew Bernard and Sarah Francis in 2017, Upswell helps organizations tap the full power of platforms such as Facebook to create a healthier, more just, and joyful world. One of the ways we do this is by providing global health organizations with the strategies, training, tools, and insights they need to succeed.

IT'S ABOUT THE COMMUNITY, NOT THE COMPANY

Like all social media applications, without its users, Facebook is just a platform, an empty blue dot on your phone. What makes Facebook useful for behavioral change communication is that Facebook is a community. It's a place where people come to engage with the people they care about and who care about them. According to their 2019 financial filings, Facebook had 2.5 billion monthly active users by the end of 2019, the most of any social network. In July 2020, more than 98% of active users accessed Facebook through their mobile phones (Clement, 2020). Despite this impressive number, when planning to use Facebook, you must first do your research to determine whether people in your intended audience or the community you plan to reach are on the platform. Fortunately, Facebook provides tools that make this quick and easy.

Facebook is a channel where people come to find things they think are important or valuable and share them with each other. Trust in institutions is declining. In a recent study, just 41% of people say they trust mass media (Brenan, 2019), and only 19% trust the national government (Pew Research Center, 2019). However, all around the world a whopping 83% of people trust the information they get from friends and family (Nielsen, 2015). This means that it is more important than ever to get information to people in ways that lead them to share it with friends and family members. Entertainment-education programs have long recognized the importance of audiences discussing and sharing information about the programs with each other, using interpersonal discussions as a key outcome in program evaluation (Chatterjee, Bhanot, Frank, Murphy, & Power, 2009; Sood, 2002). Talking positively about a campaign can also mediate the impacts the campaigns have on social norms and behavior (Frank et al., 2012). Thus, a channel that facilitates sharing among friends is an ideal venue for entertainment-education programming.

THE AUDIENCE IS YOUR CHANNEL

Unlike traditional broadcast channels, on social media, content that people believe has value can earn far more exposure, as users share the messages with their community. This audience sharing not only amplifies the message and distributes it further but also makes it more powerful. However, on social media, the original content creator does not have complete control over the message. This is especially true when content is shared multiple times by multiple people. Indeed, Shi, Pooirsay, and Salmon (2018) identify multiple layers of sources of social media content including the originating organization, the technology platform, and the friend who shared the message. Because a friend becomes the source of a shared message, the organization's credibility may not matter as much for persuasion. Instead, people judge the content based on the fact that their friend found it valuable to share. When people comment on and counter misinformation on Facebook, their remarks can be effective in correcting audience perceptions (Bode & Vraga, 2018).

Because Facebook and social media are amplified when people share, social and behavior change campaigns on these platforms need to reconsider their audience. Move from thinking of your intended audience to thinking of the people who care about, influence, and engage with that intended audience. In other words, if you want to talk to moms, you'll certainly want to reach other moms who they engage with. But at the same time, you'll want to think about who are the people who talk to moms, and arm them with the materials they can use to reach out to them. Give grandma, grandpa, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, and friends content that they will find valuable to share with the moms you ultimately hope to reach and influence. Essentially, you are adding one layer of abstraction, or thinking one step beyond the actual audience to their social network connections. This idea of multiple audiences is already an established practice in some more traditional entertainment-education programs using broadcast media. Frank, Jodrell, and Smethurst (2017) found that for pregnant women in Bangladesh, the primary influencers on decisions for prenatal care were their husbands and mothers-in-law. BBC Media Action used this information to craft their television drama, *Ujan Ganger Naiya (Swimming Against the Tide)*, to target all three groups and encourage them to talk about the show and prenatal care. On Facebook, the key influencers are the people who care about and will share your content with your intended audience.

We took advantage of this leveraging in our “Ring of Fire” advocacy campaign for Population Services International (PSI) in Myanmar. Our ultimate goal was to persuade politicians to support financing of universal health care by increasing their understanding of the issue and motivating them to act. Our formative research showed us that four key groups influenced these politicians: their wives, their friends, their staff, and the news media. Through Facebook, we were able to target the first three of these audiences that were adjacent to the decision makers. We created four different audience panels on Facebook: (1) the 2600 decision makers, (2) the 2800 wives of decision makers, (3) the 5800 staff of the decision makers, and (4) the 500,000 friends connected to the decision makers online. When we launched the campaign, we targeted the three audiences of wives, staff, and friends. Within three months, those audiences shared content from the campaign more than 5000 times and reached more than 275,000 people. By its conclusion, the campaign had 10,000 shares and reached 429,000 people. How did we do this? By focusing our energy on reaching the audiences who influence politicians: friends, voters, and key constituents. We used advertising to reach those audiences so they would engage with, comment on, and share our messages. The politicians ultimately saw our messages but did not receive them through advertisements from our campaign. Instead, they saw the messages coming from their friends, voters, and key constituents.

THE POWER OF SHARING

There are three primary reasons that people share content on Facebook: (1) to define who they are, (2) to be of value to their friends, and (3) to make a positive difference in their community or the world. When making decisions about whether to share content, people consider how it will make them look. This self-defining consideration is not just about trying to make themselves look good. Instead, it’s a litmus test of whether the content will help them demonstrate who they are and who they want to be. For example, in his study of why Facebook users changed their profile picture to the red equal sign supporting marriage equality, Penney (2015) found that many did so as a means to create a collective identity supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights. Such sharing helps people to show who they are and try to inspire others on Facebook. The most important reason people share is because they believe the content will be valuable for their friends. This value can take many forms from

being informational and life-saving to simply a funny story that will make friends smile. More broadly, people also share content that can make a change in the world beyond their immediate friend circle. In this way, Facebook users are determining whether the content can have an impact, whether sharing is going to make a difference given how much information is regularly shared, and whether the content simply needs more eyeballs. People share content that they believe benefits everybody, not just their friends.

Taken together, that means that our job as content creators is to create content that your target audience can use to serve the people they care about. We aim to create content that can serve the person who receives it by enabling them to do something for their friends. In our work for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), we developed a tool to help content creators assess their campaign before they share it on social media. The tool asks organizations to rate whether the content is relevant for their intended audience, has high emotional value, and conveys its message without requiring much time or thought. It further asks the extent to which people who see the content will want to share their own thoughts about it, believe their friends will get value from it, feel it shows their friends something positive about them, and help them make a difference in their community. Running through this kind of checklist can improve content. But it's just our best guess of how campaigns will do. What you think is going to work is probably wrong, so we can use Facebook and our audience to improve the content before we share it widely.

FACEBOOK AS A RESEARCH TOOL

The Facebook platform allows you to conduct research to inform your campaign before, during, and after you implement it. As a formative process of campaign development, nonprofits can use Facebook's Audience Insights tool to learn about their intended audiences. For example, to promote iron-folic acid supplements, Upswell and our partners chose an audience of women who were in the age group of 15–49 and lived in the Indian states of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. We were able to determine that 9.4 million women on Facebook met these inclusion criteria (Bernard, McCullough, Francis, Holton, & Diamond-Smith, 2019). Once we identified our audience, we used Facebook to better understand what content would resonate with them. Facebook's Audience Insights

tool provided more information on women's education, job, relationship status, interests, and hobbies.

Rather than trying to pick the winning content and then develop few high-cost pieces of content, we worked with our partner agency in India, Rabbithole, to develop 104 inexpensive posts with seven different styles of art but similar messages. To keep costs down, we used memes and animated gifs to learn what types of content engaged our audience. Our production team placed bets in advance on which of the messages we thought would succeed or fail. We were completely wrong; one of the memes we believed was sure to fail received the second-highest engagement. The 104 simple messages that we tested reached over a million Facebook users. Together, they garnered 570,382 likes, comments, and shares (Diamond-Smith, Holton, Francis, & Bernard, 2020). More importantly, we were able to determine which of the simple posts resonated best. Through their engagement and reactions to the pilot messages, our audience taught us what they liked and believed was most valuable for their friends. Armed with these insights, we then developed more elaborate content: videos and stories to be used in our primary campaign. Don Green (2021) has called for formative research on entertainment-education narratives that includes testing multiple different versions that add or subtract specific narrative mechanisms to learn what works. As he detailed in his chapter, this type of intensive, multiple stimulus research can be costly and difficult. However, platforms like Facebook make it more feasible to rapidly conduct such tests. Our final campaign was based on audience-informed content.

Because our goal for these types of campaigns is measurable behavior change, reach (how many Facebook users were exposed to the campaign) is not a good early indicator of success. Instead, we focus on engagement. There is a hierarchy of engagement with likes and other Facebook reactions being the simplest and least meaningful way to interact with a post. Comments demonstrate a deeper level of engagement. By analyzing comments on our iron-folic acid campaign, we were able to learn that women had no readily accessible source for learning the answers to their questions about anemia, an insight that led us to quickly create a social media optimized website to answer their questions. Even more than commenting, the most meaningful early indicator of effective social content is sharing, whether by reposting the content or tagging a friend. This form of engagement increases the reach of the campaign and adds the source credibility of a friend recommending the content. Sharing messages indicates that the

content is of value to friends and families. However, we must consider the context for sharing and viral spread. Sometimes people share information that they see as wrong. When a local politician in Nigeria posted on Facebook that meningitis was a curse from God for having premarital sex, the post went viral by being shared extensively. Rather than immediately shutting down the spread of that misinformation, it was important to look at why people were sharing and what they were saying as they did. The vast majority of shares included comments denouncing the misinformation and encouraging friends to get vaccinations. It's not sufficient to use Facebook likes or share counts to determine what content works. Instead, it's important to understand exactly what people are saying and why they choose to spread information or not.

