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Editorial

Rethinking entertainment-education practice in Africa

By Eliza Govender

Gone are the days when educational radio and television meant a dull monotonous voice reading lessons over the microphone. Today, “Entertainment Education” has made educational broadcasting more attractive than your favorite soap opera. No where has EE been more innovative than in Africa.

Entertainment Education (EE), Edutainment, Educate-entertain are key terms used to describe the strategic and theoretically informed process of developing educational messages using a range of media platforms to facilitate a desired behavioral or social change. Arvind Singhal and Everett Rogers in the late 1990’s suggested that EE was “the process of purposely designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate, in order to increase knowledge about an issue, create favorable attitudes and change overt behavior” (1999, p. 229). Ten years later, Hua Wang and Singhal (2009) proposed that “Entertainment-education is a theory-based communication process 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 population” (p. 272-273). These transitions in defining EE are indicative of edutainment growing in scope of application and development, particularly in Africa.

Entertainment has historically been integrated into television, radio and popular music for decades, with some of the more traceable, well researched and documented efforts evident in parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Some of the early EE interventions addressed health and family planning such as *Hum Log* in India (1984-1985), and *Tushauriane* (1987-1989) in Kenya. The early 1990s saw the introduction of the television series *Soul City* (1994 to present) using edutainment to address health promotion and development issues first in South Africa and later in several Southern African countries.

Entertainment Education has increasingly been on the agenda of development agencies as a vehicle to relate educational messages to various audiences using entertainment and creativity. In this way, EE has often been adapted and financially supported for its ability to translate key development and social problems to audiences using mediums and messages that are more engaging, entertaining and receptive.

However, this issue traces some of the growing challenges, opportunities and questions that still need to be considered when exploring Entertainment Education. One of the key issues highlighted in this edition is the progressive applications of EE particularly in the African continent. The examples suggested in this edition indicate that EE has developed into a broad field that needs to consider many of the undocumented and unconventional applications of EE. This calls for academics and practitioners to rethink EE in theory and practice.

George Kingara's paper challenges the conventional application of EE, drawing comparisons between conventional soap operas and strategic EE integration in television series in Kenya. Kingara's work unpacks specific theoretical attributes in terms of para-social relationships, role modelling and functional narratives that are evident in conventional soap operas and this raises the question of whether EE is always a strategic process of integration into a storyline.

The Govender, Dyll-Myklebust, Delate and Sundar article challenges the conventional media forms of EE, highlighting that discussion and dialogue around development and health issues does not occur in a vacuum. Rather EE adopted in a television format is a catalyst for discussion through other media forms such as social media and engagement. Their work particularly emphasises Wang and Singhal's (2009) notion that EE extends to "achieve desired individual, community, institutional, and societal changes among the intended media user population" (2009, p. 273).

The work of Emma Durden highlights the challenges of integrating participatory processes and professional processes in the application of EE for television series. While there is an increasing demand for participation of various stakeholders and beneficiaries in communication processes such as EE, her work opens up the question of whether EE can really be participatory in its genuine definition. The work of Rafael Obregon and Thomas Tufte's succinctly outlines some of these key challenges of EE both theoretically and in

communication practice and they advance a new practice and research agenda for EE which addresses issues of subject, culture and social change. Their work particularly provides a theoretical stance for us to be mindful of in our future applications of EE.

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ELIZA GOVENDER



Working in the greyzone: Exploring Education-Entertainment in Africa

By Eliza Govender

Abstract

The field of Entertainment Education has seen many theoretical advances and challenges over the last few decades. This article tries to distinguish between what I term purposive and non-purposive EE interventions in Africa, drawing on the Singhal and Rogers definition that describes EE as a strategic communication process that entertains and educates towards facilitating social and behavioral change (Singhal and Rogers, 2002). This article focuses on the theoretical developments of EE but also the theoretical challenges particularly within the continent of Africa by focusing on what African countries are offering as purposive and non-purposive (EE) interventions, what is the common communication channel used and what are the key educational objectives or messages. In exploring these questions through an online literature search, this article argues that there are many grey literature and grey zone experiences of EE in Africa that can contribute to the theoretical advancement of the field. These often undocumented and grey zone experiences challenge our understanding of EE as a purposive or strategic communication process when non-purposive and non-strategic development of interventions reflect EE principles and EE outcomes.

Key words: Entertainment Education, purposive and non-purposive EE, mass media, social media and new technologies.

Introduction

Entertainment has historically been integrated into television, radio and popular music for decades, with some of the more traceable, well researched and documented efforts evident in parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Singhal (2013) argues that “storytelling, music, drama, dance and various folk genres have been used in societies for recreation, devotion, reformation and instructional purposes” (p. 1), setting out that Entertainment Education (EE) is not a new invention,

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but a timeless intervention. However the purposive application of EE as a communication strategy over the last few decades is an innovation with many theoretical developments but also challenges. This article will discuss some of these theoretical developments but also the specific challenges within an African context.

Entertainment Education was predominantly adopted in mass media initiatives during its inception years and usually took the form of entertainment and information campaigns that strategically educated through development programs. The initial combination of entertainment with education in television series were developed in response to several family planning issues that were a priority development and health concern for many developing countries. EE became a popular medium of communication during this time, with the television soap opera, *Acompáname* ("Accompany Me" screened between 1975-1982) promoting family planning in Mexico, *Hum Log* ("We People" screened between 1984-1985) addressing social issues of gender inequality, health and family planning in India, and *Tushauriane* ("Let's discuss" screened between 1987-1989) focusing on family planning issues in Kenya. These soap operas catalyzed further adoption of EE as a communication strategy, setting a foundation for several television series to follow (examples include, *In a Lighter Mood*, 1986-1987 in Nigeria, *Ana Zananna - "I'm persistent"*, 1988 in Egypt and *Sparrows Don't Migrate*, 1988 in Turkey).

Entertainment education in radio can be traced back earlier than the advancement in television to the radio serial *The Archers*, first aired in 1951 and was produced to promote agricultural innovations for British Farmers. Jamaica's *Naseberry Street* radio production (1985-1989) followed similar educational principles addressing family planning issues which later rippled in radio productions in Kenya (*Ushikwape Shikimana*, 1987 – 1989) and Tanzania (*Twende Na Wakati* 1993-1998) (Singhal and Rogers, 1999, p. 129).

This article explores the transitions in the definition of EE to provide a succinct overview of some of the theoretical advancements and challenges of EE in Africa. The Rogers and Singhal (2002) definition is used as a guide to distinct EE interventions (purposive) from non EE interventions (non-purposive). I term this purposive and non-purposive EE based on the strategic process that accompanies all EE development. A strategic process can be defined as the plans or actions taken to achieve an intended purpose, outcome or objective. EE since

inception has often been described as a strategic process with early research advocating that it is not a theory, but a communication strategy (Singhal & Rogers, 1999). It is this strategic process that distinguishes purposive EE from non-purposive EE interventions. This poses the question if a programme developer or facilitator has not purposively included entertainment with education, can this still be EE?

Using this definition, the article investigates which African countries offer interventions that are considered to firstly both entertain and educate. Secondly the medium of communication used to implement interventions that are both entertaining and educating in Africa. Thirdly, the specific purposes of interventions that seek to entertain and educate, in other words, what are the core objectives of these initiatives. These three key areas align with the definition that EE is a strategic process that purposively combines entertainment and education to facilitate social and behavior change. In assessing what interventions have educational and entertainment components, uses a strategic process or a communication channel for a specific behavioral or social change outcome in Africa, it will provide a broader landscape of what purposive and non-purposive EE interventions are taking place in Africa.

These specific questions were explored through an online search for EE articles using Google scholar and academic databases. Three researchers conducted online searches for these articles and their findings were tabulated and cross-checked to ensure the database of articles were extensive but not repetitive. Keywords such as *entertainment-education in Africa*, *African edutainment projects*, *EE interventions in Africa*, *EE programs in Africa* were used to identify potential articles. A second level of online research was conducted by using these key words in conjunction with names of African countries, some of these countries included South Africa, Ghana, Tanzania, Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Sudan.

EE interventions and programs were evident in several African countries, however many were often under-researched or undocumented and did not employ a purposive entertainment education strategy as suggested by the definition. This review highlights these contradictions in the field of EE, pointing out some of

highlighting the purposive and non-purposive work conducted using entertainment and education, this article hopes to promote the importance of the experiences of the grey zone in understanding the theoretical and practical applications of EE. Before these African examples are explored, a brief discussion of the theoretical development of the field of EE is offered.

Theoretical developments of Entertainment Education

The rising tide of the entertainment industry and its ability to engage and communicate with audiences suggest that entertainment can be the most pervasive mass media genre to inform people on how to dress, speak, think and behave (Browne, 1983). The influence of entertainment is therefore recognized for its value in education specifically for its ability to advance the health and developmental agendas, especially in cases where an educational programs alone fails to attract, maintain and engage with viewers. The initial EE definition posed by Rogers and Singhal (1990) suggests that “the entertainment-education strategy amounts to intentionally inserting educational content in entertainment messages, whether in radio, television, print or popular music” (p. 176). The key to EE here, is the intentional adoption of entertainment with education messages through a medium that reaches an audience.

During the emergence of EE several key attributes for its success were offered by Singhal and Rogers and can be summarized to suggest that entertainment and education must combine to form an integrated communication approach that allows for repetition of messages, and the use of role models to promote messages that are educational and comprehensible for the audience (1990, p.180-181). These initial observations suggested that EE was more than educational messages but also about role modeling positive behavior. EE was then seen as “the process of purposely designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate, in order to increase knowledge about an issue, create favorable attitudes and change overt behavior” (Singhal & Rogers, 1999, p. 229). This definition evolved to recognize that EE required media messages to achieve both entertainment and education and align with objectives of addressing the popular knowledge, attitude and practice studies (KAP). It further suggested that purposive or the intentional application of entertainment and education had to promote specific outcomes or behavioral practices.

the well-researched and documented EE efforts, but also those interventions that remain undocumented and under researched yet

This focus on behavior change by addressing the knowledge, attitude and practices of the audiences later advanced to rethink the focus on individual theories to a more multilevel and contextual theoretical explanation (McKinlay & Marceau, 1999; Airhihenbuwa & Obregon, 2000). This catered for further theoretical development around the variability in EE by asking questions about different contexts that need to be considered, deliberated the resistance that EE could face through message production, the message environment and the message reception, focused on the “rhetorical, play, and affective aspects of E-E, and the need to utilize methodological pluralism when evaluating EE interventions (Singhal & Rogers, 2002, p. 126-127).

Singhal *et.al* (2003) based on these theoretical developments proposed that the purpose of EE is to: “increase audience members’ knowledge about an issue, create favorable attitudes, shift social norms, and change the overt behavior of individuals and communities” (p. 289). From this perspective, they argued that “entertainment-education is not a theory of communication, but rather a strategy used to disseminate ideas to bring about behavioral and social change” (Singhal & Rogers, p. 117). The main purpose of EE programs were to then combine both commercial and social interests (Singhal & Brown, 1996) and work through the individual, community and society levels to contribute to the process of direct social change (Singhal *et.al*, 2004, p. 289). These evolving definitions of EE indicate that although EE was a strategic communication process, it was increasingly recognized as an empirically and methodologically tested process, informed and shaped by extensive theory.

The theoretical development of EE posed by Singhal and Rogers (1999, 2002), echoes similar trends identified by Tufte (2005). Tufte documents the transition in EE over the last few decades into three distinct generations. The first generation was labeled the *marketing of social behavior* with a focus on how to convey messages to promote behavioral change with the lack of information identified as the key problem that had to be addressed. The second generation of EE was termed as *bridging of paradigms* as it extended beyond the focus on the individual to more societal change, identifying the structural problems and societal change and the need to use participatory approaches to address issues of behavior change. The third generation of EE focused

on the *empowerment and structural change* which focuses on “problem identification, social critique, debate, challenging power relations and advocating for social change” (Tufte, 2005, p. 166). These three generations identified by Tufte confirm the theoretical development identified by Singhal and Rogers in that they both argue in favor of revisiting the historical application of EE, to cater for a more contextually relevant, well researched, people-oriented, audience specific approach to EE.

EE today has set a footprint in the field of communication research and practice as a mediator between deep social issues and challenges in communicating about these issues. It further suggests that the “tide of EE research and practice is on the rise – with increasing intensity and extensity” (Singhal, 2013) as it continues to explore new ways of using old and new media, particularly exploring the role of new digital media. The popularity and accessibility of the digital media has increased the potential for interactive engagement. Singhal (2013) points out that the popularity of this digital face, increases the possibilities for interactive entertainment and ultimately causes a reformulation in how we define EE. Hua Wang and Singhal (2009) therefore propose that:

Entertainment-education is a theory-based communication theory 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 population (p. 272-273).

This definition epitomizes the transitions in EE that now emphasizes the creation, production and dissemination of social and educational content through information, communication and technology mediums to the intended media user. Understanding EE within this extended framework suggests that it is becoming more impossible to separate communication and technological trends from how we engage with audiences and more specifically how we integrate entertainment and education for development. With communication technologies becoming increasingly accessible, portable and affordable (Vorderer and Ritterfeld, 2009), it builds on the role model theories of Bandura

for mass-mediated EE to a digital role modeling engagement where the players can “actively ‘role-take their own journeys of exploration, experimentation and discovery” (Singhal 2013, p. 4; Peng & Lui 2008, Wang & Singhal, 2009).

This interactive entertainment suggests the cognitive process of learning and acquiring knowledge is not the main focus of the strategy, but rather the *incidental form of learning* through narratives and role modeling (see Sood, Witte & Menard, 2004). It is this *incidental form of learning* that grabs the viewers’ attention, through parasocial interaction, a process that develops a relationship with characters by association of similar behavior and social circumstances (Renes *et.al*, 2011). It is through this process of parasocial engagement, that EE works best to establish an interaction between viewers, characters and their experiences (Sood *et, al*, 2003), and therefore setting the scene for some effects on awareness, knowledge and behavior (Moyer-Guse, 2008). EE’s ability to use the process of incidental learning can create an appeal among viewers to identify the commonalities of their social circumstances, identify with the characters and enact relevant positive behavioral choices. This incidental learning then tends to interchange between purposive and non-purposive EE as knowledge acquisition is not the central focus of the strategy but rather creating possibilities for learning through role-modeling. These sort of studies and intensive research that depicts the cutting-edge transitions in the application of entertainment and education for social and behavior change in indicative of a diverse theoretical base on which EE draws in terms of its communication approach.

Storey and Sood (2013) reiterate that “EE has emerged as a distinct area of research and practice....because it operates at the cutting edge of social change” (p. 11). What is evident from these very writings, is that the theoretical and practical implications for EE is ever evolving and while EE has advanced in modern scholarship and practice it at the same time ‘reveals significant challenges, particularly relating to advancing the next generation of EE scholars and practitioners’ (Storey & Sood, 2013, p. 11).

While there is still evidence of the strategic integration of entertainment with education, EE has contributed to a wider discourse and development of the field, by drawing from various theories, but also contributing to its own theoretical developments in the field. EE as a strategic process over the years has adopted principles from the social

cognitive theory, storytelling, influence of the narrative, persuasion theory and extended parallel process model, yet in turn it has generated a theoretical foundation that stabilizes EE as a field, that develops beyond just a strategic process to a theoretical basis from which EE can be adapted and applied to other communication research. Hence from the first definition of EE offered by Singhal and Rogers in 1990, this notion of the strategic process of EE, has magnified its influence to evolve into what I consider its own theoretical positioning in communication research. This is evident in the new definition posited by Wang and Singhal (2009), where they distinctly redefine EE as a theory based approach. This demonstrates the evolution of the field of EE from a strategic process that often drew on other theoretical developments, to one that is now re-shaping those theoretical developments from a communication perspective. Below is a brief discussion of some of the key findings of EE interventions in Africa, with a particular focus on those that can be considered non-purposive EE, yet they promote social and development agendas.

EE interventions and programs in African countries

A review of purposive and non-purposive EE interventions was conducted using some of the key words posed by the Singhal and Rogers (2002) definition to map the EE landscape across all countries in Africa. The review indicated that EE interventions was purposely designed and implemented predominantly in Southern and East Africa, with some purposive application of EE in West Africa. Eighteen EE purposive interventions were identified in Africa that were documented and researched. By documented and researched this article makes reference to the publication of work related to EE in Africa in peer reviewed journals or book chapters.

Some of these purposive EE interventions in East Africa included *Ashreat Al Asmal* (Sails of Hope) in Sudan, *Journey of Life* and *March* in Ethiopia, *Young, Empowered and Healthy* in Uganda, *The Team* in Kenya, and *Twende na Wakati* (Lets go with the Times) and *Femina* in Tanzania. Ten of the 18 purposively designed EE interventions were evident in Southern African countries like Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Botswana, Namibia and South Africa. Seven of the ten EE interventions were specifically evident in South Africa (*Takalani Sesame*, *Tsha Tsha*, *Yizo, Yziso*, *4Play: Sex Tips for Girls*, *Intersexions*, *DramAidE* and *Soul City*), indicating a wide application of EE in South

Africa. Other purposive EE programmes include *Makgabaneng* (Botswana), *MARCH* (Zimbabwe and Botswana), *the Suzie and Shafa Show* (Namibia) and *Soul City* (Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi). The application of EE in West Africa seems to be scarce with only evidence of purposive EE interventions in Ghana through *MARCH* and *Stop AIDS, loveLife* interventions.

While there seems to be a more saturated application of EE in Southern Africa compared to other regions, there is also a greater and influential presence of EE in Africa that are not succinctly documented or explored in academic literature. It is beyond the scope of this study to document all these grey zone work or grey literature in Africa but during this research 12 examples were continuously identified (highlighted in grey in the table below).

Of these twelve examples, two cases were evident in Southern Africa (*MoRaba Mobile Game* in South Africa, *Creative Arts for Youth HIV and AIDS prevention* in Mozambique), five programs in West Africa (*Bino & Fino* in Nigeria, *Presidents Malaria Initiative* in Liberia, *Police Case* in Sierra Leone, *Hen Mpoana* in Ghana and *Voice Program* in Congo) and five in East Africa (*Tuitange Mothers Support & Drama Group* and *Pikabom Puppet Show* in Tanzania, *Sambaza Peace Game* and *Shuga: Love, Sex & Money Radio Drama* in Kenya, and *The gender roles, equality and transformation project* in Uganda). This suggests that while West Africa had fewer cases of purposive EE interventions, there was still evidence of the application of entertaining and educating interventions that were not purposively identified as having a strategic process to entertain and educate within this region. I have termed this non-purposive EE where an intervention is identified as applying the integration of entertainment and education for social and behavior change, even if this was not the intentional application of the developers. This was found in a comparative study conducted on EE interventions between two soap operas, *EastEnders* and *Isidingo* in the UK and South Africa respectively. The study found that even though it was not the explicit intention of the producers to include educational information with an entertaining storyline, the audiences identified the strong educational content through this entertainment medium which promoted specific social and behavioral change outcomes (Cardey, Govender *et.al*, 2013).