Additionally, we can use Facebook as a tool to recruit participants for surveys that we launch outside of the Facebook platform (Bernard et al., 2019). As COVID-19 spread globally, we were connected with the producers of *Shuga*, an entertainment-education show airing in Nigeria and South Africa, who wanted to learn more about their audience and what the audience knew already about COVID-19. We were able to quickly use Facebook to reach viewers of the show. We used a Facebook advertisement to invite participants to complete a survey that we ran on Qualtrics. We intentionally did not say much about the purpose of the survey, so that we would not skew the results. Instead, we simply advertised the opportunity to be heard and to receive a small monetary incentive for completing the survey. We were surprised to learn that 89% of *MTV Shuga* viewers were already able to accurately identify action steps to prevent COVID-19 they learned from the show. We expect to do further research to compare viewers to non-viewers. The Facebook platform allowed us to recruit very quickly and inexpensively for a survey that could inform programming.

Facebook analytics and advertising tools allow us to learn and evolve in the midst of the campaign. As we learn which campaign messages resonated most strongly, we spend advertising dollars to boost those messages to our intended audience. The more engaging the message is, the more cost-effective it is as people distribute it beyond the advertising reach.

BLACK DOG CASE STUDY

One of my favorite examples of this strategy in action is a piece of content created and shared by the World Health Organization (WHO) on World Health Day in 2016. In the months running up to that event, we

consulted with the WHO on how they could better leverage Facebook in their communication initiatives. After working with them to identify the key factors that inspire their audiences to share content with friends and family members, they quickly put them to use to address the stigma around mental health, the topic of their 2016 World Health Day. The WHO team created content that people can use to support people who are suffering from depression and released it on Facebook. Based on a book by Matthew Johnstone (2007), the “Black Dog” video was a four-minute narrated video with captions. The video incorporated the static graphics from the original book, so production was not expensive. Using the metaphor of a black dog to represent depression, the video said, “Because of the shame and stigma of the black dog, I was constantly worried that I would be found out. So I invested vast amounts of energy into covering him up.” It describes the author’s story of feeling isolated and his journey toward recovery using professional help. WHO shared the video on their page on October 7, 2016, with a caption that read in part, “If you are in difficulty, never be afraid to ask for help. There is absolutely no shame in doing so.”

WHO’s “Black Dog” video demonstrates the startling impact that sharable health content can have. Within days more than 9000 people commented on the Black Dog video. Many of the comments on the WHO post were positive and grateful for the content. For example, one of the early commenters wrote, “Great to see this video, hopefully it will help destigmatize depression and allow people to feel comfortable in sharing their challenges with others. There is a solution to depression, people need not suffer in silence.” However, some of the comments were less immediately positive. Another early commenter responded to the video that, “It sounds so easy. My black dog cannot easily be chased away as it comes with a red chronic pain ... It’s nearly impossible to keep the black dog outside the room or my thoughts. When the consultants shake their head and pain attacks ... life becomes very difficult!” The WHO actively moderated comments on their post, and they responded, “Thanks for sharing your story with us. We understand it can be really difficult, but talking about depression is the very first step towards recovery.” This active engagement with the audience yielded a positive response, “Absolutely! The discussion has got to start somewhere.”

This video about the stigma of depression, specifically designed for people to share with those who might suffer, was shared more than 36,000 times in the first 34 hours and more than 74,000 times to date. People shared it directly with their friends who they worried might be

experiencing depression with messages saying they were thinking of the friend and hoping the friend was doing well. In an exemplar comment in which one friend tagged another, she said, “our talks last Sunday ... this helps me make more sense of it,” and her friend replied, “Thanks for sharing this ... it still helps to know.” Shares like these were entirely organic with no money spent on advertising on the Facebook platform. In total, the content related to WHO’s year-long mental health campaign including its flagship Black Dog post reached more than 18 million people.

Working with a Facebook brand lift study, we conducted a follow-up survey to learn why people shared the video. Brand lift studies provide de-identified and anonymous responses to simple questions. With a sample of 460 people, we asked whether people had shared for each of the three reasons that we have found typically motivate sharing. Of the people polled afterward, 60% said they shared it because they felt like it would help friends struggling with depression, and 72% said they felt everyone could benefit from watching it.

BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED

These lessons are about the use of Facebook specifically, but as social media evolves, they will continue to remain true for harnessing the influence of the audience. The power of social media comes from the power of the people who are using it to engage with each other.

Use the ability to rapidly test, learn, and evolve to conduct research. The fastest path to success goes directly through failure. By testing a high volume of low-cost, low-quality content, you can gain insights that augment other forms of market research. Fail fast and fail cheap to learn which messages will or won’t resonate with the audience you hope to reach.

Manage your community. In using social media to distribute content, you are trying to arm people with material they can use to help you accomplish your mission. People are going to leave comments, ask questions, and engage with your content. Don’t leave those comments unattended. Based on our years of experience with social causes on Facebook, we recommend that you (1) like all positive comments, (2) hide comments that are irrelevant or threatening to other members of your audience, and (3) answer all questions. When you can hide comments, the person who wrote the comment won’t know they are hidden. If someone is attacking others, you can also block them. But generally, the best option is to write back and engage with people who comment. Your audience assumes a real

person is behind your page, so you must interact and respond. To help you manage your time in responding to questions, you can develop a script of likely questions and possible answers in advance.

Your job is to create content that the person you're sending it to can use to care for people. When you see that content is taking off and being shared, you can put ad dollars behind that content to boost it. Doing so is an extremely cost-effective way of spreading your message to a wider audience. Higher impact content decreases the cost of reaching your audience by earning additional exposure.

Let your audience inform your content. Don't fall into the trap of believing that you know what is best. Think of your audience as your partner in how to create the most engaging content. Evaluate your campaign every day, and keep changing to boost what works with your audience and abandon what does not engage them.

REFERENCES

- Bernard, D., McCullough, C., Francis, S., Holton, A., & Diamond-Smith, N. (2019). Facebook powered measurement and evaluation for iron folic acid health intervention in India. *Gates Open Research*, 3, 1536. <https://doi.org/10.12688/gatesopenres.13047.2>
- Bode, L., & Vraga, E. K. (2018). See something, say something: Correction of global health misinformation on social media. *Health Communication*, 33(9), 1131–1140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2017.1331312>
- Brenan, M. (2019, September 26). *Americans' trust in mass media edges down to 41%*. Retrieved from <https://news.gallup.com/poll/267047/americans-trust-mass-media-edges-down.aspx>
- Chatterjee, J. S., Bhanot, A., Frank, L. B., Murphy, S. T., & Power, G. (2009). The importance of interpersonal discussion and self-efficacy in knowledge, attitude, and practice models. *International Journal of Communication*, 3, 607–634.
- Clement, J. (2020, July 24). Device usage of Facebook users worldwide as of July 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/377808/distribution-of-facebook-users-by-device/>
- Diamond-Smith, N., Holton, A. E., Francis, S., & Bernard, D. (2020). Addressing anemia among women in India—An informed intervention using Facebook Ad Manager. *mHealth* (Advanced online publication). <https://doi.org/10.21037/mhealth-19-237a>
- Frank, L. B., Chatterjee, J. S., Chaudhuri, S., Lapsansky, C., Bhanot, A., & Murphy, S. T. (2012). Conversation and compliance: Role of interpersonal

- discussion and social norms in public communication campaigns. *Journal of Health Communication*, 17(9), 1050–1067. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10810730.2012.665426>
- Frank, L. B., Jodrell, D., & Smethurst, L. (2017). Social and structural factors to promote maternal health in Bangladesh. *Journal of Communication in Healthcare*, 10(3), 216–225. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17538068.2017.1313640>
- Green, D. P. (2021). In search of entertainment-education's effects on attitudes and behaviors. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Johnstone, M. (2007). *I had a black dog: His name was depression*. Constable & Robinson.
- Nielsen. (2015, September 28). Recommendations from friends remain most credible form of advertising among consumers; branded websites are the second-highest-rated form. Retrieved from <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/press-releases/2015/recommendations-from-friends-remain-most-credible-form-of-advertising/>
- Penney, J. (2015). Social media and symbolic action: Exploring participating in the Facebook red equal sign profile picture campaign. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 20(1), 52–66. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12092>
- Pew Research Center. (2019). Public trust in government: 1958–2019. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2019/04/11/public-trust-in-government-1958-2019/>
- Shi, J., Poorisat, T., & Salmon, C. T. (2018). The use of social networking sites (SNSs) in health communication campaigns: Review and recommendations. *Health Communication*, 33(1), 49–56. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2016.1242035>
- Sood, S. (2002). Audience involvement and entertainment—Education. *Communication Theory*, 12(2), 153–172.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if you modified the licensed material. You do not have permission under this licence to share adapted material derived from this chapter or parts of it.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.