EE intervention	Country	Communication medium	Intention of EE intervention
Soul City	South Africa Zimbabwe Malawi , Zambia	Mass media: TV, radio Participatory: Soul Buddyz clubs & community workshops	HIV & AIDS, Domestic violence, Health and wellbeing, Gender abuse
Iwende na Wakati (Let's go with the times)	Tanzania	Mass media: radio	HIV & AIDS
Makgabaneng	Botswana	Mass media: Radio	HIV & AIDS
Journey of Life	Ethiopia	Mass media: radio	HIV & AIDS
MARCH	Ghana, Zimbabwe, Botswana,E thiopia	Mass media: Radio	HIV & AIDS
Junction Juniors (part of the Know Zone show)	Kenya	Mass Media: Television	Know Zone: supporting Junction Juniors: social issues, bullying, human rights, corruption
Ashreat Al Asmal (Sails of Hope)	Sudan	Mass media: radio	Female genital cutting, HIV & AIDS prevention, gender inequality
Takalani Sesame	South Africa	Multi-media: television, radio, puppetry	Early learning experiences of children, HIV & AIDS, numeracy, literacy, life skills
Tsha Tsha	South Africa	Mass media: TV participatory workshops in communities	HIV & AIDS
Yizo Yizo	South Africa	Mass media: TV	Education

MoRaba Mobile Game	South Africa	Mass media: cellphones	Gender-based violence
Bino and Fino	Nigeria	Mass media: television cartoon	Educational content for children –arithmetic, literacy, African songs, history
Presidents Malaria Initiative (PMI)	Liberia	Mass media: television and radio Participatory – music and drama	Malaria
Police Case	Sierra Leone	Mass media: television, Facebook	Domestic violence, women rights
Fuitange Mothers Support & Drama Group	Tanzania	Participatory drama	Mother-to-child transmission
Sambaza Peace Game	Kenya	Mass media (cell phones)	Peace and non-violence
Voter opinion & involvement through civic education (voice)	Congo	Mass media: radio, participatory (eg: music & community outreach)	Peace & non-violence
Pikabom Puppet Show	Tanzania	TV	Variety of social and political issues
Shuga: Love, Sex & Money Radio Drama	Kenya	Radio	HIV & AIDS
Creative Arts for Youth HIV & AIDS Prevention	Mozambique	Comics and music	HIV & AIDS
The gender roles, equality and transformation project	Uganda	Mass media: radio, participatory – grassroots mobilisation	Gender inequality & reproductive health
Hen Mpoana	Ghana	Radio, community campaigns	Pollution and environmental sustainability

Education focus of EE interventions and programs in Africa

Whilst family planning was the central focus of many EE interventions in the early 1970's, HIV/AIDS featured as a predominant development and health issue with many African countries. This was supported by programmes that addressed issues of Domestic violence, Gender abuse, Bullying, Human rights and Corruption among others (refer to table for more issues addressed). In many of the programs that purposively used EE principles, the primary focus of their intervention centered around issues of HIV & AIDS (see examples from South Africa, Tanzania, Botswana, Ghana, Sudan, Kenya, Namibia and Uganda), with some focus on issues of domestic violence, health and wellbeing and gender based violence (*Soul City*, Southern Africa and *Femina* in Tanzania). *Junction Juniors*, part of the *Know Zone Show* in Kenya also addressed issues of bullying, human rights and corruption, with *Takalani Sesame* and *Yizo Yizo* in South Africa having a broader focus on numeracy, literacy, life skills and education for children and young people.

In some cases, EE interventions used HIV and AIDS discussions to further unpack other key health and development issues. *Ashreat Al Amal* (Sails of Hope), an EE radio broadcast in the Sudan (2004-2006) for example, used dramatic storylines to convey educational messages on HIV prevention, with topics of gender equality and female genital cutting (Greiner, Singhal and Hurlburt, 2007). *Tsha Tsha*, a South African entertainment education television programme, broadcast in Xhosa focuses on problems faced by young South Africans today (Tobi *et al*, 2004), and aims to help young people identify problems, develop solutions and encourages them to take the appropriate action to bring about positive change (Hajiyiannis & Jugbaran, 2005). *Tsha Tsha* focuses not only on the HIV virus but also on how it is connected to wider social issues such as poverty, or how it affects family structures (Hajiyiannis & Jugbaran, 2005). HIV and AIDS in many cases remained the central focus on EE interventions, but it was in most cases integrated into a wider storyline of social issues.

Several interventions identified in Africa did not employ a purposive EE strategy yet their work showcases most of the EE principles in its application. Some of the broad issues addressed through these non-purposive EE applications included issues of Malaria (Liberia), Mother-to-child transmission and various social and political issues in Tanzania, peace and non-violence in Kenya and Congo, gender inequality and

gender based violence in South African and Uganda, and pollution and environmental sustainability in Ghana.

Over half of the purposive EE programs specifically addressed a range of issues that directly related to HIV & AIDS, with a focus on sexual networks, risky behavior and HIV prevention (*Intersexions, 4Play: Sex Tips for Girls, Tsha Tsha* etc in South Africa), domestic violence, health and wellbeing (*Soul City, Southern Africa*), HIV prevention and gender inequality (*Ashreat Al Asmal* in Sudan, *The Suzie and Shafa Show* in Namibia, *Youth, Empowered and Healthy* (YEAH) in Uganda). This was in stark contrast to the many undocumented and non-purposive EE programmes that covered a wider range of topics as identified above. This distinction between the purposive and non-purposive EE programs could suggest that many purposive EE interventions are funded, and mostly within the field of HIV and AIDS. This can leave several important development and social concerns in countries either unaddressed or insufficiently funded. The grassroot organizations then mobilize to address several of the community challenges, often employing principles of EE without being fully aware of the strategic process they are using. This contrast of the purposive and non-purposive EE is also explored through a review of the communication medium used.

The review of the various stakeholders funding a wide spectrum of social and development issues indicate that many of the purposive EE interventions were often funded through International Aid, philanthropies and foundations. The review illustrated a distinction between funders of purposive EE interventions and those that were often adopting principles of EE, without calling this an EE intervention. In many cases International Aid and government were seen to promote EE strategies in their work, for example The Population Communications International (PCI) initiative in New York provided assistance and advice on entertainment-education strategy to the creators of *Twende na Wakati* (Rogers *et al*, 1999) and the National Office of Population in Ethiopia established the Reproductive Health Communication Project (ERHCP) to promote behavior change and capacity building to assist HIV/AIDS prevention (Farr *et al*, 2005). ERHCP's adapted an EE radio drama programme, *Journey of Life*, to promote abstinence as a means of preventing HIV/AIDS and of family planning between 2001 to 2002 (Smith *et al*, 2007). These well-funded efforts also meant that more EE television and radio programs were

possible instead of grassroots efforts, as more funding was allocated to the media EE interventions.

The forms of media used for EE interventions in Africa

(1) Mass media

Several mediums of communication and engagement were evident in many of the African programs and interventions that extended beyond television and radio, to include work in puppetry, participatory workshops, drama/Theatre, magazines, comic and music. Some programs also specifically made use of cellphones, internet and *Facebook* for entertainment and educational messages.

The contrasts in purposive and non-purposive EE interventions are also evident in the communication medium used, with more purposive EE applications evident in television and radio. Many purposive EE initiatives used television (examples include *Junction Juniors* and *The Team*, Kenya, and *Yizo Yizo* South Africa) and radio (examples include *Twende na Wakati*, Tanzania, *Journey of Life*, Ethiopia, *Ashreat Al Asmal*, Sudan and *The Suzie and Shafa Show*, Namibia) as their primary communication channel. In many African countries, radio is the primary source of entertainment and education, for example in Tanzania *Twende na Wakati* (Let's Go With the Times) is a popular EE radio soap opera for HIV/AIDS information (Vaughan *et al*, 2000). Two MARCH (Modeling and Reinforcement to Combat HIV/AIDS) projects *Makgabaneng* (in Botswana) and *Mopani Junction* (in Zimbabwe) also offer specific radio dramas that create entertaining storylines to focus on characters who act as positive and negative role models (Galavotti *et al*, 2005). In line with the American government's aim of HIV/AIDS prevention, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) developed the MARCH strategy, which largely draws on entertainment education principles to halt the spread of the virus and is now implemented in Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana and Zimbabwe.

The MARCH approach aims to use entertainment in the mass media to educate the public, while also employing tools at the community level to reinforce behaviors that contribute to HIV/AIDS prevention. *The Suzie and Shafa Show* was a radio series that ran in Namibia to help youth gain important life skills and information to make informed decisions about issues such as HIV/AIDS, drugs and alcohol abuse. The series used Namibian celebrities to keep hold of the audience's attention while educating them about important social problems¹.

Femina HIP, a multi-media platform in Tanzania draws on an edutainment approach to create media products on issues that are important and relevant to young people (Femina HIP, 2011). *Femina HIP*'s use of entertainment education was largely inspired by *Soul City* with the first TV Show initiated in 2002 (Fuglesang, 2002). The show depicts the lives of ordinary Tanzanians and discusses issues such as sexual behavior or job security for young person. The talk show helps initiate open discussions between parents and young people about sensitive topics such as sexuality (Femina HIP, 2011). Most radio and television interventions therefore employed purposive EE to develop their storylines and series.

(2) Hybrid approaches – participatory, social media and new technologies

Some purposive EE applications also extend to offer community dialogues, drama puppetry and communication workshops beyond the TV and radio efforts (examples include *Soul City*, *Femina* in Tanzania, *Intersexions*, *Tsha Tsha* and *Sex Tips for Girls* in South Africa). The fourth series of *Soul City* reached approximately 16.2 million people in rural and urban areas, making it one of South Africa's most successful entertainment education programs at the time (Tufte, 2001), because of its application of EE initiatives to addressing health and social problems (Singhal, *et al*, 2004). In addition to these mass media tools, *Soul City* also draws on more participatory approaches at a local community level (Usdin *et al*, 2005). In 2001 *Soul Buddyz* was established as a club initiative, with the aim of engaging children between the ages of 8-12 at a grassroots level on a variety of social issues (Tufte, 2001).

The Know Zone, a Kenyan entertainment education television programme for children and families in rural Kenya similarly formed the *Junctions Juniors Club* due to the high levels of students dropping out of primary school. *Junction Juniors club* of the series adopts an entertainment education approach in the sense that it aims to educate young people to stay in school and continue their education (de Block, 2000).

Takalani Sesame, a South African adaptation of the American children's programme *Sesame Street*, uses entertainment education through entertaining tools, such as puppets, to educate children about social issues such as HIV/AIDS (Kruger, 2008; Coetzee, 2012). Mass media EE programs often stimulate discussions at the inter-personal

level as it was evident in the case of *Tsha Tsha* in South Africa. While *Tsha Tsha* is mainly a television series, efforts have also been made to adopt a more participatory approach at a grassroots level, where *Tsha Tsha* facilitators work in communities using the television programme to catalyze debates and discussions on HIV/AIDS (Hajjiannis & Jugbaran, 2005). The *Tsha Tsha* producers drew on the themes dealt with every week in the television show and created follow-up discussions around these themes on radio, which allowed the audience to call in and discuss these themes openly on-air (Selikow *et al*, 2006).

Similarly *Yizo Yizo*, focuses on a variety of other social issues such as drug abuse, rape and HIV/AIDS, and adopts a Freirean approach, as it encourages the audience to engage in critical thinking and dialogue on the issues and themes addressed in each episode. The show follows a process of: “*exposing the conditions*”, “*creating dialogue*”, and “*support and solutions*” and “*continuing evaluation*” (Smith, 2003, p. 162).

Intersexions, a South African television series also adopted a purposive EE strategy to address a range of HIV related topics further using radio shows, *Facebook*, *Twitter* and community dialogues to foster public discussions. Viewers were encouraged to voice their opinions on HIV and sexual networks through these various platforms and indicates that EE facilitates collective dialogue from a mass medium to a community interpersonal level (Govender *et. al*, 2012). *The Team*, a television programme in Kenya similarly addressed the violence and tension that erupted in Kenya after the national elections in 2007/2008 and focused on a soccer team that needed to work together in order to achieve success. EE was used to foster greater dialogue between different ethnic groups in Kenya with a further integration of radio shows, a *YouTube* channel and social networking sites that provided the audience with the opportunity to engage more actively with the themes raised in the TV show (Tully & Ekdale, 2012).

DramAidE on the other hand does not develop TV and radio series but works with the national EE series using theatre and performance to educate people, especially the youth, about HIV/AIDS. *DramAidE* emphasizes empowerment, where individuals and communities are assisted in acquiring knowledge and skills to prevent the spread of HIV. It adopts a participatory approach, and uses peer educators who engage directly with young people (Botha & Durden, 2004). This engagement takes place through the use of creative methods such as plays or songs

and dances, which are often developed in participatory collaboration with youth.

The review of literature in Africa indicates two key challenges. Firstly there is a vast body of literature on purposive EE in Africa available through reports and workshop notes, often termed grey literature because it's undocumented and inaccessible to academics, researchers and communication specialists. Secondly, the review indicated that there are several cases where EE principles are evident, yet the interventions have not purposively adopted EE. These cases can be referred to as working in the grey zone, where the wealth of application and theoretical understandings of EE emerge, but may never filter into mainstream academics understanding of EE in practice. These two cases are discussed in more detail below.

Purposive Entertainment Education in Africa - Undocumented

There is an extensive body of literature on EE that can be referred to grey literature. This means that while they affirm the EE principles with incorporating entertainment and education, using a strategic communication process and facilitating either a social or behavioral outcome, this work is often undocumented through peer review journal articles or in accredited academic books. Research that is unpublished is often term as grey literature and defined as 'that which is produced on all levels of government, academics, business and industry in print and electronic formats, but which is not controlled by commercial publishers' (GLNS, 1999)². Grey literature has often not been published in peer review journals or books, and can be difficult to identify and obtain through the common literature searches, and for this reason it is known as 'grey literature.'³ Grey literature in this instance can comprise a wide range of material including technical reports, fieldwork notes, newsletters, fact sheets, organizational notes and progress reports. Often this grey literature is produced by community based groups, non-governmental organisation's, and people working spontaneously in the field without having either the time or resources to document and share their experiences of working on the ground. It is these grey literature and officially unpublished work that often carries the most constructive theoretical development and application for the field of EE.

Some of the purposive EE interventions identified through online searches and the *SoulBeat Africa* website emphasis the gap in what is happening in research and practice. Many EE efforts remain under

researched and therefore important contributions from the field are often not incorporated into how we understand and make senses of the application of EE today.

Hen Mpoana is an example of undocumented EE work, it uses a radio drama, talk shows, and a community-level initiative called My Community campaign to raise awareness about environmental problems. *Hen Mpoana* focuses on the prevention of environmental degradation of Ghana's coastal areas. The radio drama storyline was developed with audience participation and draws into the characters' lives of a small fishing village to unpack the severe consequences that pollution can have on a community's well-being.

Similarly, *4Police Case* first broadcast in 2012 depicts the story of a woman in Sierra Leone who has finally decided to take action against the constant physical abuse she experiences by her husband and reveals the complexities and challenges of a woman attempting to uphold her rights in the justice system in Sierra Leone. *Police Case* has its own Facebook page, where viewers are able to discuss the themes portrayed in the show every week yet no official research or documentation of its application of EE is available. *AdvocAid* also uses the Facebook page to provide legal information and guidelines regarding women's rights and abuse. *Bino and Fino* in Nigeria also offers a television cartoon series for toddlers and children from an African perspective. One of the major aims of the cartoon series is to depict Africa and African culture in a positive way, to counteract all the negative images of Africa from the West.

Other participatory purposive EE approaches include *MoRaba*, a free game that can be downloaded onto cell phones in south Africa, to help young people in townships learn about gender-based violence through a range of questions which entertain but also educate at the same time. *Sambaza*, a digital and cell phone game aims to teach young people about the importance of peace and non-violence. It fosters a sense of peace amongst the youth of Kenya by teaching them about conflict resolution and the importance of dialogue and negotiation. Accessing the grey literature contributes to understanding some of the most significant experiences and challenges of people in developing countries. In most cases, these countries are more interested in the participation and development of their communities as a means approach, rather than an end in itself. However, it is these undocumented and under researched applications in the field that bears most relevance to how we understand the field of EE today.

Non-purposive interventions: is it EE?

In addition to the wealth of experience and lessons of EE that often go undocumented there are several projects both researched and published in Africa which do not employ a purposive EE approach, but demonstrates EE principles in its application. For example, gospel music has been used in Zimbabwe for HIV prevention with songs that promote testing and support for those infected. Storytelling in Cameroon is used to educate local people about environmental problems and the importance of conservation. The stories catalyze discussion between the audience members about particular environmental problems. Using stories for conservation efforts results in more participatory and dialogical interactions between environmental experts and local people. *The Young Citizens Program* in Tanzania was developed to encourage young people to create drama skits and shows to educate their communities about HIV/AIDS. Drama was selected as an entertaining, participatory form of communication that encourages interaction with the audience. *Akan* folk music, also known as Hi-life has been used in Ghana to educate people about HIV/AIDS. *Akan* is an accessible way to teach illiterate people about the dangers of the virus. As a form of folk media, *Akan* music entertains the audience while simultaneously educating them. *Akan* music is perceived as not only an important means of expression in Ghana, but also an effective way to convey information to masses of people in a quick and enjoyable way.

Many of these non-purposive interventions incorporate the use of entertainment and education, working through mass media, participatory and social media mediums to promote specific behavioral, health and development objectives. These non-purposive EE interventions in Africa sometimes use radio to promote these objectives (*VOICE* program in Congo, *Shuga* in Kenya and *the gender roles, equality and transformation project* in Uganda) and are often supported by participatory community mobilization and engagement. Other non-purposive EE efforts also extended to the use of comics and music (*Creative Arts for Youth HIV & AIDS* prevention in Mozambique), participatory drama (*Tuitange* in Tanzania) and the use of cellphones (*MoRaba Mobile Game* in South Africa). The *YEAH* initiative in Uganda for example addresses the need to reduce the spread of HIV by utilizing different media products, to empower Ugandan youth to become agents of change. The *Rock Point 256 radio*

drama also uses EE principles and the concept of role modeling to depict and encourage desired behaviors for its audience.

The review suggested that the purposively developed EE interventions are mostly externally funded and many work through television and radio channels, whereas in cases where EE is evident yet not-purposively applied, more participatory approaches were used. Dutta (2006) suggests that many EE programs still follow a very top-down approach in which E-E campaigns are developed for subaltern participants where the location of agency lies predominantly with the funders/donors, who impose their Western values and ideologies and derail from providing a discursive space for subaltern voices.

Dutta (2006) argues that even in cases of participatory communication in E-E campaigns, the problems of subaltern participants are still defined by Western interventionists (p. 221). He poses the need to promote subaltern voices through a process of dialogue in communities ensuring that their participation informs the EE agenda that is often set by donor agencies.

The work of Dutta (2006) therefore offers a theoretical contribution to the work done in EE as he extends his critic beyond questions of the effectiveness of EE, to questions of ideologies and values that drive an EE intervention. Dutta's contribution particularly challenges the absence of the subaltern voices in EE programs, and therefore advocates for their participation which poses new possibilities for EE from a health communication perspective (p. 222). The work of Dutta is also pivotal to this article as he recognizes the theoretical development of EE from a modernized perspective that ultimately attempted to bring development to underdeveloped countries, to one that now needs to recognize and include the voices of subaltern participants in their solutions to development (Escobar, 1995). The theoretical developments of EE therefore sees a shift of EE from being an effort directed to subaltern voices, to one where subaltern participants plan, develop and direct the EE programs.

The examples offered in this review suggest that several non-purposive interventions still applied EE approaches where the communities actively participate in this development process. This participation is sometimes missing in purposive EE interventions. It is these participatory engaging experiences with people who are implementing and facilitating these interventions where the real learning and theoretical contributions to EE lie. These undocumented or grey literatures often carry the wealth of EE advancement for Africa.

Working in the Grey Zone

The grey zone, described by Wendy Quarry and Ricardo Ramirez is indicative of the messiness in which research and interventions occur in developing countries. They speak of often “wondering where we are going and why”, where development work feels like “navigating an obstacle course” (2009, p. 57) which continuously requires researchers and implementers to revisit what they are doing, why they are doing it, and also adjusting their expectations of how the development process should unfold. Quarry and Ramirez describe their work in the grey zone as shifting attention away from methodology to the conditions where these types of work often take place. The conditions of these grey zones do not promote the purposive adaptation or understanding of EE strategic processes yet the interventions still materialize despite these conditions. It is in these conditions that communities can sometimes best manage their own collective learning processes which often take the form of non-purposive EE. It is these grey zone areas where some of the most pivotal work that can contribute to our understanding and development of EE interventions, which often happens in undocumented and under-researched zones. However one of the complexities of working in the grey zone is that communities and NGO’s are often “left out of the implementation mix, and this is where most of the communication know-how resides” (Quarry & Ramirez, 2009, p. 59). Communities are often left out of the implementation phase where gatekeepers or various stakeholders manage the development process of a purposive EE intervention. Yet many of the examples provided in this study suggest that the non-purposive EE know-how still materialized in the absence of purposive EE.

Many of the discussions about EE from funders is driven by products or outcomes, leaving little flexibility for the communication professionals and NGO’s to consider process or participation of the beneficiaries. Quarry and Ramirez (2009) therefore argue that “carefully planned communication should be central to any development initiative – who best to support this than someone familiar with the various issues germane to the sector?”(p. 61)

One of the key points of departure for Quarry and Ramirez (2009) is that no one takes time to notice the conditions such as “the politics, the institutions, the culture and history, the patterns of media control and funding” that promote development and communication interventions

(p. 62). They further suggest that development has a fascination with best practices and replication, if a pilot goes well, it's then used as a model to scale up, but this ignores that "the intense, creative force behind each new initiative is different from the task of multiplication" (Quarry & Ramirez, 2009, p. 62). They therefore extract conditions from some of their success stories which they describe as coordinates for navigation which helps navigate in grey zones. Three key coordinates are champions, context and communication.

Champions based on the work of Paulo Freire (1985, 2002) and principles of another development suggest that people can only resolve their problems if they are aware of the factors or causes of their situation. Often communities are the pioneers or champions in development. Context allows for an understanding of the dimensions or the environment that influences the context. Communication can have varying functions from telling (technological transfer or public relations) to telling and listening (social marketing and behavior change) to listening, exchange and dialogue (advocacy and participation) (Quarry & Ramirez, 2009, p. 63). Several EE cases identified in this chapter reflect these coordinates of working in the grey zone, where champions through communities, understanding of the context and a diverse application of communication is evident in their non-purposive EE interventions. Whilst their development of interventions may not have followed this well-researched and documented field of EE, the examples provided from the review indicate that they are in fact applying EE in practice. Working in the grey zone often indicates that advocacy and participation is happening at a community level, yet poor documentation excludes core lessons and experience from the field in Africa.

Concluding remarks

Many of the responses for this editions call for papers emanated from predominantly South African authors with many reflections on South African experiences. This perhaps could be accredited to South Africa being one of the first African countries to offer purposive EE interventions, and hence became one of the most well researched examples of EE in the continent. Yet many of these undocumented and unknown stories of EE in Africa still need to be told. This edition offers several unconventional examples of the research and application of EE that I hope will advance our understanding of the future theoretical developments needed in EE. The work of Emma Durden highlights the

challenges of integrating participatory processes and professional processes in the application of EE for television series. Her work poses interesting questions for the advancement of EE, particularly in Africa where participation and empowerment are seen as pivotal to social change. This paper opens up the question for Africa to address whether EE can really be participatory in its genuine definition.

The paper by George Kingara demonstrates the dichotomy of EE application in conventional soap operas and EE television series. Kingara makes a case that conventional soap operas still offer the para-social relationships, role modelling and functional narratives through its storyline that still attains educational messages. This paper aligns with the focus of the review article that contextualises EE for an African context by arguing that EE still occurs whether in purposive or non-purposive form.

The Rafael Obregon and Thomas Tufte's article identifies key challenges of EE both theoretically and in communication practice and further highlights the known and the unknown experiences of EE from around the globe. Given the theoretical challenges of EE, they advance a new practice and research agenda for EE which addresses issues of subject, culture and social change. The notion of subject, culture and social change are key attributes for addressing EE from an African perspective.

The Govender, Dyll-Myklebust, Delate and Sundar article highlights the transitions of the use of EE from television to social media, indicating that EE can catalyse a dialogue through social media and can contribute to behavioural outcomes.

I hope these articles will broaden our lens on the African trends and developments in the field of EE. These trends and developments in EE require us to explore the influence of the south-north conversations in EE, particularly when working in the grey zone, and how these experiences can further advance EE. In other words, what are the trends, developments and challenges experienced in the global South and how can this catalyze the further development of EE? An example of this is well documented in the article by Kawamura and Kohler (2013), scholars of the global north who reflect on the importance of the Mexican methodology of EE (developed in Global South), but adapted for radio serial drama's in the US and Japan. A close reading of the many studies and research done on EE suggests that there needs to be a shift from the Global North application of EE to the Global South, to a greater focus on learning from the practical, theoretical and

methodological developments of EE emerging from Global South, and Africa in particular. These South-North conversations of EE also highlight the importance to work, document and acknowledge the work in Africa that is often done in the *grey zone*. This article explored the application of EE interventions in Africa through a purposive and non-purposive lens. I hope that the articles to follow succinctly offer a Global South landscape of the real challenges of EE in the field.

Footnotes)

¹ http://www.jhuccp.org/hcp/countries/namibia_suzieshafa.html

² Fourth International Conference on Grey Literature: New Frontiers in Grey Literature. GreyNet, Grey Literature Network Service, Washington DC, USA 4-5 October 1999.

³ <http://www.healthknowledge.org.uk/public-health-textbook/research-methods/1a-epidemiology/grey-literature>. Accessed on 18 October 2013

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Towards a paradigm shift in Entertainment-Education: Exploring the emergent conceptual underpinnings

By Rafael Obregon and Thomas Tufte

Abstract

This article reviews the last decade's global scientific production on entertainment-education, and identifies the key challenges for this area of work, both as a theoretically informed communication strategy, but also as a communication practice that aims to solve real and pressing development problems. Our analysis, based on a comprehensive review of 82 identified publications, builds on two assumptions: firstly, that the dominant conceptual and theoretical perspectives in EE remain focused on behavior change, inhibiting EE to unfold its full potential to more effectively contribute to tackling development challenges. Secondly, that emerging theoretical approaches and innovative practices open up opportunities for a broader epistemology for EE. Our review analyses well-known experiences with EE, for example from the fight against HIV/AIDS in Africa, but it also sheds light on some of the largely unknown experiences from around the globe. The conclusion points towards a new practice and research agenda for the further elaboration of EE scholarship – an agenda that challenges the perceptions of subject, culture and social change in the theory and practice of entertainment-education.

Key words: Entertainment education, subject, culture, social change, audience involvement, development, behaviour change

Introduction:

Entertainment-Education (EE) is an established communication strategy for development and social change which has achieved global

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recognition as an applied, efficient and flexible approach that can help social actors address development challenges. Although EE originated in agricultural extension services it quickly evolved into other fields such as family planning, education, public health and HIV/AIDS prevention, and eventually into most areas of development practice. EE-based communication strategies are used today in good governance, climate change prevention and resilience, and peace and reconciliation processes, and are well established in all facets of the health, education and sustainable development sectors (Singhal and Rogers, 2004, p. 7). In addition, the explosion of information and communication technologies has created new opportunities for delivery and reach of EE products and content.

One of the most distinctive aspects of EE, however, is that it is often guided by a solid and rich theoretical basis that allows it to integrate multiple theoretical perspectives (Waisbord and Obregon, 2012; Brown, 2012). In a study of peer-reviewed journal articles that explored the theories informing empirically evaluated EE programs (Sood, Menard and Witte, 2004, p.118) the authors identified seven key theoretical constructs: 1) Steps or stages individuals pass through in a behavior change process; 2) Social psychological theories related to behavior change; 3) Psychological models related to behavior change; 4) Drama and role theories in relation to how people script/enact their own lives; 5) Audience-centred effects studies; 6) Hybrid models combining elements from various theories, but maintaining the centre-focus on individual behavior change; 7) Contextual theories. While the latter construct includes theories of power and social constructionism (Sood, Menard and Witte, 2004, pp. 130-131) and goes beyond individual behavior change, EE work still retains a strong effects-oriented focus.

This paper reviews the history and development of the research and practice of EE, analyses conceptual challenges in how EE connects to contemporary development agendas, and discusses the need to integrate emerging and critical conceptual approaches to research and practice of EE. Two assumptions drive our analysis: Firstly, that despite some trend toward diversification dominant conceptual and theoretical perspectives inhibit EE to unfold its full potential to more effectively contribute to tackling development challenges. Secondly, that a series of emerging theoretical approaches and innovative practices are emerging, especially facilitated by new communication technologies,

that reflect a development agenda based on explicit norms of social justice, equality and human rights, in addition to culturally-sensitive strategies. This, we argue, should lead to a renewed and broader epistemology in EE, permeated by a stronger focus on social change.

Our analysis of the ontology of EE therefore is centred on three fundamental concepts – each of which, in its own way, contributes to our understanding of what possible social change dynamics can be articulated with the use of communication. Or stated differently: analyzing the understanding of communication and its potential strategic role in social change processes is about analyzing the implicit notion of the subject, notion of culture, and notion of social change. We formulate three claims about the conceptual limitations of mainstream EE approaches. These limitations implicitly explain the need for increased inter-disciplinarity, and call for increased attention to epistemological and theoretical alternatives emerging in EE scholarship. Our points of departure are:

1. While EE emerged originally as a fresh contribution to the field of development and health communication and rapidly became a common feature in international development communication programs, it has had a much slower pace in incorporating new theoretical perspectives and intervention models that address the underlying causes on poverty, underdevelopment, and health inequities.
2. The application and practice of EE remains heavily driven by perspectives focused on creating change at the individual level, as opposed to a greater focus on the determinants of health and other development issues. This has been the result, in many cases, of the short-sighted agendas of many international donors and funding agencies.
3. Evaluation of EE interventions have failed to take into account richer culture-driven communication perspectives that could help examine how EE content serves as a platform for individuals and collectives to make sense of their own realities, create and circulate meanings, and act upon to transform their environments and demand greater accountability.

An Outline of the Recent Academic Production on EE

Our analysis draws on the current status of the global EE scholarship and practice, with particular attention to its theoretical refinement and growth. We examined 82 publications that covered the 2002-2009 period (Obregon and Tufte, 2014) that specifically dealt with development and social change issues using some form of EE.

In order to gather resources describing applications and innovations of Entertainment-Education from 2002 to the present, we primarily focused on searches within online databases for abstracts and full-text articles either from peer-reviewed journals book chapters, or works presented as Master's theses or PhD dissertations in various academic databases in English, Spanish and Portuguese. Academic databases we searched included Academic Search Complete (an aggregate of the major academic journals), Google Scholar, Redalyc (Red de Revistas Científicas de América Latina y el Caribe, España y Portugal), HAPI (Hispanic American Periodicals Index), HLAS (Handbook of Latin American Studies), LANIC (Latin American Network Information Center), and the CFSC Body of Knowledge (Communication for Social Change Consortium).

We also expanded our search to accommodate other media forms and/or approaches that could reflect the use of various forms of entertainment for development and social change. We used multiple search terms that included, in addition to different articulations of entertainment and education (edutainment, infotainment, enter-educate), keywords such as games; theatre; development theater; participatory theatre; computer games; video; video games; digital games; drama; soap operas; television; TV; radio; comic books; telenovelas; comics/cartoons; film; social change; social development; health; education; and HIV/AIDS. In our analysis we only included those articles/chapters/thesis that specifically focused on an entertainment medium for social change or development. For example, if the author only discussed a particular communication or media issue (i.e., telenovelas) without a specific focus on a development and/or social change element, we excluded it from our list.

Two graduate students in communication and development studies, with a high degree of familiarity with the edutainment strategy, studied and coded each article using a uniform coding instruction guide. Coding information was pulled and detailed on an Excel spreadsheet, according to the following categories: all author names; institution/

location of author; title and date of publication; research questions/objectives; brief summary of study; medium/format; location of study; theories/theorists referenced; and additional comments distinguishing the study. Our analysis revealed three important trends: emergence of broader and converging theoretical perspectives; increasing interdisciplinary perspectives on the use of EE; and application of EE principles through various formats beyond media and communication.

Our review shows that new theoretical perspectives continue to be incorporated into EE scholarship. These emerging theoretical concepts are organized into three areas that include a) critical perspectives such as subaltern theory, critical feminist and gender perspectives, and Foucaultian concepts; b) empowering and participatory approaches that draw on Freire's dialogic perspectives and emphasize civic engagement and citizens participation; and c) greater attention to cultural dimensions that build upon cultural studies with some attention to the role of narratives and sense-making, and notions of cultural mediation such as Vigotski's.

However, our analysis also confirms that the use of individual behavior change theories remain strong in EE scholarship. The majority of papers reviewed subscribe to the dominant social psychological theories that have dominated EE work in the past, particularly social learning theory, and behavior change models such as the health belief model, and the stages of change model. It is worth noting, however, that unlike Sood, Menard and Witte's analysis (2004), there seems to be a greater diversity of theoretical approaches, combined with some attempts to develop more eclectic EE work that draws both on behavior change and participatory approaches and theories.

Another important trend revealed in our analysis is a move toward increasing interdisciplinary perspectives in EE work. From a traditional base in psychology and social psychology in particular, we identified several works rooted in disciplines such as education, political science, computer science, media studies, sociology and anthropology. Thematically, public health continues to be the dominant area of concern although EE continues to be in many other areas of development, including environment and climate change, conflict and emergencies, peace-building, agriculture, and education. Within public health EE projects today address a variety of issues including gender equity, women's empowerment, and promotion of healthy behaviors on topics ranging from HIV/AIDS, to female genital cutting, to

nutrition. This thematic proliferation and in particular interdisciplinary conceptual development of the science informing EE practice is a positive trend that provides greater opportunities for a deeper understanding and conceptual growth of EE practice.

In the practice of EE we further identified a series of important trends. The prevalence of innovations in and applications of EE through a variety of media channels, genres and entertainment formats seemed to be understandably defined by the regional capacity. For example, within our sample of articles, community theatre and radio serial dramas continue to flourish in countries such as Kenya, Ethiopia, Ghana and Vietnam. In Latin America most authors focused on television (i.e., telenovelas), and radio, with limited references to video games or virtual reality (i.e., use of video games in childhood education). In North America and Europe, on the contrary, we observed EE innovations in digital games, and in the use of primetime television as an EE medium. Our sample also contains an important number of “theatre for development” studies. Popular culture genres within, for example, music in Kenya and film in India, — have also served as EE mediums in recent years. Soul City and its multimedia approach in South Africa continues to heavily influence multimedia EE approaches, and it is studied specifically or referenced in several of the collected articles.

To sum up, the academic literature reflects the sustained importance of EE as a key strategy in public health and in many other areas of development. As for epistemological, theoretical and methodological approaches our sense is clearly that EE is being re-assessed fundamentally and critically. Our literature review reveals an increasing interest toward re-thinking the theoretical and epistemological base of EE and a move toward an expanded, more holistic and interdisciplinary, culture and audience-centered theoretical basis.

A brief history of EE

EE has a history which dates far back - at least to the 1950s, some argue back to when North American industries in the 1930s began to use the comic strip character “Popeye” to promote spinach eating amongst malnourished American children. Others even date EE back to Aristotle who argued for the educational potential of entertainment. In the multitude of experiences using entertainment for development and social change agendas, which has come to be known as EE, a

particular discourse has emerged as the dominant discourse. We call it the “known” story. Brown (2012) provides a rich account of the “known” story of EE with a focus on the promotion of healthy behaviors. In the following we first flesh out the main highlights of this dominant discourse. We then turn our attention to the less known sides of EE experience, in particular in developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, but also the European experience.

The rise and proliferation of EE: 1970s-1998

In recounting the history of entertainment-education (EE), David Poindexter (2004) traces origins of EE back to 1958 when he worked in the production of a series of short dramas for a local project led by the Methodist Church. Poindexter’s recollection lends support to an existing consensus among most EE scholars (see for example contributors to Singhal, Cody, Rogers and Sabido (2004) on how the use of entertainment for educational purposes has historically been a part of almost every society. However, only by the late 1960s and early 1970s did EE emerge as a strategy that began to incorporate more elaborate theoretical perspectives, concepts, and methods that eventually led to its growth and preeminent positioning as a core element of development and social change communication. Mexican producer Miguel Sabido’s work in developing a conceptual and methodological framework for the use of soap operas for behavior change is credited (Nariman, 1993; Singhal, Obregon and Rogers, 1994; Sabido, 2004; Ryerson, 2004) as the first attempt to develop a conceptual and theoretical basis for entertainment-education. Sabido’s conceptual framework and methodology on the use of soap operas for behavior change convinced many that the entertainment function of mass media could also be channeled to promote rapid changes on some of the most pressing issues in international development.

Building upon Shannon and Weaver’s model, Sabido understood that a communication model “could be adapted to include several communicators, messages, media and responses” (Nariman 1993, p. 29). Under this linear approach to communication, Sabido integrated elements of David Bentley’s Dramatic Theory, Carl Jung’s Theory of Archetypes and Stereotypes, Albert Bandura’s Social Learning Theory, and David MacLean’s concept of the triune brain. Sabido argued that these theoretical elements could be integrated into a melodramatic story, and create a communication circuit that could influence attitudes

and behaviors of well-defined target audiences on specific social issues. Development practitioners and scholars were better able to grasp EE from a theoretical standpoint, but Sabido's model remained focused on a prevailing understanding of communication as a unidirectional and persuasive communication process that did not take into account larger socio-cultural determinants and contextual factors underlying people's practices and behaviors.