Last Mile Media: A How-To Guide

Paul Falzone and Gosia Lukomska

We've spent much of the last decade thinking hard about how to reach marginalized communities in some of the most remote regions in the world with life-changing entertainment-education. Many of our audience members are overlooked by traditional interventions (thus the "last mile" in this chapter's title), so a little information can change lives in a big way. However, strategies to reach them have required innovation and invention on our part. In this chapter we will share the essentials of what we've learned and some of our successes and mistakes.

Our organization, Peripheral Vision International (PVI), started out with deep, ethnographic fieldwork in Uganda, and many of our case studies draw from our experience there. But in recent years we have used those principles of "Last Mile Media" to work with a broader array of partners and expanded to other countries, producing and distributing EE media that has been viewed, read, interacted with, or listened to hundreds of millions of times across dozens of countries. Over the course of this decade,

P. Falzone (✉)
Peripheral Vision International, Brooklyn, NY, USA
e-mail: director@pvinternational.org

G. Lukomska
Peripheral Vision International, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
e-mail: gosia@pvinternational.org

we've copied, remixed, innovated, invented, stolen, and been stolen from, all in the name of our ultimate objective: to make a better world using media. Though our work is informed by scholarly theory, this chapter is written primarily for the emerging practitioner or "pracademic" who is actively designing and strategizing media campaigns in the Global South. So, without further ado, here are our top "rules of the road" for designing and implementing last mile media.

DEFINE YOUR CHANGE

The purpose of a media campaign is never to save the world, but it is to change it, often in some small, but important (and preferably measurable) way. Think about five years down the road: when your media campaign has come and gone, what is the difference in the world that you reasonably expect to have made? The more we get away from abstract concepts, the more effectively we can design a media campaign. Too often in the jargon-filled NGO sector, we are tasked with goals that are both very broad and incredibly vague: "We want to improve health"; "We want to empower women"; "We want to build the capacity of civil society"; "We want to sensitize the stakeholders"; or "We want the public to speak up." When you dig down, you find that partners often have a hard time defining what precisely they are trying to achieve, and until you do, it is impossible to decide whether media is the best tool to achieve that goal.

Before you can even begin to think about what kind of media campaign you want to run, the first thing you have to do is to break these abstract concepts down into very specific, precise goals. Traditionally, media campaigns can attempt to impact three outcomes: knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors. For example, in the case of intimate partner violence (IPV), media might try to affect change in an audience member via knowledge (the audience member learns that IPV is illegal), belief (the audience member decides that IPV is wrong), or behavior (the audience member stops practicing IPV or actively reports/acts to stop others from practicing IPV). As you can guess, it is a lot easier to impact knowledge than behavior. You should also begin at this early stage to think about the complexity and practicality of measuring each of these three things.

As Don Green (2021a) writes elsewhere in this book, "It is clear that narrative-based media content often has meaningful effects on attitudes and behaviors, but rarely does one see profound and enduring changes." The "magic bullet" or "powerful effects" schools of thinking went out of

fashion more than half a century ago. These days we understand that media effects are limited but cumulative. I encourage you to read about Cultivation Theory (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999) to think more about how the media can add up to large changes over time. With that in mind, define your change, and be realistic about what you can accomplish with the time, budget, and technology that you have.

GET YOUR BOOTS DUSTY

While desk research about a media landscape is important (though often unreliable in last mile settings), it is no substitution for the field. And by “field” we aren’t talking about the hotel restaurant or NGO office. Too often those who work in development confine themselves to the usual spaces and talk to the usual suspects. The goal of last mile media distribution is to disrupt this model and create better, broader systems for reaching real people who not only claim to speak for the masses but also *ARE* the masses.

As Sheila Murphy (2021) writes, “Researchers and EE producers need to remember that for many EE projects you will work on, you are not a member of your target audience.” This means you must go to the places where your actual audience lives, works, and plays and find out from them how best to make a difference in their lives. Talk with them like the equals that they are. Your audiences are intelligent people who have not enjoyed the same privilege as many of us in this profession, but who understand their own lives and society and can give insight into their practices, needs, and desires. Finding out what your audience wants and what they need, learning what they already enjoy, whom they already trust, and how they already consume media, are essential in designing your last mile media strategy.

One great research site is the local market—not the craft market or fancy stores in malls, but the actual market areas that are rarely visited by elites or outsiders. Explore the clothing, DVDs, CDs, school notebooks, and other commodities where branding may appear. Pay special attention to pirated or bootlegged content that is locally produced. The fact that merchants went to such lengths to download and duplicate this content means that they perceive a consumer’s desire for it.

Getting our boots dusty in the field has been key to our work. We’ve counted aerial antennas in fishing villages on remote islands in Lake Victoria, watched action movies in storefront cinemas in refugee camps,

convened focus groups under mango trees, and conducted interviews in fields, marketplaces, and moving taxis. This experience helped us launch one of our most successful projects. In 2015 we were hired by a UN agency to distribute DVDs featuring condom PSAs bundled with popular music videos to ambient screens in Karamoja, one of the most remote regions of Uganda. What we discovered is that everywhere we went people had basic cellphones. It was their only media tool. They were using them primarily for phone calls and to listen to the radio. They couldn't read or write in their first language of Karamajong, so SMS was basically useless as a tool. When we got back to Kampala, our desk research showed that mobile telephony was undergoing an amazing transformation at that time. All across Sub-Saharan Africa, people went from having no phones straight to mobile telephony. But though it was leapfrogging, it was landing in a different place from the West. Smartphones were confined to the capital and to elites—those who could read and write, afford expensive technology, and had regular access to electricity to charge the energy-hungry smartphones. For the rest of the country, it was basic phones.

We spent months utilizing a design thinking process (learned from the Dutch organization THINK) to come up with a new way to use basic telephony as an EE platform. After much iteration and prototyping and more than a few misfires, what emerged was a platform that we called “Wanji.” The concept was simple: people can call a toll-free number and encounter a spoken “choose-your-own-adventure” style interactive narrative in their local language (“Interactive Voice Response” is the technology involved). They maneuver through the story using the buttons on their basic cell phone. The platform was meant to combine the aural accessibility of radio, the ubiquity of the basic telephone, and the entertaining and educational potential of interactive narrative in a way that was nationally scalable with minimal cost.

We established a partnership with an organization called Viamo, which makes deals with mobile network operators to provide free airtime for social good projects. This costs little and provides telecommunication companies with a value-added feature that helps them compete. The platform won an award from MIT and has since scaled to 15 countries and reached over 3 million callers to supplement campaigns on topics ranging from family planning to climate change-resistant agriculture to COVID-19 prevention. But we never would have come up with it if we hadn't gotten out of the city, gotten out of the car, and talked with the people we met along the way.

PLAN DISTRIBUTION BEFORE YOU PRODUCE

There are three core aspects to EE creation: research, production, and distribution. Too often, practitioners take an approach along the lines of, “First we will produce the media, then we will figure out how to distribute it, then we will figure out how to measure it.” The less your media campaign takes that approach, the more effective it will be. The elevation of distribution over production in our preliminary thinking about EE has been key to every successful project we’ve worked on.

While there are artistry and craft in the creative elements of EE, it is important that we don’t think of ourselves as artists. Art for art’s sake has no place in EE. The needs of the audience are paramount. And their needs will not be served if we don’t prioritize our strategy for how to reach them in the first place. This will also, ultimately, make your production process easier. The creative aspects of media campaigns are often the most time-consuming, costly, and difficult to correct. The more planning goes into the other aspects ahead of production, the easier, more focused, more impactful, and more cost effective your production will be.

We learned this lesson the hard way. In one of our earliest projects in Uganda, we targeted local “video halls,” or small informal cinemas that play action movies on television screens for patrons who pay a few cents to sit on wooden benches and watch. There are thousands of these video halls across the country; at that time, they were the only way to reach large audiences with video content in Uganda (Fig. 20.1). Our interviews revealed



Fig. 20.1 Inside a typical Ugandan video hall (kibanda)

that dramas and actions were some of the audiences' favorite genres, and they liked local stories. We also discovered that video hall owners did not feel they were respected in society, so we attempted to combine all these opportunities into a unified project. We produced an action-packed 20-minute short film that told the story of a heroic video hall owner who stands up to a corrupt politician when he rolls into town (the campaign was about political corruption and governance). We distributed DVDs of the video to hundreds of video halls, but the video got no traction in this format at all. Why? The video hall owners loved the film, but explained that they only show feature-length films and music videos in between films. A short film simply didn't make sense for their business model. In retrospect, this makes perfect sense. These were the local equivalent of movie theaters. When was the last time you paid to see a standalone 20-minute movie in a theater? We had designed great content in the wrong way.