It did not take long before such an innovative idea captured the attention of many organizations and individuals working in international development. For instance, India's need for a rapid introduction and expansion of national television coupled with outreach efforts developed by Mexico's Televisa to export its approach and media products led in 1984 to the production and broadcast of the TV soap opera *Hum Log* (We People). *Hum Log* focused on issues of gender, and family planning, following the Sabido model for EE (Poindexter, 2004; Singhal and Rogers, 1999). This experience was soon after replicated in other countries and through various formats, particularly radio dramas and soaps. In retrospect, this rapid popularity transformed an ancient and widely used communication approach into a theoretically and conceptually driven communication strategy for development and social change.

While entertainment-education as a strategy grew out of the success and popularity of soap operas, its newly-found theoretical basis and behavior-change driven focus quickly resonated with the needs of various organizations involved in international development. The notion of the rigorous use of a data and research-driven process for the production of entertainment media products aimed at creating social change was highly appealing, and garnered tremendous interest. Chief among those organizations were the Johns Hopkins University's Center for Communication Programs (JHU/CCP), and Population Communications International (PCI). These organizations took on leadership roles in international efforts aimed at expanding the reach and acceptance of family planning programs and later HIV/AIDS, environment, gender, and other health-related issues. JHU/CCP and PCI capitalized on the appeal of EE, and experimented and innovated through the use of other entertainment-formats that included the use of short TV and radio dramas, theater, music, reality television, circus-like activities, and board games (Singhal and Rogers, 1999).

The Golden Years (1999-2004)

By the mid to late-1990s entertainment-education had become a sort of staple of most international development and health communication programs. In India, for instance, the BBC World Service Trust developed and broadcast a series of EE dramas aimed at raising awareness of HIV/AIDS. Various international NGOs and projects, some in collaboration with local organizations, developed and used multiple EE media products in Africa, Asia and Latin America. EE, as defined and conceptualized in its early form, was a central piece of international development and health communication work. In 2004, Singhal and Rogers stated that "since our involvement in EE began in the mid-1980s, over 200 EE interventions, mainly for health-related educational issues and mostly broadcast as radio and television soap operas have been implemented, mainly in the developing countries of Latin America, Africa and Asia" (p.7).

With the increased popularity and visibility of EE, more home-grown EE projects were developed around the world, some of them with remarkable success such as Soul City in South Africa, and Puntos de Encuentro in Nicaragua. Soul City, launched in 1992, has become not only a brand for sound and successful EE, but more broadly a reference for comprehensive development and social change communication work. Soul City focuses on three levels of change – individual, community, and social/policy-, and has developed a conceptual model that places research at the heart of its practice. Puntos de Encuentro in Nicaragua, which started as a media for development project, later identified its own work as EE (Rodriguez, 2005). Puntos uses a less structured process but it is equally focused on facilitating dialogue, debate, and discussion on socially sensitive issues around youth sexual and reproductive health, and gender and masculinity. In Puntos' view, such facilitation of public dialogue and debate is a catalyst for change.

Between 1999 and 2006 various international organizations developed conceptual and methodological EE frameworks, and numerous journal articles and book chapters discussed different dimensions of EE (Bouman, 1998; Singhal and Rogers, 1999 and 2004; Tufte, 2001; Singhal, Cody, Rogers and Sabido, 2004; McKee, Bertrand and Becker, 2004; Papa, Singhal & Papa, 2006). Not only had EE become a central piece of development communication practice, but it was also backed by a productive pace of scholarly work that made this a significant period for students, scholars and practitioners of EE.

At Johns Hopkins University, the director of Centre for Communication Programs, Phyllis Piotrow and colleagues (1997) articulated a more comprehensive theoretical argument for their EE interventions. They emphasized Bandura's concept of self-efficacy (an individual's confidence in his/her ability to perform a behavior) as the pillar of effective EE, and integrated it into larger health communication interventions, particularly for family planning. Piotrow and colleagues argued that carefully designed EE interventions could increase demand for health services and change people's attitudes and behaviors toward adoption and use of family planning methods. PCI, on the other hand, developed a values grid through which they identified positive, negative, and neutral values and practices. Positive values were to be reinforced (i.e., appreciation for small family size), while negative values were to be changed (i.e., negative perceptions on modern contraceptive methods).

Over nearly 25 years, a set of theories dominated EE thinking and influenced its practice. Bandura's social learning and cognitive theory, and concepts such as role modeling, observational and vicarious learning, message reinforcement, punishments and rewards for specific actions, and later self-efficacy, drove most EE interventions and projects. Other theories that Sabido previously put forward were less visible or were discussed in a more limited way in entertainment-education projects, particularly in those cases that did not include a drama-driven component. JHU/CCP also explored new theoretical approaches such as ideation theory. Kincaid's articulation of ideation theory posits that people's attitudinal and behavioral changes are a function of cognitive, emotional and social interactions. This perspective somehow addressed one of the earlier theory-focused criticisms to EE interventions concerning the limitations of social learning theory in explaining behavior change (Sherry, 1997). Entertainment-education products such as dramas, therefore, are well positioned to trigger such interactions, and the cumulative effect of those interactions may lead to attitude and behavior change (Singhal and Rogers, 2004). Babalola et. al. (2002), for instance, drew upon ideation theory to identify positive deviant behaviors among youth in Rwanda concerning sexual and reproductive health behaviors.

Early theoretical developments of entertainment-education were pivotal in providing a clear conceptual basis for scholarship and practice in EE. They followed functionalist theoretical articulations of

how EE communication processes could facilitate multiple interactions and lead to changes in behaviors and attitudes. However, by the late 1990s the international development communication community was engaged in a debate that attempted to redefine the role of communication in development, underscoring the need to explore new ways to facilitate processes of social change (Grey-Felder and Deane, 1999; Deane, 2001).

The academic growth of EE also took place in close connection with the growing attention given to HIV/AIDS and the communication challenges this pandemic posed. The exponential growth and visibility of the HIV/AIDS tragedy in the 1990s created a strong sense of urgency for communication responses – and here was a well-proven communication strategy known from its contribution to family planning and child health. In the impossible dilemma between the need for long-term engagement with the underlying causes of HIV/AIDS, and the need for immediate responses with high impact, an emergency response and short-term/high impact, became the main focus. To this end, a particular form of communication was welcomed, with high reach, strong visibility, and potential for high impact. This spoke to marketing logics, and fell well in line with the social marketing experiences in the promotion of family planning of the 1980s and early 1990s.

For a longer-term perspective, be it with a focus on long-term processes of empowerment and social and structural change, or be it in the modes of assessing how communication strategies influence societies, there was seemingly no time, nor interest. Also, a certain moral imperative lay implicit in the lack of questioning of the underlying ontology and epistemology informing and guiding HIV/AIDS communication. Conceptually, the field had begun rethinking its focus in the late 1990s, experiencing a change in discourse from a traditional focus on behavior change, to an increased attention to structural and social challenges.

Within the dominant logic of behavior change communication, a significant turn occurred in the early 2000s towards increasingly assessing audiences' "degree of exposure" to EE interventions, and to measure whether and how EE interventions spur interpersonal communication between audience and non-audience members, as a way to measure "indirect" effects (Singhal & Rogers, 2002, p.130; Valente & Saba, 1988). Singhal & Rogers argue that research and

theorizing in recent years have shown that entertainment-education has turned out to motivate members of the audience to talk to each other about what they learn from the EE messages, and to engage audience individuals in what they call *socially supportive behavior change*.

Some studies report that effects of EE projects often come about as a result of *role modelling* performed by main characters, and *parasocial interaction* of audience members with positive and negative media characters (Papa, Singhal, Low, Pant, Sood, Rogers & Shefner, 2000; Sood, 2002). There is evidence, for instance, of how individuals incorporate the language of their role models when talking with others about the EE messages, as well as of how they report adopting new behaviors in their real-life contexts.

One example of how everyday discourse is influenced by the programs was the broadcasts of *Simplemente María* in Peru 1969-70, which led to housemaids in Peru to be called María, the name of the main female character who had been a maid herself and eventually becomes a high fashion designer (Singhal, Obregon & Rogers, 1994). Another example was how the name of the negative role model Mkwaju in *Twende na Wakati* became a nickname for sexually promiscuous men in general in Tanzania in the 1990s (Singhal & Rogers, 1999, p.144). While these studies pointed towards effects on everyday discourse, it remained to be further investigated more in-depth how EE-interventions lead to – or not - the articulation of discourses on the levels of edutainment texts, as well as edutainment production and reception. Singhal & Rogers suggested that “entertainment-education has certain of its effects as a catalyst for triggering *interpersonal peer communication* leading to changes in the *social discourse* of the audience” (ibid. Italics authors’ own). It does, however, remain as one of the weakly developed pathways of EE research to explore these social and discursive outcomes of EE interventions

Audience involvement and intermediate effects

Much of the early research on EE focused on effects. Studies analyzed the changes in audience members’ knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. However, they did not look into *how* those changes took place. More recently, researchers interested in EE have begun to explore the process through which EE interventions produced their “effect”, and in which ways audiences became involved with the programs (Sood, 2002).

“Audience involvement is the degree to which audience members engage in reflection upon, and parasocially interact with, certain media programs, thus resulting in overt behaviour change,”(p.153). The focus, however, is still primarily on emotional and psychological involvement, and is not necessarily oriented towards social action.

Sood, in line with others, also discusses three specific forms of *intermediate effects* that are often analyzed in EE research. These are (1) an increase in *self-efficacy*, defined as “peoples’ beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over events that affect their lives” (Sood, 2002, p.159); (2) an increase in *collective efficacy*, a relevant concept given that many cultures are collective rather than individual, and defined, following a system-level perspective, as “people’s beliefs in their joint capabilities to forge divergent self-interests into a shared agenda, to enlist supporters and resources for collective action, to devise effective strategies and to execute them successfully, and to withstand forcible opposition and discouraging setbacks.” (Bandura 1995 in Sood, 2002, p.159); and (3) increased *interpersonal communication* among audience members, which leads to discussions about the programs and their educational themes among peers and in their communities.

As it is often done in EE effects research, Sood conducted a quantitative analysis of audience involvement in *Tinka Tinka Sukh* in Kenya, using those concepts as pre-given categories. Sood suggested that “sense-making and reception analysis techniques” could be utilized in order to take this analysis a step further. Interestingly enough for our study, Sood mentions that “[f]or example, qualitative textual analysis of letters by audience members can help in understanding audience involvement through the words of the audience themselves” (Sood, 2002, p.168). A problem with this approach, which we have brought forward elsewhere (i.e. Tufte 2004), and which Sood also recognizes herself, is a lack of cultural contextualization. Sood’s suggestion of using “reception analysis techniques” does not change the epistemological aim of the study. Rather, it introduces new techniques to better understand how communication interventions impact upon individual behavior.

Despite the limitations identified in Sood’s methodological proposal, it constitutes a useful first step to explore audience involvement and “intermediate effects”. Rather than providing an interpretation of the process of sense-making and the nature of this production of meaning, Sood remains discursively and largely theoretically as well, embedded in a functionalist paradigm of trying to understand the effects of the EE

interventions. In short, Sood's operationalization of audience involvement represents an important opening towards the broad field of reception studies as an alternative to understand how audiences make sense of EE content.

Yet, as discussed earlier, most EE research is still today rooted in exploring behavior effects, drawing on social psychological theories. Contrary to this research agenda, the epistemological aim of communication for social change, as will be outlined in the following section, is not only about individual behavioral change, but also about human rights, citizenship and social justice agendas. CFSC digs deeper into the relation between communication and empowerment, communication and collective action, and communication and the articulation of critical thinking. The epistemological aim, as well as the underlying ontology, is distinct from "mainstream" EE as it emerged and has developed up until very recently.

The "unknown" story of EE

The distinction from "mainstream" is seen also in what we elsewhere have called "the unknown story of EE" (Obregon & Tufte, 2014). On all continents a wealth of on-the-ground experiences with EE has been unfolding but remaining relatively untold and unknown to the main academic discourse as it is represented in the major journals of media and communication studies. They represent a multitude of conceptual approaches, notion of subject, culture and social change representative of the localities where they have grown.

This is, for example, the case of the experiences in Europe with public broadcasting for agricultural development, which originates back before the post Second World War efforts to regain economic strength by rebuilding an agricultural sector, and using BBC's pioneering EE experience on radio: *The Archers*. Latin America's experience with cinema and video for social change (Getino, Solanas 1969/2006), and theatre of the oppressed (Boal, 1974/2006) were other experiences incorporating EE characteristics but from a critical, engaged and very political perspective but never really getting incorporated into the mainstream EE practice of the large development organisations. Also in Latin America we identified a vibrant experience with EE in broadcasting for development using *telenovelas* and where heavy emphasis went into developing the narratives based on a concern for representing the social realities of the Latin American viewer (Fuenzalida, 2004/2006).

In Africa, the EE experience we identified integrates home-grown pathways with strong intellectual, institutional and financial presence of, especially, the U.S tradition of EE through development cooperation. In contrast to the U.S.-influenced tradition, there is a longstanding tradition that draws on what Ugboajah (1985, 2006, p.293) conceptualized as 'oramedia', reflected in musical traditions and the use of particular instruments such as the drum (Ugboajah 1972 & 2006, p. 52). Theatre for development also ties in with the "oramedia" tradition (Irobi, 2006; Kamlongera, 2005; Airhihenbuwa, 1999; Nyoni, 1998). Within theatre for development are strands such as "theatre for an aesthetics of necessity", a term coined by Cameroonian practitioner Werewere Liking (Liking, 2002, in Irobi 2006).

Summarizing this bringing together of the known and the more unknown experiences of EE into a holistic story of the field, we can conclude that there exists a rich and diverse past of EE. It represents multiple traditions and perspectives that are increasingly cross-fertilizing each other in contemporary EE approaches. From this more holistic view of EE there is some vindication of perspectives that have been out there for many years but today begin to gain greater recognition. Also, this is a two-way street process as some of the more dominant traditions also have become more flexible and accommodating to the less known perspectives. Some of these developments are presented in the following section.

5. Critiques and theoretical revisions

5.1 Broadening theoretical perspectives

As we have briefly mentioned above, the growth of entertainment-education has often times been part of larger efforts undertaken in the context of international development and health communication work. As such, entertainment-education has been part of the broader communication and development field both as an academic field of research and as a communication practice (Waisbord, 2001). The field of communication and development has moved through periodic paradigm shifts that have followed shifts in international development and which have been well documented elsewhere (Tufte, 2000; Morris, 2003). These paradigmatic shifts include the diffusion paradigm in which communication was assumed as a unidirectional process that relied heavily on the powerful role of media as a force of change; the dependency paradigm in which communication for development was

characterized as a tool for hegemonic and ideological purposes; and the participatory paradigm in which communication is perceived as a process that creates opportunities for people's engagement and participation on issues that affect them.

In the late 1990s The Rockefeller Foundation devoted a significant amount of resources to push for a new concept called communication for social change. It strongly argued that communication for development needed to move beyond individual behavior change approaches and instead focus on facilitating the conditions and environment that would facilitate social change processes (Rockefeller Foundation, 1999). This idea garnered support in the communication and development community, which was particularly concerned about the lack of progress in curbing the HIV/AIDS epidemic. By November 2001, in the context of the UN Communications roundtable convened by UNFPA in Nicaragua, which focused on HIV/AIDS communication, James Deane wrote a background piece that aptly captured the axis of the debate concerning HIV/AIDS communications and, by extension, notions of communication and development. Deane stated that:

The last two years have seen intense debate over different approaches to HIV/AIDS communication. In particular, there has been a growing questioning of social marketing and behavior change-oriented communication, and increased interest and debate focused in the field of communication for social change, an approach to communication that focuses less on changing individual behaviors and more on empowering communities and societies to tackle the underlying issues of discrimination, poverty and marginalization that are driving the epidemic in the first place (p.5).

Other organizations such as UNICEF also had begun to work on new conceptual frameworks. UNICEF argued for a communications from a human rights perspective, a notion that brings into consideration several key aspects associated with people's rights, citizenship and agency (Ford, et. al., 2003). The UNAIDS' Communication Framework for HIV/AIDS argued for a renewed look at HIV/AIDS communication interventions on the basis of the continued growth of the epidemic which was spreading rapidly despite the numerous communications interventions carried out worldwide. These interventions, it was argued, were primarily based on

some of the most important behavioral psychology theories, including social learning and cognitive theories (UNAIDS, 1999; Airhihenbuwa, Makinwa & Obregon, 2000). The primary thesis of the framework stated:

Seeking to influence behavior alone is insufficient if the underlying social factors that shape the behavior remain unchallenged. Many communications and health promotion programs proceed on the assumption that behavior, alone, needs to be changed, when in reality, such change is unlikely to be sustainable without incurring some minimum social change. This necessitates attention to social environmental contexts. (UNAIDS, 1999).

The UNAIDS framework called for greater attention to five contextual domains: (1) government & policy, with a focus on the role of policies and laws supporting or hindering intervention efforts; (2) socio-economic status, with a focus on issues such as income and its impact on communications interventions; (3) culture, with emphasis on positive, neutral or negative aspects of culture that may help or prevent the adoption of healthy practices; (4) gender relations, focused on the status of women in society and how it impacts their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS; and (5) spirituality, focused on the role of religion/spiritual practices in the adoption/rejection of certain healthy practices (UNAIDS, 1999; Airhihenbuwa, Makinwa & Obregon, 2000). Communications could play a specific role in helping produce change in one or more of these five key domains to facilitate behavior change processes, as opposed to targeting people's behaviors regardless of the context in which behaviors took place.

In essence, the Rockefeller Foundation and UNICEF, and other international organizations were working almost in parallel in revisiting dominant conceptual communication for development approaches. They shared a common vision: to move beyond individual behavior change approaches and to focus on the structural determinants of development under the assumption that, by empowering communities through effective communication processes, individual and collective change was possible.

The central feature of the framework was its departure from the dominant focus on individual behavior change that drove health communication practice and its call for a new emphasis on targeting the root causes of the epidemic in order to create better conditions for the adoption of the desired behaviors. In other words, targeting individual

behaviors without addressing the root causes of the epidemic was the equivalent of bypassing the main causes of the problem; hence changes in behavior would be very unlikely. By contrast, affecting the root causes of the problem would in turn create an enabling environment for change and facilitate adoption of specific behaviors. Gender issues illustrate this point very well. While many HIV/AIDS prevention programs emphasize the use of condoms, a lack of focus on gender imbalances leads to minimal impact, as the locus of decision would remain in the hands of men.

The conceptual debates in the communication and development field and in the context of HIV/AIDS communication had several common elements: the need to provide greater spaces for people's participation, empowerment and agency; the need to accommodate development communication process to the contextual realities in which development efforts took place, particularly in regards to cultural dimensions; and the need to pay greater attention to structural issues that determined people's vulnerable conditions to poverty, disease, etc. Scholars and practitioners began to call for a reassessment of the field as a whole but also of particular strategies that defined current international development and health communication work. The next section discusses how this paradigmatic shift began to influence conceptual and theoretical thinking in entertainment-education.

Critiques of EE

In 1999 Singhal and Rogers defined entertainment education as "the process of purposely designing and implementing a media message both to entertain and educate, in order to increase audience members' knowledge about an educational issue, create favorable attitudes, and change overt behavior" (p.9). A few years later the definition of EE was expanded to incorporate the notion of "changing social norms" (Papa, Singhal & Papa, 2006, p.53; Singhal & Rogers, 2004, p.5). Over time definitions of EE acknowledged the need to focus both on individual and social change (Singhal & Rogers, 2004; Tufte, 2005), while more recent definitions reflect a socio-ecological perspective. Wang and Singhal (2009) have proposed the following:

Entertainment-education is a theory-based communication theory 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 population”(p. 272-273).

The evolution in how EE is defined reflects the rich theoretical tradition that has guided EE practice and research, as well as the possibilities that EE provides for theory building in the broader media and communication for development landscape. Typically, EE programs and products are part of a larger communication intervention that may include other communication efforts such as social mobilization and media advocacy. Even though existing definitions of EE often have not taken into account other socio-cultural dimensions critical to the process of social change, perhaps a more critical aspect of EE is the perceived philosophical approach and theoretical context under which EE operates.

Waisbord (2001) characterized entertainment-education as part of the dominant paradigm of development. He stated that EE was another strategy that followed behavior change models of “the dominant paradigm in the field of development communication”, and argued that “different theories and strategies shared the premise that problems of development were basically rooted in lack of knowledge and that, consequently, interventions needed to provide people with information to change behavior” (p.7). Although Waisbord recognized that promoters of entertainment-education were increasingly open to incorporating other social dimensions in their programs, entertainment-education remained anchored on behavior change models.

In fact, Waisbord suggested that there was a need to look for a convergence approach that could allow communication and development researchers and practitioners to integrate and work with various communication strategies regardless of their apparent disconnect. This question was taken on by Morris (2003) who analyzed 45 journal articles that used communication for development purposes. These articles were classified as either anchored in the diffusion or participatory paradigm. Morris concluded that there was a false dichotomy in most of the projects analyzed. Diffusion-based projects often used elements that could be defined as anchored in the participatory communication and vice versa. In 2005, Tufte, based on a review of EE-practices, developed a heuristic model which outlined three different generations of EE-practice. Roughly speaking, the first generation EE referred to those experiences embedded in the early

paradigm of behavior change communication. Second generation was the experiences oriented towards life skills development and articulating an emerging critique of the limitation of the BCC paradigm. Finally, the third generation reflected the growing focus on issues of empowerment, participation and structural change – connected to what today is well known as the communication for social change approach to EE. Each generation of EE represented a different understanding of a series of core concepts in EE: notions of entertainment, culture, catalyst, education, audience, etc. One of the fundamental and distinctive features between the generations was how they conceived of the problems they were a communication response to. The first generation defined the core problem as an information problem while the third generation defined the problems dealt with as being about structural inequalities, power relations and social conflict. The second generation interpreted the problems dealt with as being among lack of skills, but also relating to both the lack of information as the structural inequalities addressed in the third generation.

In 1997, John Sherry's review of twenty soap opera interventions around the world identified a number of methodological limitations and theoretical implications. At the theoretical level he emphasized that the complexity of social learning theory to explain changes in behaviors had not been fully captured in the operationalization of the entertainment-education projects analyzed. An even more striking observation made by Sherry referred to the limited understanding of audiences' interaction with entertainment-education content and messages and negotiation and sense-making processes, following the reception studies tradition, and suggested the need for further studies in this area, an observation that has been echoed more recently by public health professionals (Petraglia, 2007).

A more recent and explicit critique of the entertainment-education strategy is posed by Dutta (2008). In addition to labeling entertainment-education approaches as primarily a "one-way flow process" of communication (p.33), Dutta states that entertainment-education programs have served as a conduit for the promotion of Western values in developing contexts, and as a platform to prioritize certain health issues over others, that they pay limited attention to contextual and environmental factors that determine people's behaviors, and the episodic nature of entertainment-education

interventions. By contrast, Dutta argues, the emphasis should be “on developing a meaningful and profound relationship without the thrust of achieving campaign objectives within short-term periods” (p.36). This perspective resonates with ideas espoused in approaches such as communication for social change in which communication must focus on the creation of communication spaces for people’s voices.

6. Subject, Culture and Social Change in EE

In our analysis of peer-reviewed scholarship we identified a series of challenges which together lead us to suggest a three-pronged research agenda for the further elaboration of EE scholarship. These include the lack of incorporation of well-established communication traditions that arguably can contribute to a more holistic and interdisciplinary conceptual basis for the practice of EE; an increasing need to better understand not only what EE “does” to audiences, but how audiences interact with EE content and messages; a more in-depth reflection of how the emerging social change perspectives in development communication could and should be reflected in EE-scholarship. These challenges point towards three theoretical notions that we believe must be better understood in order to advance in EE science and scholarship (and consequently improve the design of EE practice). These include notions of subject, culture and social change.

6.1 Notions of subject

What understanding of the subject informs your approach to communication? Without unpacking a full philosophical discussion of notions of subject, subjectivity and self, it is important to be clear about the fact that different philosophical perceptions of the subject result in different understanding and expectations as to what communication is about, and what a communication intervention may entail. If you conceive of the subject as a unitary, autonomous subject (inspired by Kant) you are most likely to perceive it as a rational subject who, in accordance with linear communication models can be influenced to change behavior if the communication is clear, well planned and in sync with what formative research may show. In other words, in terms of communication theory, the notion of subject is linked to a functionalist school of thought, be it effects studies, social learning theory and behavior change communication.

If you conceive the subject as a social construction (inspired by Althusser, Foucault and Bourdieu) where the construction of the

subject occurs in the discourses that emerge in the interplay between (media) texts, audience and context, you will find your theoretical resonance within reception studies. Consequently, your notion of the subject is aligned with the sense-making models and theories of communication which conceive of the subject as an active player in the production of meaning. This notion of the subject is seen in reception theory from about 1980 and onwards (Hall, 1973/1980; Radway, 1984; Morley, 1986) and the following proliferation of qualitative audience studies). We argue that this notion of the subject is one of the key distinctive features emerging in some of the new EE studies. This notion of audience characterizes reception studies in opposition to previous audience studies known from uses and gratification and effects studies, and it is a growth area within EE studies. The non-controllable and unpredictable sense-making process is a distinctive feature recognized in reception theory. It contrasts the concern for predictability and control of sense-making inherent in many EE-initiatives. However, reception theory is not the only theoretical communication take on a social constructivist notion of the subject. The political subject, linking the subject to identity politics is seen in the work of scholars such as Michel de Certeau (1984) and Chantal Mouffe (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Mouffe, 1993). This again is tied in – as is reception theory – with the emergence of cultural studies in the UK, Scandinavia, Australia and Latin America in the 1980s and in the US in the 1990s (see below, the section on notion of culture). The determining role of everyday life as the locus for the construction of the subject is central in both Michel de Certeau’s and Chantal Mouffe’s work. It is a social construction of a political subject which emerges as discourse and as a social action, but is rooted firmly in the practices of everyday life.

Consequently, when it comes to the notion of subject in the mainstream of EE thinking –it remains a unitary, autonomous and rational subject which connects primarily with the functionalist school of thought and hardly connects with the notion of subject as reflected within reception theory and political theory as outlined above. We see this as a limitation which in part explains the emerging notion of subject in EE towards a social constructivist perspective.

6.2 Notions of culture

An inspiring book which helps clarify our proposed notion of culture is “Communicating Health” by Mohan Dutta (2008). In this

book Dutta presents and applies a culture-centred approach to health communication which in turn reflects the emergence of cultural studies as articulated at the Birmingham School in the early 1980s and has since spread in the Anglo-Saxon academic world. Similarly, the Latin American school of cultural studies¹ developed along a similar pathway, vindicating the credibility of popular culture as a nexus in the articulation of subjectivity and identity formation. The key difference between the British and the Latin American schools of cultural studies was the strong Latin American focus on connecting the proliferation of popular cultural forms of expression with social and political critique. This was also present in early British Cultural Studies, but tended, up through the 1980s, to dissolve into a mere celebration of active audience sense-making and cultural expression, with less emphasis on the social critique and orientation towards required social and structural change. The way Dutta presents his culture-centred approach to health communication is by making explicit the interaction between structure, culture and agency:

“The intersection of structure, culture and agency creates openings for listening to the voices of marginalized communities, constructing discursive spaces which interrogate the erasures in marginalized settings and offer opportunities for co-constructing the voices of those who have traditionally been silenced by engaging them in dialogue” (Dutta, 2008, p.5).

Just as Raymond Williams in the early 1970s termed culture as, namely “a way of life” (Williams, 1975), Dutta speaks of culture as “the local contexts within which health meanings are constituted and negotiated (2008). Culture is constituted by the day-to-day practices of its members as they come to develop their interpretations of health and illness and to engage in these day-to-day practices” (p. 7). In other words, rather than working with a static notion of culture as an essentialist category where culture becomes a container of static practices in the lives of people, his emphasis is on the way people in dynamic ways engage with and negotiate local cultural practices, interpreting phenomena of everyday life, be it illnesses, campaign-based media texts, famine, music or whatever element of everyday life. Culture, consequently, becomes a lived and negotiated social practice.

In relation to EE and the notion of culture, the most important difference between the dominant discourses in EE scholarship and the

emerging paradigm becomes apparent when identifying the starting point of an EE initiative. In the first, the focus is on a pre-established goal to which you wish to apply culture-sensitive communication strategies. In the latter the starting point is an analysis of everyday life (read: cultural practices) from which key development challenges emerge.

Consequently, our claim - when it comes to the notion of culture in the mainstream of EE thinking up until today - is that EE strategies, rather than taking the in-depth analysis of everyday life, culture and cultural practices as their starting point from which to develop the goals to pursue with the help of EE, they rather tend to pursue pre-established goals with the help of culture-sensitive applications of a basic EE model. We see this as a limitation which in part explains the emerging reorientation in the notion of culture in EE, a reorientation which aims towards a culture-centred approach to communication.

6.3 Notions of social change

Finally, the notion of social change remains what we might call an abused buzzword. By this we mean that it has come to be used about basically any form of change which lies beyond behavioral change. Clarifying and thus conceptualizing social change in the context of development work and EE is therefore crucial. This conceptualization is about aligning the concept with the different paradigms of development. The prevalent paradigms each imply a particular notion of social change, a conceptualization of what social change is about, who are the key stakeholders of that social change, and what social dynamics the change process entails. In rough terms, we may distinguish between four overall notions of social change, reflected in four different development theories. These core distinctions are as follows:

- the linearity of the modernization paradigm and its conceptualization of social change as a one-way development process. This notion of social change is primarily tied to economic development and linked to a market-oriented economy.
- the emerging critiques of the modernization paradigm retain a linear thinking of social change also as primarily economic growth, but rather emphasize a central role of the state – reflected in the dependency theories

- the participatory paradigm (or multiplicity paradigm) opens up to a sense of agency which recognizes the
- post-development paradigm and its emphasis on voice and representation of the marginalized in the mainstream discourse of development

Although these distinctions point towards different notions of how to conceive of social change processes, there are interrelations. At a more concrete level of specificity social change can be about changes in social norms, development of social capital, or changes in the social determinants impacting upon, for example, health conditions. However, the main point for this article is that social change is not a neutral concept, but a concept embedded both in theories of development and change and social science. Organizational theory, systems theory or complexity theories are also pathways currently being explored to theorize on particular dimensions of social change. However, we fully recognize that these theoretical formulations must be grounded or reflected in actual practice. While some organizations such as Soul City, Puntos de Encuentro and the Center for Communication Programs continually explore these approaches, researchers need to provide new and emerging illustrations of how other organizations are integrating these dimensions into their EE work. As the practice of EE continues to thrive and diversify, an examination of emerging and converging conceptual and theoretical underpinnings will remain an important area of study and research.

(Footnotes)

¹ The Latin American scholars that contributed to what we here call the Latin American School of Cultural Studies have never identified themselves with such a school. However, in retrospective, looking at what happened from the late 1970s and onwards in Latin America, we find patterns of thought and epistemological concern which identify such a label in equal terms as what has come to be known as the Birmingham School and as British Cultural Studies. Timewise, these were parallel intellectual trends, occurring in the 1980s and as such pre-dating the subsequent North American interest in cultural studies, emerging in the 1990s and onwards.

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TOWARDS A PARADIGM SHIFT IN EDUCATION-ENTERTAINMENT





Social networks as a platform to discuss sexual networks: Intersexions and Facebook as catalysts for behavior change

By Eliza Govender, Lauren Dyll-Myklebust, Richard Delate, and Natasha Sundar

Abstract

In South Africa alone, over 5.5 million people are on Facebook, representing over 9% of the country's total population. Given the extensive usage of social media in South Africa, this paper discusses a study conducted by staff and students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal to investigate the role social media can play in HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. A group of 19 students conducted a qualitative reception analysis of all comments posted on Facebook after the screening of 26 episodes of the entertainment education drama series, *Intersexions I*. The series follows the HIV and AIDS infection chain through 25 inter-connected but independent stories with the final episode bringing all the storylines together and being narrated by 'the voice of HIV'. The study explores the concepts of perceived risk and perceived efficacy that demonstrate specific behavioural outcomes (i.e. HIV testing) and how social media can extend dialogue and 'diffuse ideas' that contribute to social learning and knowledge exchange.

Key Words: social media, dialogue, behavior change, entertainment education, perceived threat, self-efficacy

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Introduction:

This is the first known study that analyses the real time content of online discussions that took place each week amongst viewers of the first season of the South African Entertainment Education (EE) television drama, *Intersexions* broadcast between October 2010 and April 2011. The paper examines the influence of the encoded HIV/AIDS behavior and social change messages in *Intersexions*, via comments posted on the Facebook¹ *Intersexions* page. The data for this study consists of Facebook participants' regular comments on each episode, their views on the *Intersexions*' sexual network storyline, and their own personal experiences and preferences regarding sexual relationships. The overall objective of the study is to explore the concepts of perceived risk and perceived efficacy (see Bandura, 2001; Green and Witte, 2006) that demonstrate specific behavioral outcomes (i.e. HIV testing) and social media's role in facilitating this.

The HIV context in South Africa

There are 6.1 million South Africans living with HIV, making this the largest number of people living with HIV in the world (UNAIDS, 2013). HIV data from South African antenatal clinics indicate that the epidemic has been stabilizing (Department of Health, 2010, p. 2); however, infection rates remain relatively high in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly with young people. Young people, especially females between the ages of 15-24, are reported to be most at risk (UNAIDS, 2008; UNAIDS, 2010). The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) 2008 Report on the global AIDS epidemic puts prevalence rates in South Africa of 15-19 year old males at around 4-5% and females at 15-17% (UNAIDS, 2008), with the UNAIDS 2012 report projecting a 17.9% prevalence for South African's ages 25-49 (UNAIDS, 2013). The high prevalence of HIV infection is partially due to factors such as Multiple and Concurrent Partnerships (MCP), transactional relationships, intergenerational sexual relationships (see Leclerc-Madlala, 2008), lack of correct and consistent condom usage, early sexual debut, teenage pregnancy, mother-to-child transmission and substance abuse, among other factors (Shisana *et al.*, 2009; UNICEF, 2011).

MCPs and low condom use in particular are among the risky sexual behaviors associated with HIV infection with young people. MCPs are a major contributing factor to the exponential growth of infections as

they have partnerships that overlap in time, where someone maintains more than one sexual partnership simultaneously, or where they begin a new relationship before ending the last one (Parker *et al.* 2007). Multiple partners coupled with concurrency increases the chances of HIV infection by creating multiple pathways for transmission (Shisana *et al.* 2009). This results in the creation of sexual networks of infection, which together with the higher viral load within the first few months of infection, greatly increase the chances of transmission (Halperin & Epstein, 2007). Despite this fact, these partnerships are often normative in South Africa (Parker, 2004), making HIV transmission a complex and multi-faceted sexual network.

MCPs also manifest in the form of transactional and intergenerational relationships. Transactional sexual relationships occur where gifts or money are exchanged for sexual favors (Parker *et al.* 2007, p. 6; Ridgard and Struthers, 2010). Intergenerational relationships occur where an age gap of five years or more exists between partners (Ridgard and Struthers, 2010). In South Africa the percentage of young women who report having sexual partners more than five years older than themselves rose from 18.5% in 2005 to 27.6% in 2008 (Shisana *et al.*, 2009). The 2012 Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) survey indicated a further peak in HIV prevalence among females aged 30-34 years at 36.8% and among males at 24.2% in the 35-39 year age group². Researchers identify a link between transactional and intergenerational sexual relationships (Ridgard & Struthers, 2010).

Consumerism and materialism have been identified as significant factors driving these relationships (Shisana *et al.*, 2009). Economic need, unemployment, and lack of parental support can simultaneously influence young people to engage in these types of relationships (Ridgard & Struthers, 2010). Economic disparity and age difference render one partner more powerful than the other, and may expose young people to violence, abuse and other risks such as HIV infection and unwanted pregnancies (Pettifor *et al.* 2004; Mercer *et al.* 2009). These types of relationships constitute the "sugar daddy phenomenon" which is viewed as an acceptable subculture in South African Society (John, 2012). The cultural context that drives this phenomenon is not only attributed to a largely patriarchal South African society but is also considered a "survival strategy" in poverty stricken areas (Leclerc-Madlala, 2008). Conversely it signals an ever-increasing global

obsession with materialism (see Mulwo *et.al*, 2009, Kunda 2009). The mass media's omnipresent focus on luxurious items and improving one's status also plays a role. Young women aspire to either own these items or achieve a glamorous status and they view older men as a means of acquiring these (Kuate-Defo, 2004). The protection of women from HIV is linked to protecting them from this financial dependence on older men (UNAIDS, 2010, p. 10) and to minimise the engagement in MCPs. The *Intersexions* television series was developed in 2010 with the objective of addressing issues of sexual networks and MCPs in an entertaining and educating way.

Intersexions: Entertainment Education Background

Intersexions is a South African produced multi-media intervention that addresses issues of HIV prevention, treatment, care and support and voluntary counselling and testing. The series is a joint production commissioned by South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) Education, SABC 1, Johns Hopkins Health and Education in South Africa (JHHESA), produced by Curious Pictures, Antz Media with funding by USAID/PEPFAR. It particularly aims to support those who have already adopted behaviors such as condom usage and partner reduction by promoting the maintenance of those behaviors. It also encourages those that may have stopped a given (risk-taking) behavior to re-adopt a behavior which places them at a lower risk of infection. A repeat broadcast of the series was shown by SABC 1 from July to December 2011 and a second series screened from 11 February 2013.