We corrected this mistake in our next project. We talked to our end users and worked backward from that. The video hall owners played music videos between films to attract an audience to the next screening (they called this "the crowdpuller"). But the music video disks they purchased were often faulty or out of date. We also learned that other businesses liked to play Ugandan music videos (bars, long-distance buses, beauty salons, etc.). In all of these settings, a single screen reaches many, many viewers. We also studied the way that MTV in the United States launched; it took advantage of an opportunity in the new market of cable to make money on advertising by putting free content (music videos made by record labels) between the commercials.

We mixed this all together and created *Crowdpullerz*, a straight-to-DVD music video show that bundled the top 12 Ugandan music videos with public service announcements, news segments, and other pro-social media. We created a distribution network that delivered free DVDs every two weeks to over 4000 public screens (video halls, beauty salons, restaurants, busses, etc.) across 24 districts in Uganda. The business owners gladly play *Crowdpullerz* because we are providing content they want in a format that works for their business model. The project reached millions of viewers through more than 100 episodes and ran for 9 years until COVID made door-to-door delivery impossible. The reason it worked (and the reason it eventually ended) were shaped by the distribution context.

HACK THE MEDIA

Learn what tools your target audience already has, what media they already enjoy receiving, the messengers they trust, and then figure out a way to use old media in new ways. Don't reinvent the wheel. Remix it.

For instance, in 2013 we were approached by members of the Black Monday movement in Uganda, which sought to raise awareness about government corruption. Whenever they tried to hand out pamphlets on the street, they were arrested. We scoped media outlets and co-created a new outlet for them. “Matatu” minibuses are the primary public transportation in Uganda; in the capital they gather at a couple of central taxiparks that fan out to all corners of the metro area. We decided that this central distribution point could serve as an unconventional spot for last mile media. When talking to matatu drivers, we found that because the taxis were old, they almost all still had old-fashioned audiotape decks, but cassette tapes of contemporary music did not exist. We worked with the Black Monday Movement to create an audiotape format that packaged popular music with short informational segments on corruption and the Black Monday Movement. One Monday morning, instead of getting arrested trying to hand out a few flyers, unlabeled black tapes appeared in all the minibuses in the capital. The “Black Monday Mixtape” went out to more than 1000 matatus that week, reaching a much broader audience than their flyers could have done and with no arrests.

In another example, an organization approached us that was trying to show “farmer to farmer” videos to improve agricultural techniques in remote, off-grid villages. They were using “mobile cinema” kits (generator, projector, screens, large speakers, etc.) to show the films, but women had difficulty attending the screenings. The projectors they were using needed darkness, but women didn't feel safe traveling at night to a screening and weren't comfortable sitting in crowded, darkened rooms during the day. We began by asking ourselves: how are these challenges (sun, public spaces, remote, off-grid) actually opportunities?

What emerged was a tool that we called “Village Video” or ViVi (Fig. 20.2). It is a solar-powered microcinema in a suitcase that combines a low power TV screen, speakers, and public address system. Able to be packed up and transported on the back of a motorbike or in the flatbed of a truck, it was more durable, more affordable, and more transportable



Fig. 20.2 Village video in the field

than the microcinema our partners were using before. Importantly, ViVi works best when it is pulled out in weekly markets or other settings where women and families gather in public during daylight hours. With no other entertainment to compete with, ViVi could roll in and steal the show at these gatherings, attracting large crowds with its novelty. When our partners went to the field, they immediately saw female attendance double from when they were using traditional mobile cinema tools.

Our upcoming project hacks a format rather than a medium. All across Sub-Saharan Africa, imported telenovelas from countries in Latin America and Asia fill the airwaves. Why? The shows are inexpensive for TV stations to acquire and audiences like them. As one television executive explained to us, audiences are drawn to stories of “love and wealth.” We didn’t have millions of dollars to produce our own pro-social EE telenovela, but we saw an opportunity in the existing media landscape. We bought the rights to a Venezuelan telenovela, and “hacked” or “remixed” it by re-scripting, re-dubbing, and re-cutting it into an entirely different show that focuses on messaging around sexual and reproductive health, contraception, and female empowerment. The title, inspired by that network executive’s insight, is *Love and Wealth*, and it is scheduled to launch across Africa in early 2021.

“ENTERTAINMENT” IS THE FIRST E

Creating effective EE is a tricky business. How do you create something that is more like “candy with vitamins” than “chocolate-covered broccoli”? It is hard enough making something enjoyable, let alone trying to make it beneficial. And EE is tasked with both—usually with a budget that is a tiny fraction of a commercial production. We are set up to fail and are all crazy for being in this business. As Martine Bouman (2021) writes, “When writing drama for educational purposes, the entertainment comes first.” We know that people comprehend and remember through narrative and make choices based on emotion. So the content you create needs to move your audience. It needs to inspire them, to draw them to it on its own merits, to transport them. As Melanie Green (2021b) writes, “Individuals who are more transported are more likely to adopt beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that are implied by the story.”

In Uganda, where the median age is 15, young people will determine the future of the nation’s governance, but there was almost no civic information or news platform that targeted them. Our field research showed that music was their favorite media and that it also had a cultural history of teaching, originating in Bakisimba traditional music, which evolving into Kadongo Kamu and later into the Lugaflow genre of rap. In Senegal, rappers Keyti and Xuman had started posting YouTube videos of themselves rapping the news and calling it *Journal Rappé*. We combined all this and worked with local musicians to co-create *Newz Beat*, a weekly English and Lugaflow “rap news” TV show that reported on news from Uganda and around the world (Falzone, 2017). The show looked nothing like traditional TV news. Staid reporters were replaced by dreadlocked “raporters” who delivered news and editorial opinion in rhyme and flow. Bright visuals, swagger, and style all heightened the entertainment aspect (Fig. 20.3). Journalism is tightly regulated in Uganda, but the playful format read as nonthreatening and allowed us to feature edgier topics that never would have made the cut in a traditional format. But above all, the format was *fun*. We always put entertainment first.

The show was picked up by the top-rated television station in Uganda to air before their flagship news program on the weekends. We supplemented this distribution with online uploads, by making the audio available to radio stations and included the show on *Crowdpullerz*. The show ran for four years and became one of the most recognizable media



Fig. 20.3 Not your stereotypical newscasters. The Newz Beat team

properties in the country. Our internal analysis of ratings data showed that we were increasing ratings for the regular news by 16% on days that *Newz Beat* aired. It was also generating measurable changes in the audience (Shaker, Falzone, Sparks, & Kugumikiriza, 2019). But when music superstar Bobi Wine decided to run for president against Uganda’s leader (who first seized power in 1986), the government suddenly began to perceive popular music as a threat. *Newz Beat* was abruptly canceled. So be careful. Your intervention might be *too* successful.

LEVERAGE COMMERCIAL COMPETITION

One of the measures that we use to assess whether a project is a success or not is “do we need to pay people to distribute and/or consume this media?” If so, then we continue workshoping until a different strategy emerges. It is always better to create something that your audience wants to see and your distribution partners want to show than to force media down their throats. Your creations don’t necessarily require a business model (though certainly it would contribute to the sustainability of the project), but they should be something that your audience likes so much they may be willing to pay for it with their time and attention.

Our eyes are always on commercial distribution practices and, more precisely, on the needs of commercial distributors. The best distribution

strategies are ones that solve a problem for a commercial distributor. If you can provide material that gives these parties market advantage or cost savings, then you can leverage their reach for your own ends.

For example, over the past few years, we've been tracking how the growth of microsolar electricity has been changing media consumption in Sub-Saharan Africa. What we discovered is that there is a revolution going on, but it is a quirky one. As the head of a major television station in East Africa told us, "Solar is growing our audience, but mobile is eating our audience." What they meant was that wealthier households (who are more desirable for advertisers) have more screens in their homes. Mobile phones, tablets, and expensive digital and satellite TV have fragmented viewership within the home and shrunk this valuable audience for the major networks who do terrestrial in-country broadcast. Advertising dollars have fled to digital. On top of that, the recent shift from analog to digital broadcast meant that these television stations now have two or three channels to fill instead of one, with more competitors than ever competing for shrinking advertising dollars.

At the same time, the massive and recent growth of small-scale solar power means that their audiences at the bottom of the socioeconomic pyramid have been growing. Unable to afford satellite television, these new viewers are tuning into free television. With fewer screens and less jaded attitudes toward the media, there is also a lot of co-viewing happening among these audiences (young and old watch together). What this means is that it is a terrible time to run a commercial television station, but a great time to leverage their pain to reach those audiences.

When COVID struck, we determined that we needed a way to directly transmit health messages about COVID, elevate trust in science, and help reach kids who were out of school. At the same time, we could encourage girls to become more involved in science. So we quickly created a pilot and pitched a TV series called *N*Gen* (Next Generation) Television (Fig. 20.4). Africa has the largest youth market in the world and there had never been a science show made for them before. Major television channels in multiple countries signed the show based on the pilot, and by autumn 2020, *N*Gen* was launched on national television in Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe at zero distribution cost to us.

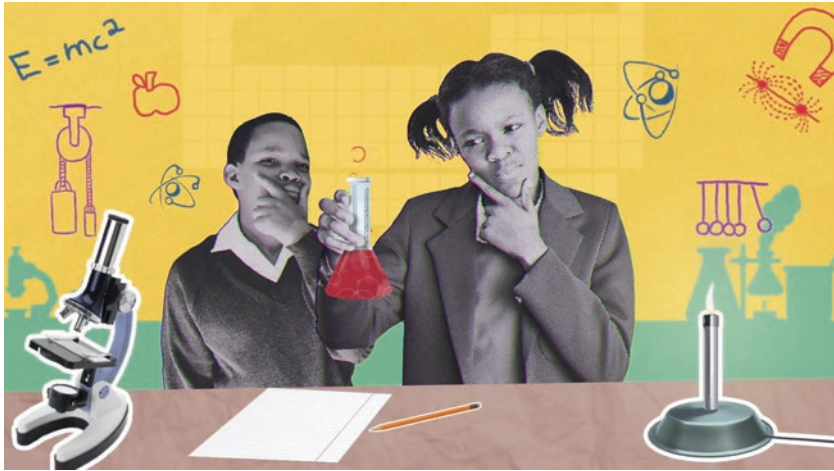


Fig. 20.4 Still from the opening credits of N*Gen

RESEARCH, RESEARCH, RESEARCH (UP TO A POINT)

Research is not a separate step. Ideally, it needs to be interwoven into every stage of your process. Prior to a project, you can conduct *formative research* such as desk research, focus groups, ethnography, interviews, and other methods that will help you to better understand your audience and the context. Prior to launch, you can *pretest* media, measuring liking, agreement, and/or comprehension. Focus groups are the most common method, but we've also used interviews and more quantitative measures like moment-to-moment dial testing. After your media launches, you can allocate resources to measure *impact* and *reach*. Common methods of impact measurement include panel research, surveys, and experiments (lab and/or field). The more you think about how you will measure impact from the get-go, the easier it will be to conduct this research.

Outside of digital, measuring reach is notoriously slippery, particularly if you are using multimedia, transmedia, broadcast, or “out of home” channels. How do you count views of a billboard? Or of 10,000 posters? This is made worse by the fact that there is simply no way to neatly parse views from unique viewers. If two episodes of a television show have one million viewers each, then did one million people see two shows or did two million people see one show? That's a huge difference, but common

methods do not reliably distinguish them. We've heard more than one tipsy advertising executive describe their media measurement as "smoke and mirrors." So be warned.

But while you need to research, you also need to make and distribute something using a limited budget, so you need to be conscious of the way that you allocate resources to research. Importantly, you have to be honest with yourself about *what* you are able to measure and whether what you are claiming is *true*. Media measurement is a murky business at the best of times, and donors *do not like to hear that*. They want to be told that X program aired on X channel, reached X number of people, and resulted in an X% uptake in behavior and X number of saved lives.

We've seen many cases where some combination of donor demand and/or simple lack of understanding of research biases results in clear but meaningless outcomes. The easiest way to create research like this is to combine a pretest/posttest survey where the audience knows what is being studied. Let's take the example of child abuse. You collect a panel of people; you pay them to be studied (perhaps call it a "transport fee"); you do a pretest survey on whether they hit their children that primes them about the topic; you show them some media that explicitly discourages child abuse; and you replicate the survey in a posttest. Now that they know what the study is about and what you want to hear, they know how to answer the questions to make you happy. At that point, you can run a variety of statistical analyses to show internal validity, and you can claim that your intervention decreased child abuse by 50% in X district. Did it though?

A century of theory and research has shown that media's effects are rarely so cut and dry. Impact can be difficult to prove, and relying on the literature can be fraught, as studies with ambiguous results or boomerang effects are rarely published or publicized. So be realistic about what you are able to measure and, above all, honest with yourself and others about your findings, even if they don't say what you want them to.

LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

In this job we are always working with too little funding, too little time, too few people, and too great a burden of change. The more tactical we can be in deploying those limited resources, the greater chance we have of creating media that people need and reaching the people who need it the most. To do so, remember these lessons.

Begin with Harold Lasswell's (1948) iconic "5 W" model of communication, which focuses on: Who (says), What (to), Whom (in), Which Channel (with), and What Effect. Begin to define these constituent parts when designing your own project. Define the change you want to see in terms of knowledge, attitude, and/or behavior.

Think carefully about the audience who can help create that change. Get to know your end users by getting into the field.

Question whether the media is the best tool to realize change. Find out what media tools your audience can access, what formats they enjoy, and what messengers they trust.

Design production based on distribution. Who already has access to your audience? Find their pain points and solve their problem in a way that benefits your project's goals. Monitor distribution to make sure what is supposed to be happening is happening.

During production, iterate as you create to catch misfires early. Create contingency plans for when things go wrong. Because they will go wrong.

Build research into every step of the process to the degree that budget and time permit. Be realistic and honest about what you can measure. Share your successes and mistakes so that others may learn from them.

REFERENCES

- Bouman, M. (2021). A strange kind of marriage: The challenging journey of entertainment education collaboration. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Falzone, P. (2017). Follow the beat: The use of digital media for youth-oriented news in Uganda. In P. Messaris & L. Humphreys (Eds.), *Digital media: Transformations in human communication* (2nd ed.). Peter Lang.
- Green, D. P. (2021a). In search of entertainment education's effects on attitudes and behaviors. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Green, M. C. (2021b). Transportation into narrative worlds. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lasswell, H. (1948). *The structure and function of communication in society. The communication of ideas* (L. Bryson, Ed.). New York: Institute for Religious and The Social Studies, 117.

- Murphy, S. T. (2021). When life gives you lemons: What to do when something goes wrong in your carefully planned research and how to avoid disasters in the first place. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Shaker, L., Falzone, P., Sparks, P., & Kugumikiriza, R. (2019). From the studio to the street: Cultivating democratic norms in Uganda. *International Journal of Communication*, 13(19), 1612.
- Shanahan, J., & Morgan, M. (1999). *Television and its viewers: Cultivation research and theory*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if you modified the licensed material. You do not have permission under this licence to share adapted material derived from this chapter or parts of it.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.





Epilogue: The Next Reel for Entertainment-Education

Paul Falzone and Lauren B. Frank

In this collection we endeavored to bring together many of the preeminent theorists, researchers, and practitioners of entertainment-education (EE) to make sense of the field's history and present moment. New technology has radically transformed the field since the early 2000s, and recent review articles have highlighted challenges and recommendations (Chatterjee, Sangalang, & Cody, 2017; Sood, Riley, & Alarcon, 2017; Storey & Sood, 2013). Thus, we asked each chapter author to answer some of those outstanding questions and to recommend practical advice, lessons learned, and best practices for working in the field going forward.

P. Falzone
Peripheral Vision International, Brooklyn, NY, USA
e-mail: director@pvinternational.org

L. B. Frank (✉)
Portland State University, Portland, OR, USA
e-mail: lfrank@pdx.edu

LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

In compiling the recommendations this volume offers, we have grouped them into categories on media channels and distribution, research, theory, message design, relationship building, and growing the EE field. We highlight ways in which they overlap or suggest contradictory directions. Some of the recommendations reiterate important guidelines that have long grounded our field, and others offer new suggestions that reflect rapidly changing media environments. These recommendations leave us with the question: where does the field go from here? What questions and developments will emerge, and what must be addressed in the next key collection in this field, whether that be 5, 10, or 15 years down the road? Prognostication is a risky proposition, but we would anticipate that the next collection will need to fill in the blanks that our own historical moment was unable to address.

Media Channels and Distribution

With the advent of new digital technologies, the case studies in this collection detail many innovative new EE formats that rely on digital and social media (e.g. Bouman, 2021; Sabido, 2021). Recent EE interventions use transmedia storytelling in which multiple channels tell consistent stories to reach and engage audiences (e.g. Chatterjee, Pasricha, Mitra, & Frank, 2021; Ryerson & Negussie, 2021; Wang & Singhal, 2021). Not only do we need transmedia campaigns that tell a single story, but also we need multiple different campaigns that all work together to affect social norms over time (Borum Chattoo, 2021). M. Green (2021b), D. Green (2021a), and Murphy (2021) call for more research to understand how much exposure to a campaign is necessary for change in knowledge, attitudes, social norms, and behaviors. As Falzone and Lukomska (2021) highlight, we must plan for distribution from the beginning of developing a new EE initiative. This includes considering which media channels are most appropriate and what schedule makes the most sense. As Bouman (2021) notes, audience expectations in the online realm are not the single new episode each week; viewing patterns have changed, and binge-watching is becoming more common.

What new platforms, channels, and media have emerged as distribution channels, and what unique challenges and opportunities do they present? At the time of this writing, TikTok is emerging as a popular platform, and

examples like the Vietnam handwashing choreography (#vudieuruatay #handwashingmove; see Chirinos-Espin, 2021) have already shown what possibilities this platform may offer to advance EE.

The advances of new digital technologies hold promise for innovative new EE formats. However, they can also leave behind those with less access to media. To reach these less connected audiences, Chirinos-Espin (2021) collaborates on music interventions with songs that resonate with audiences, Jahn (2021) describes her literacy work through live performances, and Falzone and Lukomska (2021) use basic mobile phones, off-grid, and out-of-home venues. What are the ethical implications of the digital divide? Are there ways to combine old and new media channels within the same campaign to reach more of the audience? Perhaps a new initiative by Johns Hopkins University Center for Communication Programs (JHU CCP) to promote malaria testing and treatment in Guyana will help to answer this question. They plan to use a mix of social media and WhatsApp, along with more static media such as DVDs and flash drives.