The series was supported through a 26 part radio talk show, aired on 10 SABC radio stations Lesedi FM and Ukhozi FM. *Intersexions Talkshow* was designed to stimulate discussion with audiences on topics introduced in the drama series. The use of the social media, *Facebook* and *Twitter* in particular, was used as a strategy to extend the dialogue beyond the drama series. The comments expressed on the *Intersexions* Facebook page took the form of discussion forums. These forums provided an online space that allowed users to post messages to a shared area (see Farmer, 2004). The forum facilitates discussion by its very existence and open nature, to which the users might not otherwise have access or be willing to openly participate in. Interaction on the Facebook page could arguably create a sense of virtual community or social network – a sense of commonality in an online setting. The

television series was awarded 11 out of the 14 South African Film and Television Awards (SAFTAs) in the Drama category, including best drama, best actor and best actress. The success of the series at the SAFTAs was followed with a prestigious Peabody Award after its first broadcast in 2010. The series is designed to bring to life the idea of entering a sexual network and focuses on some of the behaviors that place people at risk of HIV infection which include MCPs, alcohol and drug abuse, transactional sex, and inconsistent condom usage, as well as encouraging healthy behaviors such as HIV counselling and testing and treatment adherence. The series also tackles vulnerable populations such as men who have sex with men (MSM), sex workers and mobile populations, such as transport workers and mine workers³, to demonstrate the structural factors that place people at risk of HIV.

Entertainment

Intersextions follows an HIV infection chain told through 25 interrelated but independent stories each addressing a different dimension of HIV. The series ends with a “docu-drama” in which the storylines and the series’ intentions are narrated by the voice of HIV. *Intersextions* adopts an EE approach, which is a “theory-based communication theory 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 population” (Wang & Singhal, 2009, p. 272-273; see also Tufte, 2008).

Watching South African characters on *Intersextions* allows the audience to identify at some level with the characters involved and through this identification to explore their own behaviors and attitudes towards issues and situations embedded in the storyline. *Intersextions* thus demonstrates the circumstances, relationships and behaviors that facilitate HIV infection (perceived threat), while also supporting the uptake of HIV counselling and testing, treatment, care and support (perceived efficacy). Each episode presents a different situation in which HIV can be transmitted⁴. It presents a full spectrum of characters with which a wide audience can identify, thus capturing the imagination of audiences from a range of different circumstances. The narrative is both character and theme driven. Different sexual partners offer variety in the characters’ lives, and the narrative is based on the

premise that our lives are interconnected and as soon as we have sex, we are locked into a network that connects us all (Delate *et al.*, 2011). The narrative structure follows a murder mystery “who done it?” formulae that increases its entertainment value) as the audience is kept guessing as to where the HIV chain started. This narrative strategy encouraged the audience to critically engage with the storyline without relying on an overtly didactic HIV and AIDS message⁵.

Education

Intersexions' educational component addresses a set of intervening cognitive, social and emotional variables, collectively referred to as “ideation”. Ideation refers to new ways of thinking, as well as the diffusion of those ways of thinking via social interaction within a social network (Cleland & Wilson 1987; Kincaid, 2000b). These ideational variables are derived from diffusion of innovation theory (Rogers, 2003) and social network theory (Montgomery & Casterline, 1996; Rogers & Kincaid, 1981) that extends diffusion theory in response to claims of its focus on individual psychology. These theories are combined to explain the psychological and social factors of ideation and to derive appropriate measures for research (Kincaid, 2000b). In the context of mass communication and behavior change, ideational factors can indirectly influence behavior by increasing knowledge (by increasing perceived risk and perceived efficacy), changing attitudes, or encouraging discussion (Kincaid *et al.*, 2002b).

Intersexions also aims to provide the audience with knowledge that enables them to make informed decisions about protecting themselves against HIV, undergoing HIV counseling and testing or accessing treatment. The ideational factors mentioned above directly impact on the behavioral outcomes that the series seeks to address. These include: i) increasing the uptake of HIV counseling and testing; ii) increasing open and honest discussions within relationships; iii) reducing the number of sexual partners; iv) increasing and maintaining condom usage; and iv) reducing the levels of alcohol consumption and promoting the uptake of counseling and treatment (Delate *et al.*, 2011).

This study investigates the role of social media, Facebook in particular, in extending dialogue and diffusing (Rogers, 2003) the ideas initiated in the *Intersexions* series through the *Intersexions* Facebook page where viewers posted comments about the series. Facebook participants regularly commented on each episode by sharing their

thoughts on storylines, onscreen behavior of characters, issues raised by the series, and their own personal experiences of sexual relationships and HIV and AIDS. This study focuses on the combination of two mediums, namely TV (by means of the EE drama series) and social media (the Facebook page dedicated to the series) and their role in facilitating discussion on HIV prevention, care, support and treatment. While the drama series created a “fan following”, the Facebook page allowed viewers and fans to engage with the topics raised in the series. The attraction of social media is that it perhaps allows people to connect with each other in “ways that are valuable, meaningful, and convenient, on their own terms and on an unprecedented scale” (Blanchard, 2011).

Trends in social media

The use of the social media to promote HIV prevention, care, support and treatment formed the basis of discussion of a high-level panel on HIV and AIDS held at the University of Stellenbosch in 2011. According to Michel Sidibe, UNAIDS Executive Director, “[T]he potential of new technologies to re-energize the AIDS-movement is clear. We need nothing less than an HIV prevention revolution, with social media and mobile technology at its core”⁶. According to UNAIDS (2009) half of the world’s two billion internet users have used some form of social media. Africa has seen a 2357% growth in internet usage between 2000 and 2010⁷ and in 2013 there was over 5.5 million South Africans on Facebook alone representing approximately 9 % of the total population of the country. Since then, the last six months has seen over 700 000 South Africans join Facebook⁸. “The social media holds huge potential to help raise awareness and mobilise the social action needed to turn the tide on the HIV epidemic”⁹. A number of HIV role players (see JHHESA, loveLife, MyMsta) have recognized the significance of the social media, and have initiated Facebook pages and *Twitter* accounts for audiences to follow relevant Facebook discussions.

However, incorporating social media into an intervention leaves it open to the potential pitfalls of the media. Journalists have noted large-scale misuse of social media, for instance girls have used *Mxitto* to sell semi-nude pictures of themselves in South Africa (Campbell, 2008, p. 9; Gounden, 2009, p.5). In an analysis of *loveLife’s* social networking site *MYMsta*, several examples of this are noted, in a discussion on sugar daddies, several participants encourage young women to pursue

transactional relationships (Sundar, 2013, pp. 72-77). So while social media can facilitate dialogue, the use of social media for educational purposes and knowledge transferal has to continuously be monitored.

In order to counteract some of the negative influences of social media, JHHESA appointed a professional sexologist to respond to user questions and comments, and manage the *Intersexions* Facebook page. Facebook, as the social media form, can therefore allow for the expansion of dialogue, incorporating those that produce media (JHHESA and their partners) and those that consume media (*Intersexions* audience and Facebook users). Social media, therefore, inverts traditional communication practices, providing a forum through which audiences can provide instantaneous feedback, input, dialogue and critique in relation to a given topic (Smith, Wollan and Zhou, 2011). This feedback and dialogue constitute the data that is analysed in this study.

Methodology

The data for this research is constituted by the real time responses of viewers commenting on the *Intersexions* Facebook page during the screening of season one. The study examines audience's responses in terms of how *Intersexions*; i) imparted new skills or knowledge, ii) impacted on cognitive and emotional ideational factors amongst the viewer/participants, and the ways in which) social media promotes dialogue on various HIV-related issues through the *Intersexions* Facebook social networks. The research employed a qualitative interpretivist approach. It takes the form of a reception analysis of viewer/participant responses in discussions on the *Intersexions* Facebook page. The analysis is conducted using a media-culturalist perspective and media-materialist approach (McQuail, 2010).

The media-culturalist approach considers the audience member's perspective in relation to a specific example or genre of media culture (e.g. the *Intersexions* series) and "explores the subjective meaning of the experience in a given context" (McQuail, 2010, p. 13). A media-materialist approach frames the study in terms of potential effects (e.g. to deliver a health message to curb risky behavior), by the nature of the medium in respect of the technology (e.g. through a traditional mass medium channel like TV and/or through social networking) and the social relations of reception and production that are implicated by this (McQuail, 2010). This research addresses what *Intersexions* messages

“did to” the viewer/participants in terms of influencing their knowledge, attitudes and behavior (media effects). It examines how the viewer/participants use Facebook as a platform to “react to” these messages (uses and gratifications model). Nineteen graduate students from The Centre for Communication, Media and Society (CCMS)¹⁰ were each provided with a data set consisting of viewer/participant Facebook responses to a singular and differing *Intersexions* episode. Data sets consisting of groups of comments on each episode were organised and analysed by the students using the qualitative data analysis software package, NVivo 8. Data was reviewed, cleaned and coded in order to address the objectives and research questions specified above.

Theoretical considerations

Whilst students analysed data across a range of ideational factors, the authors of this paper have specifically focused on the data that suggests behavioral influence; voluntary counselling and testing demonstrated the most significant outcome in terms of perceived threat and perceived efficacy, and the data that demonstrates the influence of social media in facilitating dialogue among viewers to address various HIV and AIDS-related issues. Albert Bandura’s social cognitive theory (1971, 1995, 2001) and Kim Witte’s Extended Parallel Process Model (EPPM)(1992, 1998, see also, Witte & Allen 2000; Green & Witte, 2006; Maloney, Lapinski and Witte, 2011) frames the analysis and have been influential in the creation and analysis of other EE interventions and strategies.

Health communication can influence behavior in multiple ways: i) it seeks to create awareness or generate knowledge of the issue being addressed by *providing the audience with information* about the topic, the availability of services, and how to do something (Krige, 2012), ii) to *legitimise a new behavior* making it easier to talk about it with others as well as to practice it (see Mulwo *et al*, 2009); iii) to *improve people’s attitudes* by emphasizing the positive benefits of the behavior being demonstrated as well as the negative outcomes that may arise if the behavior is not practiced (see Mutinta, 2012); and iv) to connect and *encourage people to access services* by modelling what to expect and how to act when they arrive (see Kunda, 2009). These key principles of health communication informed the design and development of *Intersexions*. The storyline interwove plots that provided the audience

with information, and incorporated role-model characters to encourage the adoption of new behaviour and maintenance of good behaviour.

Communication programs often apply role modelling theories to encourage audiences to model positive behaviors that are presented through the communication intervention. Bandura's (1971; 1986; 1995; 2001) social cognitive theory asserts that audiences identify with characters who demonstrate behavior that engages with their emotions, facilitates mental rehearsal and ultimately role modelling of the new behavior. The behavior model in mass media also offers vicarious reinforcement to motivate audiences to adopt, maintain and reinforce certain behaviors (Piotrowet *al*, 1997). Role-modelling can thus encourage self-efficacy, defined as an individual's perceived ability to perform a particular behavior (Bandura, 1977, 1989, 1997). The importance of self-efficacy in behavior change is further emphasized through Witte's EPPM(Witte, 1992, 1998; see also Maloney, Lapinski and Witte, 2011).

The EPPM is a message design theory that provides a framework for effective communication of health-related information (Maloney, Lapinski & Witte, 2011). According to Kim Witte and Mike Allen (2000), the key variables in fear theory are fear, perceived threat and perceived efficacy. With these variables, fear is defined as an adverse emotion, accompanied by a high level of arousal (Witte 1992, 1998). Perceived threat focuses on the perceived susceptibility to the threat (the extent to which one feels at risk of experiencing the threat), and perceived severity of the threat (the level of harm from the threat). Perceived efficacy, the third variable of fear theory, comprises perceived self-efficacy (belief in ability to perform the recommended response) and perceived response efficacy (perception about whether the response averts the threat) (Witte & Allen 2000, Witte 1992, Witte 1998). Witte and Allen's meta-theory of fear indicates that a health message should focus on susceptibility and severity, but still maintain the focal point of self-efficacy so that the receiver is more inclined to follow through with a positive behavior change.

Fear theory operates on the premise that people will undertake an appraisal process if they perceive a threat in their environment. According to Lisa Murray-Johnson (2001), an appraisal process increases people's awareness that they are susceptible to a threat and that the threat is severe. Only when people identify the severity of the threat, will they proceed to appraise protective and safe behaviour. Therefore, "the high level of fear, paired with strong efficacy

perceptions and the knowledge that they could do something to avert infection, create optimal conditions for behavioural change, in line with what current fear appeal theory suggests" (Green & Witte, 2006,p.253).

If appraisal of a threat results in a high or moderate perception of a threat then fear is elicited and people are motivated to begin the second appraisal, which is to evaluate the efficacy of the recommended response (Witte, 1992). When the threat is perceived as low, there is no motivation to process the message; an example could be a married couple who, because they feel they are in a faithful relationship, do not feel motivated to test for HIV. When perceived threat and perceived efficacy are high, danger control processes are initiated and the message is accepted. The EPPM acknowledges that fear does not directly cause adaptive change but can *influence* adaptive changes when it is mediated by perceived threat in high perceived efficacy conditions (Witte, 1992). In this study, the EPPM was used to understand how the viewer/participants read fear appeal messages combined with efficacy in *Intersexions*. Self-efficacy is relevant in this study, since the viewer/participant's Facebook responses to the episodes provide anecdotal evidence as to whether they believe in their capabilities of changing behavior to prevent HIV and AIDS transmission.

Intersexions' driving theme of, "Do you know your lover's lovers?" relates to the sexual network chain that suggests that everyone is connected through their previous sexual partners. The message is that if you are aware of your lover's previous lovers you can appropriately protect yourself against HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs). The series was strategically designed based on a combination of fear with efficacy, since fear alone could lead to a form of emotional paralysis and increase the potential for a boomerang effect by rejecting the message. *Intersexions* therefore attempts to navigate the balance between fear and efficacy (see Witte & Allen, 2000).

Data Analysis

Below is a discussion of some of the data that examines audience responses around perceived threat and self-efficacy making specific reference to behavioral outcomes such as voluntary counselling and testing. The data also explores how social media contributes to the creation of risk awareness and as a mode to facilitate dialogue for the stimulation of self-efficacy.

Increased perceived threat and self-efficacy – behavior outcomes

The data generated on *Facebook* indicated that *Intersexions*, overall, had increased viewer/participants' perceived threat to HIV infection which in turn, could be argued to have increased their efficacy. In many cases, participants' decoding of the various threats in each of the episodes was managed through a positive self-reported behavioral outcome which culminated in some form of action. One of the most significant responses to the series was the increase of reported voluntary testing. For example, episode 8 data on *Facebook* demonstrated that 18% of the participants reported HIV testing after watching that particular *Intersexions* episode. While people can get tested for various reasons (pregnancy, testing with partners to progress in a relationship, fear after a one night stand), many responses cited *Intersexions* as the direct influence for their decision to get tested. When respondents were asked on *Facebook*, why they got tested, some responses included: "INTERSEXIONS. That's y!" (*Facebook* participant 2011), and "The episode was an eye-opener, I went today to check my status" (*Facebook* participant 2011). Discussions after episode 21 indicated that viewer/participants were willing to get tested, wanted their partners to get tested and encouraged condom usage. Directly after this episode fifteen participants openly stated that they had been for an HIV test and in some cases they disclosed their status. One of the *Facebook* participants (2011) reported that not only had she gone for a test but that she also convinced her partner, siblings and two friends to get tested. These direct responses from viewer/participants indicate that they perceived the threat of HIV adequately to encourage testing for HIV, and that the episode generated greater self-efficacy (possibly through the actions of the characters) to move beyond perceived risk to self and collective efficacy (see Witte & Allen 2000, p. 609).

In four cases, viewer/participants enquired about home testing kits (where to access one or if there was such a thing). Although these viewers did not actually go to get tested, there is still a level of perceived efficacy for the "intention" of taking action against the threat (Leventhal & Mora, 2008, p. 53). According to Witte (1992; 1998) when perceived efficacy, follows perceived threat, there is no guarantee that self-efficacy will follow, however, it does indicate that some level of appraisal has taken place. In some cases, the perceived threat may have been low for these viewers as opposed to others. Perceived efficacy in this case highlights the viewer/participants' intention and motivation to

take action (through HIV testing). Bandura's concept of self-efficacy suggests that the person should have the confidence that he/she can perform a particular behavior (Bandura 1977, 1989, 1997). This is evident through the responses from viewer/participants who actually tested, and explored some form of changed behavior as a result of finding out their status. One viewer/participant stated: "I'm proud to say I'm from the last week Thursday, I'm proudly negative and no more fooling around at least for now" (Facebook Participant 2011).

Some viewer/participants also discussed their concerns about their partners who refuse to get tested. In many responses, words such as "fear" and "scared" were used to suggest that they were concerned about their partners HIV status. Some highlighted that they have waited a long time for their partners to get tested, but it is not likely to ever happen. However, the characters in *Intersections* and the viewer/participants on Facebook, became role models (Bandura 1977, 1989, 1997) to others who were experiencing difficulty with encouraging their partners to test. Some viewer/participants opted to walk out of the relationship if their partners refused to get tested, "He is going to get tested or fly" (Facebook participant, 2011). Through the sharing of information and stories, viewer/participants were able to identify with the characters of *Intersections* and the responses on Facebook, and were therefore motivated to take action. If the viewer perceives themselves as similar to the role model the likelihood of enacting a behavior is strengthened. These perceptions of similarity can be influenced by the model's personal attributes (gender, race, age) and social background (social class, education, religion) (Bandura 1986, see also McGregor, 2005; Dlamini, 2012).

The importance of this identification in role modelling was explored in a study, of the "relationship" between HlubiMboya, a television personality best known for her portrayal of Nandipha, an HIV-positive character, on the popular South African soap opera *Isidingo – The Need*, and her audiences (Dlamini, 2012). *Isidingo's* head writer, Greig Coetzee, states that Nandipha was used to change the public's "fatalistic approach" by showing audiences that one can live with the disease and still lead a healthy and productive life (Blair, 2006). Female respondents, in the study, displayed a strong parasocial relationship with Nandipha as they perceived themselves as similar to Nandipha along lines of gender, ethnicity, and age (Dlamini, 2012).

While some viewer/participants were mobilized to get themselves tested, others revisited their sexual relationships with their partners in the absence of testing. The study found that the series not only encouraged people to test themselves but also encouraged collective efficacy through people talking about the importance of testing with their peers, family and partners. The majority of the viewer/participants who commented on Facebook, decided to do an HIV test after seeing the episode where a man (Des) cheats on his wife (Virginia), with his secret lover (Ruth) and later contracts HIV due to unprotected sex. The conversations on *Facebook* emphasized the importance of taking responsibility for your own health and one participant said: "If you can't tell your partner to go test with u then u should rather not have sex with him period" (Facebook Participant, 2011). This episode in particular highlighted the perceived susceptibility to risk which was high enough to constitute an action to test for HIV, and their perceived response efficacy is elevated by the *Intersexions* storylines. *Intersexions*, in this instance was able draw attention to viewers on the need to be responsible about their own sexual practices and make responsible choices.

In the discussions on HIV testing, fear was evident in the responses, however, many viewer/participants were encouraged to continue the discussion on testing or to go for tests. So whilst many viewer/participants identified the perceived threat through the use of fear appeals, *Intersexions* also elicited self-efficacy for many viewers/participants.

Social media creates dialogue on HIV related issues

This section presents a range of examples to demonstrate the influence of social media in addressing several issues which are often not discussed publicly or in social settings. Many viewer/participants drew attention to specific issues of stigma related to anti-retroviral (ARV) treatment and testing. In addition, issues of sexuality were also openly discussed using Facebook as a platform. Episode 21 directly addressed stigma associated with taking ARVs. Viewer/participant comments on Facebook suggest that people are afraid of being seen receiving or taking ARV treatment for fear that they will be stigmatized. Further comments by participants suggested that the side-effects of taking ARVs are visible which become "stigma symbols" (Facebook participant, 2011). Many of the viewer/participants suggest that when a

person takes ARVs their physical appearance drastically changes and this reveals their HIV status which in turns creates stigma. Issues of the stigma related to ARVs were evident through participant comments that suggest "other people send their families in clinics or hospitals to go and collect their medications" (Facebook participant, 2011). Another participant said that "they even change arvs container" (Facebook participant, 2011).

The discussions on Facebook regarding issues of stigma also demonstrated the fear associated with viewer/respondents knowing their status, which is often directed from family and friends. In many responses, the fear of stigma associated with a HIV positive status, was the deterrent for getting tested. In these cases, the perceived threat was high, but the stigma associated with the risk was greater, thus resulting in no self-efficacy towards testing. One Facebook participant commented that "If I got it, I definitely won't tell my friends and family cos i know how they'd react" (Facebook participant, 2011). However, other viewer/participants also responded against the issues of high stigma associated with HIV and testing. It is important to note that self-efficacy will still manifest in cases where viewer/respondents demonstrated an ability to overcome their fear related to HIV. Another participant commented on the Facebook page: "Let's not judge. Rather support them. It might be u tomorrow, I don't care how careful, it might be u tomorrow. My friend/relative with HIV/AIDS is still my friend/relative!" (Facebook participant, 2011).

In the episode regarding ARVs and traditional medicine, the failure to take ARVs (the threat) can undermine one's health as is the case in the situation of Rosie, Ntombi's friend. Ntombi manages the threat to her health through sneakily taking ARVs, so the threat lies in not taking ARVs as depicted by Rosie, while efficacy is shown through Ntombi who does take ARVs. Framed in the logic of Witte's EPPM, (1992, 1998, see also, Witte & Allen, 2000; Green & Witte, 2006; Maloney, Lapinski & Witte, 2011) it is evident that the episode's intention is for the audience to identify the threat (fear) and model their behavior on the outcome that they believe will best manage that threat (efficacy). Throughout the series this balance of fear and efficacy is carefully woven into the story lines.

The episodes allowed viewer/participants to speak more openly and gain support on "traditionally taboo" subjects within a social media environment. Some of the responses revealed how young women who have been sexually abused are usually unable to talk about it with close

family members, freely discussed these issues and gain support via *Facebook*.

I've also been a victim of rape (on more than one occasion)...I have never shared this information with anyone. I just keep living my life and I don't care about telling anyone coz that might cause family disruptions or worse, they could decide to ignore it and call me a liar and I don't want to go through that again (Facebook participant, 2011).

What was also interesting to discover in the data was the openness and willingness with which several young women opened up about their sexual abuse. One participant in particular won the admiration of many participants and many found her to be encouraging, as revealed in statements such as, "You are such a remarkable woman, I truly admire you. After everything that you've been through you still forgive and love your kid" (Facebook participant, 2011).

This example illustrate show *Intersexions*, although not explicitly revealing a role-model on episode 18, has rather instigated dialogue and through the dialogue, a role-model from amongst the participants arose. These comments on Facebook indicate that while *Intersexions* offered a range of issues around HIV related topics, the viewer/respondents recognize their perceived threats and develop the agency to openly share and discuss their feelings of fear, sadness and anxiety towards self-efficacy. This also highlights the role of social media in providing support in discussion forums by providing a space for encouragement and affirmation. The perceived self-efficacy of the participant who revealed her story, may encourage role modeling in the same way that the series does, and so the social media platform may assist to encourage dialogue and the perceived response efficacy of other participants.

The three main concepts of social cognitive learning (Bandura, 1971, 1995, 2001) are applicable to the data analyzed. The first of these include the idea that people learn from observation. By watching the various episodes, people live through the lives of the characters and empathize with their situation. Such an instance has encouraged many young women to openly discuss their sexual abuse experience, a topic that is still considered a taboo in much of South African society. The second concept is that a conscious internal mental awareness is necessary for such an observation. This is evident by the amount of

dialogue that has been initiated and the mature and honest comments with which the participants respond. The encouragement from other viewer/participants and JHHESA-appointed professional sexologist, which is likely to result in a feeling of pride by those that shared their stories, provides the intrinsic reinforcement that Bandura (1971, 1995, 2001) argues is necessary for social cognitive learning. The third concept centres on the idea that not all observed behaviors are effectively learnt, as is evident in some viewer/participants' refusal to have an HIV test. In order for effective behavior modelling to occur the four steps of attention, retention, reproduction and motivation need to be appropriately undertaken.

Social media is useful in facilitating these four steps as it has the ability to allow individuals to voice their opinions and suggestions, to share their knowledge and to ask for information on social media platforms such as Facebook. Social media provides an ideal interactive platform to provide additional information which is discussed in an interpersonal way. Initiatives that embrace participation are often more successful at facilitating knowledge attainment as well as behavior and social change amongst its viewer/participants (see Kincaid & Figueroa 2009; Dutta, 2008). Thus, *Intersexions'* use of social media demonstrates that it is an appropriate medium for the facilitation of discussions around HIV related topics in South Africa, and as an extended form of entertainment education.

The comments received on the Facebook page about the various issues raised through *Intersexions* demonstrate the relevance of social networks to discuss issues of sexual networks particularly around sexuality, faithfulness, and HIV testing. Below is a reflection of some of the influences of social media for discussions around a range of HIV issues facilitated through *Intersexions*.

Social media firstly extends dialogue thus diffusing ideas (Rogers, 2003, Rogers & Kincaid, 1981) – the TV series provides the message and Facebook is the platform that allows for dialogue (facilitated by a sexologist on the site). Some of the comments on *Facebook* indicated that *Intersexions* was a catalyst for dialogue regarding a range of sexuality and HIV prevention issues which included prevention, treatment, care and support; and counselling and testing among others. The comments also confirmed that young people want to have a platform to discuss these issues in a non-stigmatizing environment which facilitates mutual sharing of ideas towards collection action.

Although many viewer/participants have photos and profiles with Facebook, they can still choose to be anonymous and this assists in people being more open and honest and decreases the fear of stigmatization.

Facebook has become the participatory platform for dialogue to occur between audience members and between the audience and the *Intersexions* creators, as “participatory development requires dialogue - a symmetrical, two way process of communication” (Kincaid & Figueroa, 2009, p. 507) as opposed to traditional development communication’s asymmetrical one-way process of communication. Dialogue is the first stage of collective action which can then result in individual and social changes (Kincaid & Figueroa, 2009). Similarly, on the *Intersexions* Facebook page many people not only discuss the show, but also talk to each other about their own sexual activities and behavior and the relevance of *Intersexions* to their own lives (Delate, 2010). The responses showed that dialogue was indeed facilitated through social media. Overall, *Intersexions* through the use of social media contributed to social learning through providing new knowledge but also reinforced existing knowledge.

We are an ignorant society and I am glad there is an individual who got up and wrote this eye opening drama. I for one learned a lot and vow to myself to be faithful and considerate of my health faithful and considerate of my health (Facebook participant, 2011)

This study also indicates that social media can be used in conjunction with EE initiatives to encourage discussion on existing and new information regarding HIV and related issues. Social media adds value in the provision of additional information and the creation of more holistic and integrated HIV messages connecting it to other health issues and social problems.. While an *Intersexions* episode deals with a particular topic as it relates to an entertaining storyline, the use of Facebook allows many interpretations of these messages to be shared as well as opportunities for educational discussions. The message is, thus, not limited to the episode theme. The message is mobilized by the participants as they connect it to their own lives and the broader South African context.

Conclusion

This article discussed some of the data analyzed by 19 students from the University of KwaZulu-Natal on the comments posted on Facebook after the screening of 26 episodes of the entertainment education drama series, *Intersexions*. This paper used Bandura's social cognitive theory and Witte's EPPM to explore the responses of participants on the Facebook page in terms of their perceived threat and perceived efficiency after watching the *Intersexions* series. Social media is indeed a useful vehicle that can supplement, if not drive, the effects and influences of EE vehicles, such as *Intersexions*. By analysing Facebook comments of viewer/participants active reception process, it showed that users actively interpret and use the media to discuss topics and issues that are relevant to the episode, their lives, and to the broader HIV/AIDS context in South Africa. The study also highlighted that social media is another platform that is imperative in HIV and AIDS communication. Combined with other traditional means of communication as undertaken by *Intersexions*, social media appears to play a facilitating role in how viewers/participants deal with dynamic factors around HIV and AIDS.

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Mining Edutainment from mainstream soap operas

By George Ngugi King'ara

Abstract

The theme of this article is that conventional soap operas as narratives are agents of culture that can be used to comment and assess the “realities” of life in terms of how it can be lived. In this sense, these soap operas can be seen as educational. While they may differ from entertainment-education (EE) dramas in their strategies of incorporating educational messages, conventional soap operas do carry educational messages nonetheless. Also, like EE programs, conventional soap operas appeal powerfully to their viewers through the viewers’ involvement with characters and narratives, identification with characters and situations featured in the narrative, and through the para-social relationships viewers seek to have with performers in such soaps. Hence, one can argue that such similarities between conventional soap operas and EE drama suggest that there is a need for research into the potential of soap operas in influencing specific behavior change. This author suggests an untested hypothesis for such research, by concluding that conventional soap operas can achieve some key goals of EE television dramas. However, this can only happen when the belief that any form of storytelling via entertainment television is predicated on the quest for lessons worth teaching and learning

Key words: entertainment-education, soap operas, functional narratives

Introduction:

Entertainment television programmes have utility value because viewers engage in watching them to boost their mood (Zillmann, 2000; Zillmann & Bryant, 1994), escape, or be diverted from their problems. They allow viewers to relax by acting as a channel for emotional release and in general provide the audience with the aesthetic enjoyment that

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comes from visual presentations (Bastien & Bromley, 1980; Marsden, 1981; Abelman & Atkin, 2002). Soap operas as entertainment programmes are particularly dynamic in promoting audiences' social interactivity and locating them within their socio-cultural-political networks. In this respect, soaps facilitate the audience's self-reflexivity as they negotiate socially ascribed subjectivities, hence allowing them to view their world from more personalized perspectives. For this reason, even conventional soap operas now constitute important narratives that many people are exploring in order to make sense of the social world they live in (Ang, 1985, 1991, 1996). They offer stories that authenticate the audience's world by reflecting that world back to them. Soap operas are also agents of culture, meaning that they contribute in teaching and concretising audiences' attitudes about their societies' values. In this sense, conventional soap operas could be viewed as educational (King'ara, 2010), despite the fact that their production is not supported by theory, as are entertainment-education (EE) dramas (Singhal & Rogers, 2002).

This article makes the case that conventional soap operas may achieve some of the goals of EE television dramas. It discusses when and how production and viewing of conventional soap operas can be regarded as teaching and learning experiences, respectively. Nevertheless, this author does not intend to theorize conventional soap operas in a way that would classify them as EE. Instead, he suggests that scholars of EE should perhaps in the future consider investigating the educational impact of conventional soaps.

Methodology

The author borrows from his field research conducted in Nairobi on the practices of producing entertainment programs in Kenya (King'ara, 2010). The research was guided by the assumption that in many cultural traditions thriving in Kenya, stories have a role to play as every story told has a moral lesson. Storytelling is never vain entertainment, and narratives, as agents of culture, can be used to comment on and assess the "realities" of life in terms of how it could be lived. Two conventional soap operas, *Uhondo* and *Reflections*, were selected for the study. While both dramas were produced for entertainment purposes, each drama was also designed to meet the objectives of the production houses where it was produced. This compelled the producers of each program to conceptualize their audiences

accordingly. NTV, a commercial television station owned by the Nation Media Group, contracted Eagles Media Agents to produce *Uhondo* as an outsourcing strategy so that the station could prioritize the production of news and current affairs programs in-house. In contrast, *Reflections* was an in-house production of Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) Channel 1 created in the Department of Youth, Education, Women and Children.

Interviews were conducted with subjects who participated in the production of *Uhondo* and *Reflections* to establish the motivating and guiding factors in how they approached the program's production activities. Comments were also elicited from viewers of the two soaps regarding their feelings on how these soaps appealed to them, and what meanings they derived from them. Impromptu viewing sessions of these programs were organized whereby the audience watched and responded to episodes of the two programs. Other audience commentary on *Uhondo* and *Reflections* was collected from relevant letters and emails that the audience sent to the respective television stations where the two soap operas were produced. The audience commentary was then analyzed against the stated goals and aspirations of the producers of *Uhondo* and *Reflections* in terms of what they had hoped the audience would gain from watching these dramas.

Theoretical Framework

The author employs two notions suggested by Singhal and Rogers (2002) that should form part of a theoretical agenda for future research into EE. The first one is the notion that discourses existing in the EE message environment can create potent resistance to EE discourses, especially when popular media messages (from television in this case) have been seen to legitimize negative social trends (Bandura, 2001). In such circumstances, audiences may tend to have a low opinion about the educational value of messages emanating from such media. However, the author's position with regards to this form of resistance is that when audiences in such an environment are supportive of a given medium by tagging it "valuable", narrative content conveyed through such a medium may be accepted as educational—especially if such an attitude is pervasively embedded in the audience's socio-cultural psyche (King'ara, 2010). In such a scenario, whether such messages are carried via theory-supported EE programs or conventional entertainment programs is irrelevant. In the light of this proposal, it is

conceivable that *Uhondo* and *Reflections* were accepted as educational because they were created and viewed within a socio-cultural environment where producers and audiences alike seemed to agree on the educational role of television in society (King'ara, 2010).

The second theoretical notion applicable is the one relating to how producers and audiences of conventional entertainment television drama acquire a predisposition for the said programs' narratives, enough to regard them as educational. According to Walter Fisher's (1987) narrative theory, people are essentially storytellers, and storytelling is useful for the development of human beings (Ong, 1982; Okigbo, 1998). Hence, storytelling via television can be seen as functional, as designed for achieving general aims in the enrichment of members of a society. Using the two theoretical notions presented here, and the consideration of the powerful nature of conventional soap opera to attract and influence audiences, the author advances his claim that conventional soap operas may at times achieve the goals of EE drama.

What's in the soap?

Set in central environments where ordinary people (across the world) spend a significant amount of time in their lives—in the home, the work place, the hospital and the social/public place such as the bar or restaurant—most soap operas feature familiar spaces where people tend to congregate. Such environments enhance the social interactivity necessary for dramatic relationships between soap opera characters. Since the soap opera is also underpinned by conflict, these environments of social gathering catalyze the actions of the characters in that direction. Stories of the interactions of these characters (usually about love, family and business relationships) are interwoven with those of other characters as each character appears to be connected with all the characters in the overall soap opera drama (Bignell, 2004). For this reason, soaps tend not to have central characters, although they may feature distinctive heroes and villains. The struggles of the villains and their allies against the heroes and their allies unravel slowly in many short scenes over an extended period of time that actually parallels real time.

Indeed, some of the most successful soap operas can run for more than 50 years having featured numerous episodes (Allen, 1995). Although there are many reasons why soaps are popular, many studies

(Hobson, 1982; Ang, 1985; Geraghty, 1991; Liebes and Katz, 1990; Miller, 1992) emphasize that identification with soap characters or their situations is central to the attraction of its audience. This identification can range from the audience's recognition of familiarity in the characters' predicaments, attitudes toward life, morals, cultural values and even fashion. Through identification, audiences emulate various things from the soaps' characters and may sometimes apply what they copied from such characters in their real lives. Daniel Miller's (1992) study on how Trinidadians used the American soap, *The Young and the Restless*, to appropriate the fashion depicted in that soap to represent culturally meaningful aspects of their lives is one practical example. Miller noted that for participants in his study, clothing (fashion, styles) mediated identification with the soap opera's characters. Later, however, this identification translated into "direct copying of clothes, so that seamstresses [(for example) viewed] watching the soap operas as part of their job" (Miller, 1992, p. 223)—because they could learn new fashion trends from the soap characters' clothes.

Ang notes that "what appeals to audiences in a serial is connected to their social situations, histories, aesthetics and cultural preferences" (1985, p. 46). In addition, the mythical realism of soap operas is a meta-commentary on the nature of truth itself. The melodramatic representations in soaps of characters dealing with the mundane and quotidian serve this purpose. In so far as these representations involve the psychological conflicts of characters as their lives are unsettled by their estrangement from core social institutions, particularly the family, church, school etc., they become meaningful to many viewers. The depiction of characters' movements within these institutions in soaps represents a reality that viewers recognize as it reminds them of the responsibility of living within institutions that epitomize and consolidate their sense of community (King'ara, 2010).

As the audience becomes intimately familiar with soap characters and their lives on an emotional level, the experience of "feeling with the characters" personalizes and individualizes the social world and provides the audience with a new way of knowing this world (Hobson, 1982; Abu-Lughod, 2002). Soap operas also "allow for the viewers an emotional participation in a set of fictitious powers that play with elemental human questions: honor (sic), goodness, love, badness, treason, life, death, virtue and sin, that in certain ways has something to do with the viewer" (Mazziotti, 1993, citing Gonzales, 1998, p. 11).

Once formed, the ritual of “soap watching” is never an empty or hopeless endeavor as individuals carry this experience to the social space later (King'ara, 2010). Due to this fact, and the soap opera's capacity for work in producing “educational” cultural meanings that people find useful, soaps have become useful tools for effecting positive social change.

The soap opera as entertainment-education, administrating audience response

In the African context, soaps have been found to influence cultural attitudes about education, disease, poverty, family planning and prejudice. In South Africa, for example, the oldest local soap opera, Egoli (1991 - 2010), was considered “impact-full” in this respect (Pitout, 1996). Since the soap attracted a large number of viewers, it was said to be in “a powerful position in terms of incorporating context-specific events and utilizing these to supply the audience with sufficient information. [It's] storyline regarding prejudices against AIDS, for example, heightened awareness amongst the Egoli viewers and so helped to conscientize viewers” (Oosthusyen, 1997, p. 1). In this respect, Egoli could be considered effective in delivering social education, just like Soul City (1994-), another South African production, that has been strategically employed to raise consciousness in troubled youths and other members of society regarding issues ranging from safe sex to domestic violence (Soul City Institute, 2000).