Research

Echoing recent reviews of the field (Sood et al., 2017; Storey & Sood, 2013), many of the chapters end with explicit recommendations for research. There is strong agreement on the importance of using formative research with audience members to develop and pilot messages. Moreover, Chirinos-Espin (2021), D. Green (2021a), and Murphy (2021) call for funding of and planning for outcome evaluation from the beginning. However, there is disagreement on exactly what kind of research should count as evidence for our field. While some scholars call for more robust designs that are better able to demonstrate causal impacts from EE campaigns (D. Green, 2021a), others focus on the need to adapt research methodologies to the realities of the field (e.g., Gowland, Colquhoun, Nyoï, & Thawng, 2021; Rosenthal & Folb, 2021; Wang & Singhal, 2021). Both sets of concerns are important, and balancing the two with limited resources is especially difficult. Laboratory studies (e.g. Ophir, Sangalang, & Cappella, 2021) can provide great insight into the processes that underlie narrative persuasion, but such research does not always translate to how people actually experience EE campaigns (D. Green, 2021a; Wang & Singhal, 2021). As Riley, Rodrigues, and Sood (2021) note, large changes in social norms cannot result from a single program, and indeed,

most rigorous study finds small effects (D. Green, 2021a). Perhaps iterative pretesting of alternative story features can increase the impact that EE interventions can have (D. Green, 2021a).

Studies of EE's impact are still largely dependent on surveys and self-report. It is possible that as more advanced measurement tools and technologies emerge and evolve, including biometric tools that are not currently operating at scale, we may have a more nuanced understanding of how persuasion operates. Bernard and Francis (2021) and Bouman (2021) highlight opportunities for using hashtags and tools embedded within social media for ongoing measurement of engagement with EE campaigns. Wang and Singhal (2021) mention the use of social network analysis to improve evaluation. There is also the potential to establish broader consensus or consistency across studies. The Participant Index (TPI), developed by Participant Media and the Norman Lear Center, attempted to quantify the relative social impact of films, TV shows, and online video in the United States and indicates a direction that EE might take. Is there the potential to develop generalized scales that measure social impact of EE in a more global context? Paired with a cost-per-impression analysis, such measures might put us on a path to understand the benefits of investing in EE solutions as opposed to other approaches.

Theory

As Obregon, Wendorf Muhamad, and Lapsansky (2021) note, entertainment-education and the broader field of social and behavior change communication (SBCC) value interventions that are grounded in theory. However, they and others call for more communication theories and question how theory is currently applied. Notably, Cole and Piotrowski (2021) recommend the use of information processing theories that already drive entertaining media for children. Incorporation of critical theory can also improve the field (Chatterjee et al., 2021; Chirinos-Espin, 2021). Many authors reiterate the need for multi-level theories and socioecological models that speak not only to individual processing of EE campaigns but also to institutions and societies (Borum Chattoo, 2021; Obregon et al., 2021; Wang & Singhal, 2021). From its inception, EE has focused on social change with a goal of impacting not only individuals but also societal norms. However, many of the theories that most directly ground EE interventions focus on individual message processing. Given the importance of talking about campaigns for how they create change (Frank

et al., 2012; Southwell & Yzer, 2009), our theories must better incorporate the viewing environment.

Riley et al. (2021) mark the need for theory to be accessible for practitioners. We currently have a large array of theories available, and we can look to many other fields to become truly transdisciplinary. However, we must always tie theory to practical advice for creating and implementing campaigns. Many practitioners rely on applied “theories of change” rooted in their local contexts that draw upon a few academic concepts without taking advantage of entire theories. Given that many of the theories available to the field were developed in Western contexts and focus on individuals (Dutta, 2008), this adaptation is unsurprising. Development and progression of theory should not live within academic literature alone. Going forward, how can we best adapt and iterate theories with our audiences and stakeholders to create overarching theories that reflect local understandings?

Message Design

As explained by M. Green (2021b), there are many possible ways to use theory to design effective EE content. Indeed, we will never be able to fully create a formula for crafting messages because novelty is part of what engages audiences. That said, the case studies here provide practical lessons that can guide content creators. Stories should make sense and be believable within the local context (M. Green, 2021b; Obregon et al., 2021). It helps if the educational content is part of the primary storyline, rather than incidental to the script (M. Green, 2021b); however, it’s essential to prioritize entertainment over education to ensure what your audience wants to watch (Bouman, 2021). Content that people value can be shared and increase overall exposure to the campaign message (Bernard & Francis, 2021). Although no clear pattern of emotional flow has emerged as best (Ophir et al., 2021), tapping into emotions can help to avoid being one more message in an environment of information overload (Chirinos-Espin, 2021). Characters who are relatable, particularly the protagonists, are key (Ophir et al., 2021; Ryerson & Negussie, 2021).

There is tension in how much the prosocial message should push for change. Ryerson and Negussie (2021) recommend that messages be tied to publicly espoused values of the government, but Chatterjee et al. (2021) note the constraints of not being able to fully challenge social norms. Perhaps the answer lies in relying on cultural advisors (Murphy, 2021) and

having the audience help to actually shape the message (Chirinos-Espin, 2021). Working from research, theory, and principles grounded therein, what new ideas will emerge to help creators design strong content?

Relationship Building

A recurring theme across chapters is the importance of relationship building. In order to achieve goals, a diverse array of talents is needed. Bouman (2021) highlights the importance of strong relationships between scholars and creative content designers, as do many others (e.g. Borum Chattoo, 2021; M. Green, 2021b; Rosenthal & Folb, 2021). Relationship building and local capacity building with researchers in the field are also essential (Gowland et al., 2021; Riley et al., 2021; Wang & Singhal, 2021). Notably, these relationships must move beyond the actual creation and implementation of EE interventions. We must also coordinate with the government and private organizations that may provide access to services that EE programming creates demand for (Ryerson & Negussie, 2021; Sabido, 2021). Falzone and Lukomska (2021) suggest that relationships with media companies should highlight ways in which providing content can be cost-effective for distributors and yield mutual benefits. Going forward, how can we ensure that the list of stakeholders is not limited to those with institutional power? How can we best include our audience as active participants in the co-creation of long-term relationships to promote social change?

Growing the Entertainment-Education Field

As many of the chapters in this collection illustrate, EE is tasked with the challenge of having to compete in a commercial marketplace, but bound by the twin limitations of needing to have a positive impact and being able to demonstrate that impact. This makes it more expensive to produce and more challenging to script than a purely commercial project. Chatterjee et al. (2021) highlight the importance of funding that is sustainable for long-term projects to allow for incremental social change. At the same time, because it is not driven by audience demand or profit margins, but by broader (and often slower-moving) funding mechanisms, EE operates parallel to, but separate from, commercial projects. This is a challenge and an opportunity. How will practitioners expand and evolve the

opportunities, while also keeping pace with evolutions in audience taste and the marketplace?

What is clear from this collection is that while there are many examples and practitioners of EE, they are quite disparate and disconnected. Many authors call for opportunities to share effective campaign frameworks (e.g. Obregon et al., 2021; Ryerson & Negussie, 2021; Sabido, 2021). While EE has standing in the broader field of Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC), there is no consistent conference that brings us all together. Since 1989, there have been six Entertainment Education for Social Change conferences, the most recent being within the 2018 International Social and Behavior Change Communication Summit. Both the Communication Initiative Network and Compass provide spaces for sharing SBCC projects and include sections for entertainment-education (Communication Initiative, n.d.; USAID, n.d.). It is only when we work together that the field can evolve as a whole, and more frequent direct contact yields such opportunities. The opportunity to grow our collaboration, share our tools and findings, and co-create more effectively is not yet fully realized. Doing so requires a more consistent community of practice.

PARTING THOUGHTS FROM THIS MOMENT

At the time of this collection, we are in the midst of a global pandemic and in the throes of what the World Health Organization calls an “infodemic” related to rampant misinformation, conjecture, rumor, and conspiracies. It seems in this crisis that there is a growing awareness of the power and impact of media on a population’s knowledge, beliefs, and behavior and a growing understanding that media and communication are what connect, bind, and potentially divide us. Media can entertain us and inform us. We anticipate that at this moment, we are in the dawn of a deeper respect for the power of media; media must be willfully and more conscientiously studied, funded, shaped, and utilized if we hope to create a better future. As entertainment-education scholars and practitioners, we can be a key part of that future.

REFERENCES

- Bernard, D., & Francis, S. (2021). When your audience is your channel: Facebook for behavior change. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Borum Chattoo, C. (2021). Entertainment-education as social justice activism in the United States: Narrative strategy in the participatory media era. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bouman, M. (2021). A strange kind of marriage: The challenging journey of entertainment-education collaboration. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Chatterjee, J. S., Sangalang, A., & Cody, M. J. (2017). Entertainment-education. *The International Encyclopedia of Media Effects*, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118783764.wbieme0067>
- Chatterjee, J. S., Pasricha, R., Mitra, R., & Frank, L. B. (2021). Challenging the forcefield: Crafting entertainment-education transmedia campaigns. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Chirinos-Espin, C. (2021). Music and culture in entertainment-education. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cole, S., & Piotrowski, J. T. (2021). Youth and entertainment-education. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Communication Initiative. (n.d.). *The communication initiative network: Convening the communication and media development, social and behaviour change community*. Retrieved from <https://www.comminit.com/global/category/sites/global>
- Dutta, M. J. (2008). *Communicating health: A culture-centered approach*. Polity.
- Falzone, P., & Lukomska, G. (2021). Last mile media: A how-to guide. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Frank, L. B., Chatterjee, J. S., Chaudhuri, S., Lapsansky, C., Bhanot, A., & Murphy, S. T. (2012). Conversation and compliance: Role of interpersonal discussion and social norms in public communication campaigns. *Journal of Health Communication*, 17(9), 1050–1067. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10810730.2012.665426>
- Gowland, S., Colquhoun, A., Nyoï, M. Y. H., & Thawng, V. S. (2021). Using audience research to understand and refine a radio drama in Myanmar tackling

- social cohesion. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Green, D. P. (2021a). In search of entertainment-education's effects on attitudes and behaviors. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Green, M. C. (2021b). Transportation into narrative worlds. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jahn, M. M. (2021). How to make a living legend: Bibliobandido as literacy movement building. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Murphy, S. T. (2021). When life gives you lemons: What to do when something goes wrong in your carefully planned research and how to avoid disasters in the first place. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Obregon, R., Wendorf-Muhamad, J., & Lapsansky, C. (2021). Strengthening integration of communication theory into entertainment-education practice: Reflections from the *La Peor Novela* case study. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ophir, Y., Sangalang, A., & Cappella, J. N. (2021). The emotional flow hypothesis in entertainment-education narratives: Theory, empirical evidence, and open questions. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Riley, A. H., Rodrigues, F., & Sood, S. (2021). Social norms theory and measurement in entertainment-education: Insights from case studies in four countries. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rosenthal, E., & Folb, K. (2021). Entertainment-education, American style: Informing and studying Hollywood's portrayals of social issues. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ryerson, W. N., & Negussie, N. (2021). The impact of social change communication: Lessons learned from decades of media outreach. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sabido, M. (2021). Miguel Sabido's entertainment-education. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.

- Sood, S., Riley, A. H., & Alarcon, K. C. (2017). Entertainment-education and health and risk messaging. In R. Parrott (Ed.), *Oxford research encyclopedia of communication*. NY: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.245>
- Southwell, B. G., & Yzer, M. C. (2009). When (and why) interpersonal talk matters for campaigns. *Communication Theory*, 19(1), 1–8.
- Storey, D., & Sood, S. (2013). Increasing equity, affirming the power of narrative and expanding dialogue: The evolution of entertainment-education over two decades. *Critical Arts*, 27(1), 9–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02560046.2013.767015>
- USAID. (n.d.). *The compass for social and behavior change*. Retrieved from <https://www.thecompassforsbc.org/>
- Wang, H., & Singhal, A. (2021). Mind the gap! Confronting the challenges of translational communication research in entertainment-education. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if you modified the licensed material. You do not have permission under this licence to share adapted material derived from this chapter or parts of it.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copy-right holder.



INDEX¹

A

Acompañame, 19, 25, 212
AdhaFULL, 266–268, 270, 271,
276, 277
Africa Stop Ebola, 125–131
AIDS, 27, 30, 180, 186
Amazon Prime, 43
Apple TV, 43
Arousal theory, 107
Asiatic, 184
Audience, 4, 6, 8–10, 15–18, 20,
27–29, 31–33, 35–37, 41–45, 47,
48, 53, 54, 66, 67, 70, 74–78, 80,
87–90, 92, 94–99, 106, 107,
114–116, 121–125, 139, 140,
144–150, 157–173, 175, 178, 179,
182, 184, 188, 189, 197, 198,
200, 202–208, 212, 214–216, 220,
225, 226, 228–233, 238, 245–247,
249, 250, 255, 256, 259, 261,
265–269, 271–277, 279, 280,
282–283, 285, 286, 311–320,
323–325, 327–336, 340,
341, 343–345

B

Bandura, Albert, v, 4, 18, 24, 25,
113, 124, 138, 202, 212,
225, 281
Bangladesh, 141, 184–185, 196, 313
BBC Media Action, 157, 159, 160,
163, 166, 217, 266, 313
BET, 41, 246
Black dog, 317–319
The Bold and the Beautiful, 196
BRAC JHSPH, 184
Brazil, 199

C

Caminemos, 19, 25
Capacity Model (CM), 281, 285
Caring Across Generations (CAG),
46, 49–51
Celebrity capital, 123, 124, 131
Center for Media & Health (CMH),
62, 74, 78, 78n6, 80
Center for Media and Social Impact
(CMSI), 45n1

¹Note: Page numbers followed by ‘n’ refer to notes.

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), vi, vii, 247, 248, 315
- C'est la Vie*, 142
- Civil society, 42, 47, 128, 129, 159, 324
- Color of Change, 46, 49–53
- Comedy Central, 45
- Communication for development (C4D), 137–142, 150
- Contest, 122, 127–129
- Contraception, 25, 219, 230, 330
- Control group, 198, 199, 201, 216–219
- COVID-19, 20, 130–131, 165, 166, 203, 260, 261, 317, 326
- Critical media effects (CME) framework, 9, 266, 268–270, 276
- Crowdpullerz*, 328, 331
- CSI, 52
- Cultivation theory, 54, 325
- Cultural strategy, 41–44, 50
- Culture centered approach, 122
- D**
- Define American, 40, 41, 46, 49–55, 256, 257
- Descriptive norms, 95, 181–183, 185
- Dhimbibba*, 27
- Diffusion of innovations, 178
- Digital divide, 7, 341
- Documented*, 52
- Dominican Republic, 139, 142, 144, 151
- E**
- East Los High*, vii, 23–26, 36, 228–232, 249
- Elaboration likelihood model (ELM), 71, 145, 230
- Emotion, 9, 33, 87, 92, 95, 104–108, 110–116, 124, 230, 245, 257, 306, 331, 343
- Emotional flow, viii, 92, 103–116, 343
- Engagement, viii, 50, 89–95, 97, 104, 106–109, 111–115, 121–123, 125, 128–132, 138, 139, 144, 145, 163, 164, 168, 170–173, 178, 184, 229, 238, 266, 267, 269, 274, 275, 277, 302, 307, 316, 318, 342
- Entertainment overcoming resistance model (EORM), 145–147
- Ethiopia, 26–30, 32–36
- Experiment, 35, 62, 68, 71, 79, 80, 108, 109, 114, 116, 196, 198n1, 199, 200, 202, 204, 205, 226, 228–233, 236, 237, 267, 276, 277, 334
- Exposure, 11, 70, 71n4, 97, 98, 105, 108, 116, 124, 148, 158, 176, 179, 181, 183–185, 197–199, 201, 202, 204, 218, 219, 231–234, 253, 255, 259, 276, 313, 320, 340, 343
- Extended elaboration likelihood model (EELM), 145–147, 230
- F**
- Facebook, 6, 42, 49, 53, 74, 76, 78, 116, 173, 184, 229, 233, 311–320
- Fake News, 157–160, 163, 165
- Family planning, v, vi, 19, 20, 24, 25, 27, 28, 34, 78, 176, 186, 225, 228, 233, 234, 326
- Focus group, 32, 76, 98, 160, 182, 183, 186, 189, 207, 214, 215, 267, 282, 283, 285, 326, 334
- Formative research, 31, 32, 37, 70, 77, 98, 148, 161, 187–188, 214, 266, 280, 282–283, 285, 314, 316, 334
- Full On Nikki*, 267

G

Grantham Foundation, 185
Guinea, 126–128, 131, 132

H

Harness, 46, 302, 311, 319
Hashtag, 130, 267, 274, 342
HIV, 3, 24, 27, 28, 30, 32, 33, 41,
105, 142, 180, 200, 201, 203,
225, 246, 249, 254, 260, 284
Hollywood, vi, vii, 10, 26, 31, 37, 40,
41, 43, 47–49, 51–53, 205,
228, 245–261
Hollywood, Health, & Society
(HH&S), vi, vii, 3, 5, 45, 48,
218, 246–256, 258–261, 342
Honduras, 293, 294, 302, 303, 305
Hulu, vii, 23, 25, 36, 228, 257
Hum Log, 19, 176, 219, 225

I

Ichchedana, 184, 185
Identification, viii, 36, 46, 89, 90,
106, 111–113, 115, 124, 125,
147–150, 178, 230, 231, 249
IllumiNative, 46, 50
In-depth interview, 160, 229,
267, 282
India, 19, 141, 179–182, 203, 217,
219, 224, 225, 228, 232–234,
266, 269, 271, 316
Injunctive norms, 178, 183, 185
Instagram, 43, 49, 52, 53
Intimate partner violence (IPV), 324

J

Johns Hopkins University Center for
Communication Programs
(JHUCCP), vi, 4, 341

K

Kaiser Family Foundation, 41, 246
Kwibhilya, 186, 187
Kyunki...Jeena Issi Ka Naam
Hai, 180–183

L

La Peor Novela, 137–151
Last Mile Media, 323–336
Law & Order, 52

M

MacArthur Foundation, 45, 45n1
Madam Secretary, 250–253, 257
Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon
(*MKBKSH*), 78, 176,
228, 232–236
Malaria, 341
Maleda, 27, 32
Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), 127,
128, 132
Medisch Centrum West (MCW),
66–70, 77, 78, 80
Meena, 140–142, 181, 282, 283
Meena Communication Initiative
(MCI), 140
Mexico, v, 4, 19, 24, 25, 226
Misinformation, 108, 110, 113, 116,
157–160, 162, 163, 165, 248,
311, 313, 317, 345
Modern Family, 251
Mozambique, 179, 182–184
MTV, v, 41, 45, 142, 201, 246,
317, 328
Music, 5, 8, 61, 70, 71, 104,
121–132, 181, 226, 326, 328,
329, 331, 332, 341
Muslim Public Affairs
Council, 46, 49
Myanmar, 157–173, 314

N

Narrative, 5–11, 40–55, 70, 75, 77, 78, 87–99, 103–116, 122, 123, 128, 129, 131, 132, 138, 139, 145–147, 149, 150, 158, 159, 169, 178, 179, 183, 185, 186, 197–202, 205–208, 213–217, 219, 228–233, 237, 245, 246, 249, 258, 259, 266–268, 270, 271, 273, 275, 279, 281, 284, 306, 316, 324, 326, 331, 341
 Narrative strategy, 39–55, 250, 258
*N*Gen*, Next Generation Television, 333, 334
 Nathan Cummings Foundation, 45
 National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA), 46, 49–51
 NBC, 39, 257, 261
 Netflix, 42, 52, 257, 261
 Netherlands, 5, 62, 70, 72, 74n5, 76
Newz Beat, 331, 332
 Nigeria, 142, 317, 333
 Norman Lear Center, vi, 46, 246, 247, 342
Nugget, 267

O

One World Together at Home, 131
 Opportunity Agenda, 45, 256
Ouro Negro, 179, 182–184

P

Panel, 4, 162–166, 170–172, 182, 185, 247, 250, 251, 253, 260, 314, 334, 335
 Pap test, 202, 213–215
 Parasocial interaction, 179, 258, 281
 Participant Media, 45, 342
 Participatory culture, 43, 48, 54, 284
 Participatory media, 39–55

PCI Media, 182, 184
 Peripheral Vision International (PVI), 205, 323
 Persuasion, 5, 6, 8, 47, 71, 88, 91, 92, 95, 104–108, 111, 115, 130, 178, 179, 228–232, 237, 313, 341, 342
 Persuasive intent, 90, 92, 109
 Peru, 224, 225
 Pillars Fund, 46
 Pop Culture Collaborative, 45, 45n1, 46
 Population Media Center (PMC), 23, 24, 26–37, 185, 186
 Population Services International (PSI), 314
 Propper Daly, 45
 Public art, 303
 Publication bias, 200, 200n2
 Public health, 27, 35, 70, 130, 238, 246, 248
Puntos de Encuentro, 142, 280

Q

Qualitative, 18, 19, 31, 36, 54, 161, 162, 167, 168, 170, 171, 176, 180, 186, 198, 199, 267, 268

R

Racing Extinction, 250
 Radio, 5, 6, 8, 17, 26, 27, 29, 31, 34, 61, 89, 124, 128, 129, 132, 142, 151, 157–173, 179, 182, 183, 186, 197, 200, 203, 204, 225, 226, 232, 233, 245, 267, 269, 270, 273, 274, 326, 331
 Randomized trial, 200–202
 Reference groups, 69, 177, 183
 Roma, 51
Royal Pains, 218, 254, 255

S

- Sabido method, 4, 5, 24–26, 31, 36, 115, 146, 225
- Self-efficacy, v, 6, 142, 180, 267
- Sensemaking, 145, 147–149
- Sesame Street*, 8, 20, 282, 283
- Shuga*, 142, 201, 201n3, 317
- Simplemente Maria*, 176, 224, 225, 279
- 16 and Pregnant, 205
- SudBites*, 74–77, 80
- Social and behavior change
communication (SBCC), 8, 137–140, 150, 167, 184, 189, 224, 227, 342, 345
- Social cognitive theory (SCT), 4, 46, 124, 138, 142, 145, 150, 212, 281
- Social-ecological framework, 140
- Social network, 169, 180, 183, 187, 229, 238, 312, 313, 342
- Social norms, 6, 11, 36, 44, 45, 47, 64, 122, 142, 144, 175–190, 247, 266, 271, 274, 302, 312, 340, 341, 343
- Song, 121–132, 302, 341
- Soul City*, 142, 280
- Sound Effects*, 70–72, 74
- Source credibility, 124, 129, 316
- Stigma, 146, 203, 205, 228, 318
- Storyline Partners collective, 46, 49, 51
- Storytelling, vi, 7–11, 26, 37, 40, 41, 43–45, 47, 48, 52, 53, 55, 62, 66, 69, 77, 78, 122, 138, 151, 178, 179, 184, 189, 225–228, 256, 261, 266, 284, 298, 340
- Sundance Film Festival, 50
- Superstore*, 39, 257, 258
- Survey, 28, 31, 129, 132, 159–161, 167–171, 176, 182, 183, 186, 205, 206, 214, 229–233, 235, 253, 255, 259, 283, 293, 317, 319, 334, 335, 342

T

- Tamale Lesson*, 213–215
- Tanzania, 225
- Tea Cup Diaries*, 157, 159–160, 163–170, 172
- Teen pregnancy, 21, 24, 36, 229
- Telenovela, 4, 18, 19, 24, 25, 142, 195, 196, 204, 212, 224, 225, 330
- Television, 3–5, 8, 15, 17–19, 23, 24, 26, 41, 43, 49, 51, 53, 62, 63, 65, 68–70, 74, 77–79, 87–89, 94, 95, 97, 106, 128, 129, 132, 142, 151, 176, 179–181, 184, 196, 197, 199, 201, 203, 217, 218, 225, 226, 232–234, 245–252, 255–257, 260, 266, 267, 270, 273–275, 280, 281, 283, 285, 297, 313, 327, 329–331, 333, 334, 342
- TellBlackStories*, 52
- Theory of normative social behavior, 178
- Theory of planned behavior, viii, 178
- Theory of the tone, 15–18
- TikTok, 130, 340
- Tinka Tinka Sukh*, 179
- Translational research, 223, 238
- Transmedia, viii, 7, 8, 10, 11, 24, 26, 37, 61, 69, 78, 151, 184, 229, 233, 265–277, 334, 340
- Transparent*, 218, 255
- Transportation, 5, 6, 9, 47, 87–99, 106, 111–114, 139, 146–150, 178, 230, 231, 249, 329
- Twende Na Wakati*, 225
- Twitter, 42, 49, 74, 229, 252

U

- Uganda, 196, 199, 206, 216, 323, 326–329, 331–333
- Ujan Ganger Naiya*, 313
- UNAIDS, 30, 180

- Unbound Philanthropy, 45
 UNDP, 180
 UNESCO, 19, 180
 UNFPA, 182
 United Nations Children's Fund
 (UNICEF), 30, 138–145, 149,
 151, 180–182, 184, 188, 248,
 266, 274, 283
 United States, 5, 23, 24, 26, 36,
 39–55, 94, 131, 203, 204, 224,
 228, 245–249, 252, 256, 258,
 293, 297, 300, 303, 304,
 328, 342
 University of Southern California
 Annenberg School for
 Communication (USC
 Annenberg), 4, 45, 255
 Univision, 45
UP2U, 76–78
 Upswell, 312, 315
 USAID, 25, 30, 127, 186, 345
 Uzikwasa, 203
- V**
Vamos Juntos, 19, 25
Ven Conmigo, 4, 18, 195, 212
Victor and Erika, 285
 Vietnam, 130, 341
 Vignette, 180, 185, 186, 189, 205,
 206, 217
- Villa Borghese*, 64, 66,
 68–70, 77, 78
 Village video, 329, 330
- W**
Washing hand song, The, 130
 Web series, 41, 49, 69, 71, 72, 74,
 226, 228, 229, 285
 WhatsApp, 187, 341
When They See Us, 52
Whole Society Strategy, 26–34, 36, 37
 Wise Entertainment, 24, 46
 World Bank, 19, 20, 30, 180
 World Food Program (WFP),
 180, 182
 World Health Organization
 (WHO), 30, 131, 177, 180,
 317–319, 345
- Y**
Yeken Kignit, 28, 33
 Yemen, 196
 YouTube, 6, 41, 42, 49, 51–53, 73,
 74, 130, 132, 184, 233, 274,
 284, 331
- Z**
 Zambia, 185–187, 333