Unlike the conventional style soap opera, Soul City, an entertainment education (EE) drama, provides a forum for exhibiting a televisual engagement with topics often ignored by the conventional soap by strategically placing pro-social messages in its narrative. Thus, it is able to deliver the “message” in the format of entertainment television, making it accessible to a targeted audience. The program addresses health and development issues while portraying ordinary people positively engaged in dealing with social problems that threaten productive living. At the same time, the 13-part prime time television drama runs for three months a year with each series promoting specific health education issues (Singhal & Rogers, 1999).

In Kenya, the national broadcaster, Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), developed effective educational soap operas using Miguel Sabido's social educational soap opera method of incorporating positive and negative role models in the narrative to influence audience

behavior change (Singhal & Rogers, 1999). The television series *Tushauriane* (*Let's Talk About It*) and a radio series entitled *Ushikwapo Shikamana* (*If Assisted, Join In*) appeared in mid-May 1987, aiming at "opening the minds of men" so that they could allow their wives to seek family planning counseling. Creators of these programs praised their success saying that by the time the two series concluded, contraceptive use in Kenya had increased up to 58% and the desired family size had fallen from 6.3 to 4.4 children (Singhal & Rogers, 1999). Greg Adambo, the original producer of *Tushauriane*, attributed the popularity of the programme to its realism (King'ara, 2010). Although the program was designed to promote specific types of behavior change, it appealed to the audience in a wholesome way by representing a familiar, "local" situation to which the audience could easily relate (Singhal & Rogers, 1999). This facet is a primary strength of the entertainment education soap opera because it invites audience involvement.

Audience involvement is the degree to which audience members engage in reflection upon, and have parasocial interaction with certain media programs resulting in overt behavior change. Audience involvement can be seen as being composed of two main elements: (a) reflection (critical and/or referential), and (b) parasocial interaction (cognitive, affective, behavioral participation or any combination of these) with the media (Sood, 2002, p. 156).

In reflection, the audience members consider the message in the soap opera and integrate it into their own lives (Liebes & Katz, 1986). In referential reflection, the audience relates the soap content to their personal experiences, usually by discussing it with others in the context of their own lives and problems (Moyer-Guse, 2008). When audience members disagree with the depictions in the soap opera content, it shows that they have critically reflected on the content of the soap and found it inaccurate or unfamiliar (Sood, 2002, p. 157).

Indeed, seen as "out of place" by several viewers, the educational Kenyan soap opera *Heart and Soul* (2000) was not well received despite its highly acclaimed production values and apparent relevance in featuring topical social issues. According to John Kariuki, a media critic attached to the *Daily Nation*, the drama had "serious omissions and violations from a cultural point of view which, to a large extent, [made] it irrelevant to an African audience" (BBC News World Edition, Aug 15, 2002). One such cultural inaccuracy in *Heart and Soul* appears in a

scene where a wealthy landowner, who died of AIDS, is buried in the middle of a coffee plantation. This scene misappropriates some facts relating to the Kenyan practice of burying the dead “always within the homestead” and covering the grave with many flowers (BBC News World Edition, Aug 15, 2002). Apparently, *Heart and Soul* did not fit the reality of its target audience. Unlike conventional soaps, entertainment education soaps have to be culturally coherent, and must project clear moral distinctions between good and bad behavior. EE dramas further attempt to address any inconsistencies that might arise in the depictions of characters’ actions and dialogue that often are negated in conventional soaps (Singhal & Rogers, 1999). Since EE dramas aspire to influence specific positive behavior change in the audience, their characters’ actions must be directed toward achieving desired moral objectives. The key characters must also appear to be realistic positive role models for the audience.

Quality of education in conventional soaps, the case of *Uhondo* and *Reflections*

Field research conducted in Nairobi on the practices of producing entertainment programs in Kenya revealed that producers and audiences alike felt that although soaps carry positive lessons, they are also capable of promoting wrong behavior in audiences (King’ara, 2010). The study concluded that production and viewing of conventional soaps in Kenya were motivated by the producers’ need to teach audiences specific cultural values, and the audiences’ need to learn those values.

In the Nairobi research, audience commentary was analyzed against the stated goals and aspirations of the producers of *Uhondo* and *Reflections* to understand what the audience hoped to gain from these dramas. Interviews with the producers of these dramas, their organizations’ policies on entertainment programs, and the actual packaging of *Uhondo* and *Reflections* revealed that corporate institutional goals influenced the two dramas’ appeal on their audiences.

Reflections was based on the idea of a functioning ‘ideal’ Kenyan family—a good husband, a good wife and well behaved children living in a single and ‘warm’ household. The family also had resourceful relatives and neighbors who all seemed to support each other. The subjects of this family respected each other and had aspirations that reflected ambition and a will to succeed and improve their social

standing. As a perfect picture of perhaps what every Kenyan family ought to look like, the plot line presented characters in the pursuit of their positive goals. However, conflict emanating from a changing society appeared to attack and unsettle this family. The children in the family were most affected, and they could be seen wrestling with various kinds of problems affecting contemporary youth in Kenya. The climax of these young characters "social predicament" was represented as the unwanted pregnancy of one of the daughters of the family, followed by her ill-advised contemplation of abortion. The boys in the family eventually experimented with drugs and towards the collapse of the show in 2005, the family patriarch had had an affair and his wife was contemplating divorce. Ostensibly, *Reflections'* schema was faithful to the traditional story structure aimed at reflecting that sometimes changes that come our way need to be monitored, because these usually upset our established ways of doing things ("our status quos", as in the perfect family), and not always with the best results. This structure suggests that change is usually the cause of conflict, and therefore must be adequately dealt with if the characters are ever to return to their desired normalcy (Lucey, 1996).

Uhondo, on the other hand, began with acknowledging that there were problems with the modern family in Kenyan society. Billed as the first true local soap opera to be aired on commercial television in Kenya (according to the directors of *Uhondo* and NTV's production manager), *Uhondo* (Feast) became the pioneer in a new brand of Kenyan television melodrama (King'ara, 2010). In advertisements featured in *Daily Nation*, the sister newspaper of NTV, the show was described as "A soap opera about life though 75% of the characters live a life of utopia. Deceit is a main weapon which causes a lot of trouble and havoc in everyone's life. For the young and old with language that's light and easy to understand" (*Daily Nation*, May 10, 2005).

In *Uhondo*, the patriarch of the family is a business tycoon, apparently living a glamorous life that many viewers could envy. Nevertheless, the stasis of this family unravelled every week as the plot line presented new surprises about the contradictions of this family's success. For one, its patriarch is an infidel with various mistresses. In addition, his wealth comes from drug peddling, smuggled vehicle imports and illegal land grabbing. Indeed, out of fear that his only son might be in danger because of his criminal activities, he sends him away to Australia for further studies. However, the boy cannot cope with studies abroad and eventually returns home to run his father's

crime empire when the old man is forced to flee the country as the police move to net him in. His ever lonely wife is, however, elated for the return of a son whom she has not seen for many years. Soon, however, her son drives her into depression when he uses corrupt lawyers to shut her out of the family's wealth. Nevertheless, the premise of the drama clearly took on a "cautionary tale" schema. It presented a flawed family and the tribulation that arose from immoral living. It showed that riches gained through deceit, illegality, and infidelity that destroys traditional institutions of the Christian marriage, only reap trouble for anyone involved in them.

Presumably, when conventional soaps are encoded with content that seems to reflect a high degree of social responsibility, the distinction between this genre and EE soaps narrows. *Reflections*, for example, was created for the purpose of addressing the gap between the information the youth needed for their overall development and what they were receiving from media and society (King'ara, 2010). Unlike EE soaps, the program was not theory-based, nor did the producer/director, whose personal input was mostly responsible for the success of this programme, engage in intensive research to identify specific lessons that had to be addressed in each episode (King'ara, 2010). Nevertheless, the program did address critical issues that members of a family may face in their relationships inside and outside of the home, and the tribulations of the youth in dealing with puberty, issues relating to the youths' sexual conduct and their social subjectivity (King'ara, 2010). This conventional soap undoubtedly served as commentary that possibly helped viewers to "resolve the contradictions in the contemporary [Kenyan] culture. . . between aspirations of modernity [exercise of newly found freedom of expression, thought, assembly, sexuality] and nostalgia for tradition" (Miller, 1992, p. 176). It can be argued that *Reflections'* high social responsibility-educational approach had been nurtured by the institutional environment within which it was produced.

According to Mary Onyango, the acting Television Programmes Manager (2005), *Reflections*, like many other KBC Channel 1 programs, was expected to educate the public. Onyango explained this expectation as follows:

Yeah... we pay more attention to education of the public as opposed to just stand there. But also we strive to. . . Our bottom

line is also—we have to educate. We remember at the end of it, “yeah, this is a situation, but what is the message”. There should be a message at the end of it all. It’s not just fun for fun’s sake, you see. . . There should be a message for whoever is watching it. He has to laugh but at the end of it, there is this for him... (Mary Onyango, February 2005, Interview).

Due to television entertainment drama’s ability to reconstruct the quotidian by routinely projecting the viewers’ social conditions, aspirations and human characteristics, it is easy for viewers to develop/feel a high degree of emotional connection with fictional characters. In This case study, the emotional link between audience members and the fictional characters of *Uhondo* and *Reflections*, for example, was completed through the letters viewers sent to the actors of these characters. Some audience members assumed they could merge the fictional characters with the actors, and therefore be able to penetrate the fictional world by having a real interpersonal relationship with the actors. The need to link the fictionality and reality embodied in the actors was testament that indeed “fictional reality” for the audience members had acquired a hybrid equivalence with “true reality”. In fact, a number of viewers took the fictional representations by *Reflections*’ characters as a reconstruction of a reality equivalent to that of the lives of the performers featured in this show. Hence, in their commentary on the program such viewers discussed particular characters as if sharing their experiences with the soaps’ actors.

By directly advising the fictional characters in *Reflections* on how they should conduct their lives, viewers had “breathed life” into them and turned the characters into their “friends”. Below are examples of the said phenomenon:

Dear Friends

I greet you again and I hope you are all fine. The episode of 14-11-03 was very good. Whereby aids should be discussed from the family level first. To James & Anne it is good that you realized the mistake of not counselling mum’s son Kim who had a lot of pain & regrets. Sophie was very firm despite Brian advances keep up Sophie true love wait. To you Brian it’s good you realized your mistake and took that bold step to apologise to Sophie. To Kim *pole sana* [I’m very sorry], You will recover but remember VCT [Voluntary Counselling

and Testing]. To the producer you are doing a wonderful job keep it and God bless you.

Yours faithfully

Martha. . . (Viewer Email Commentary, 2003).

Another audience member wrote:

Thanks for the program, it's very interesting as well as educative to the young generations. Kim's mum has a behavior which is very wrong, she should make sure she brings up her children in the right track. She is also trying to help Kim run away from the police which show she is encouraging the behavior. She also portrays a negative attitude to the children towards their dad. But according to me the father is doing the right thing. The mother should know that when Kim's behavior is not cut short before it grows up she will be the first to suffer as he will come to rob her. Secondly do you have video cassettes out in the shops which has all your past programs? I would like to have one. Thanks.

Simon

(Viewer Email Commentary, 2005).

Likewise, audiences of *Uhondo* seemed to look in the show for a representation of moral and cultural values, even though according to Stan Darius and Stephano Ngunyi (the director and executive producer of *Uhondo*, respectively) the show was primarily created for entertainment. Audiences criticized this drama for lack of authenticity in depicting "African-ness". Some viewers felt the soap failed in representing "the Kenyan culture", for example in characters' behavior and their dress codes. During one viewing session organized for the Nairobi research, a discussion between audience members about whether the "right" Kenyan language and dress were featured in *Uhondo* became heated. One member of the audience asked: "Do you think that the author of the show wants the viewer to think of the people in the play as normal Africans? Have we been brainwashed?" (King'ara, 2010). Ostensibly, the connotation in this viewer's questions is that *Uhondo* did not represent African-ness. To this viewer, the soap denoted a kind of space where the society's undertakings are projected back to itself for evaluation.

Hence, *Uhondo* as social commentary was expected to proclaim what is "Kenyan values" and African-ness. Nevertheless, the soap

revealed the existing contradiction in the lives of Kenyans (viewers) who aspired to be “purely” Kenyan in their cultural attitudes (as expressed through dress, song and dance, language etc.) without ever compromising traditions that are regarded as indigenous or “un-imperialized”. Yet, these same people live in a modern, constantly evolving world. In this category are the audience members who questioned why characters in *Uhondo* had to mix English and Kiswahili in their dialogue, “why the characters don’t wear our clothes”, or why the local soaps were copying everything that is Western (King’ara, 2010). One viewer of *Uhondo* advised the producers as follows:

Hi Guys,

We thank you for putting some Kenyan stuff [Uhondo] into the nation TV programs. The play depicts what we all go thru in Kenya. I commend those efforts guys. I am concerned about the attires. I guess that the actors dress to depict local situations, I agree with that. It should be so. But remember much of your audience is not adults but teenies [teenagers] who I may say have not the moral power to differentiate between right and wrong. They get influenced more by what they see. I beg that you strike a balance between depicting the local situation, and teaching the right morals. If showing us the local situation is the ultimate end, I think we expect more... (Viewer Email Commentary, 2005).

In light of all the above, it appears that the entertainment programs considered in the Nairobi study, especially *Uhondo* and *Reflections*, were able to portray “true-to-life psychological situations” that invited audience members to experience emotional realism from them (Ang, 1985, p. 45). By doing so, the soaps allowed viewers to engage with the internal psychology of their characters, hence enabling viewers to see the fictional characters as “real” people. The actions and events in which the characters participated enabled viewers to sympathize with the fictional characters, who in turn became “real” by mirroring the anxieties and problems of audience members (Ligaga, 2005).

When audiences evaluated, analyzed or discussed matters about Kenyan soaps in the small focus groups convened for the purpose of the Nairobi study (King’ara, 2010), the issue of what it is to be Kenyan and modern came up, as an enigma. It was evident that there exists a dilemma regarding how “natural” “Kenyan-ness” looks like today.

Some audiences said it did not look like what they had seen on *Uhondo*, yet they could not precisely define the “natural” Kenyan look (King'ara, 2010). Perhaps the roots of this ambivalence in how a Kenyan audience feels about character portrayals in a local soap opera is symptomatic, suggesting that other aspects of Kenyan life are also tied to its colonial history and its experience with what could be considered “cultural imperialism” through the media. Whatever the case, it appears that soaps are occupying an ever more meaningful place in the development of Kenyan culture, because they now constitute the narrative tools that are indispensable in the propagation of a Kenyan socio-cultural heritage.

Indeed, [Soap operas] are, on the one hand, a source of entertainment, but the recognition and the relevance that the audience accords to the narratives reveal the meaningful social, cultural and even political function that can be attributed to [them]. In many cases, television fiction proves more relevant and thus more meaningful than the evening news. The successful and deep-felt processes of identification lie at the core of this finding [...] the [soap operas] manage to articulate [...] active and reactive pleasure (Brown, 1994, p.173).

In other words, through soap operas viewers are able to engage at a personal level with the numerous quotidian issues represented in the programs. This engagement empowers the viewers to feel as if they are actively involved in “dealing with” the said issues. Hence, conventional soaps appear capable of traversing the frontiers of EE television drama, in that they are sometimes concerned with the development of culture (values) by advocating behavior modification and change toward positive and productive living for their audiences (Singhal & Rogers, 2002). Also, conventional soaps’ persuasive effects mirror those of EE television programs, especially because their narrative formats allow the viewer to be sucked into the “story world” thus reducing the viewer’s resistance to educational messages that could trigger behavior change (Moyer-Guse, 2008). For these reasons, conventional soap operas are practical narratives rich in utility value. The next section discusses this phenomenon and soap operas’ role as generators and disseminators of relevant knowledge.

Conventional soaps as functional narratives

In the absence of the grand oral narratives of old which in many traditional African societies contained and archived dominant philosophical teachings about “how to live”, broadcast media narratives could be seen as important tools for generating knowledge about how life is and should be morally lived (Okigbo, 1998; Bourgault, 1996). For instance, “Television melodramas offer distinctive constructions of the world” (Abu-Lughod, 2002, p. 122), some of which are no doubt based on stories that disseminate, circulate moral teachings, norms and values of a society within itself. Today, soap operas seem to be playing this role of defining the grand narratives of the day which people look to for insight on how to be or not to be. For instance, in keeping with ideologies in post-colonial nations, television drama is viewed by most of its producers in Egypt not simply as entertainment but as a means to mold the national community. Viewers, whether ordinary television watchers or critics, recognize in varying degrees the ideologies informing these melodramas and react to them—either sympathetically or with hostility, depending on their own situations and political visions (Abu-Lughod, 2002, p. 117).

Previous popular Kenyan soaps (Tushauriane, Vituko, Kisulisuli, Tausi, Dunia) have provided social commentary and the “passing on” of the moral traditions from the cultural spaces within which they were set—always close to “home” and “family” (King’ara, 2010). This tradition has placed television in a central position in terms of its ability to construct socio-cultural meaning that viewer’s regard highly. According to *Uhondo’s* executive producer, television in Kenya, occupies such a place:

[Television is] Very very powerful. Television is very influential... it influences people in a magical way. If you want to change their thinking, make everybody to be a positive thinker, television can do that very easily. You only need to give them shows tailored towards that route. I have seen TV being used by the state here... when KBC was a monopoly, the producers and the government were using television to tell the society what they wanted them to be told... viewers take TV very seriously. When TV has said something, that something is like the gospel truth...(Stephano Ngunyi, September 2005, Interview).

Indeed, viewers seemed to expect that Uhondo should transmit relevant information about things that mattered in their lives. One viewer said the following after watching an episode of the soap in a screening organized for the Nairobi study:

it's quite similar to the scenarios that we normally experience in life—or either experienced by our friends [...]But since we are unable to reflect on ourselves, we always think we are on the right. You know, such an event happening on the screen and you hear it, it helps you reflect on yourself properly. It helps you to place yourself wherever you are [as portrayed in the show], or may be wherever your friend is. And with that kind of thing, may be you can be able to place yourself [in scenarios shown] and you can be able to correct yourself through these things (Viewer Commentary, 2005).

In Kenya, a country that was not too long ago primarily an oral culture, the new orality in television, through television drama—which “has striking resemblances to the old in its participatory mystique, its fostering of a communal sense, its concentration on the present moment, and even its use of the [orality] formulas” (Ong, 1982, p. 136)—easily appeals to audiences as functional storytelling. In this context, soap operas are symbolic stories capable of reflecting on human actions within specified frames of culture and socio-political networks. Thus, these stories “store, organize, and communicate much of what [people] know. . .”, and have become particularly important because they “can bond a great deal of lore in relatively substantial, lengthy forms that are reasonably durable” (Ong, 1982, p. 140-141). Particularly, due to the repetitive nature and pervasiveness of the soap opera genre, this form of narrative is capable of massively and permanently bonding a society's thoughts just like the oral narratives did before television. Indeed, according to Charles Okigbo (1998) television in Africa is primarily an entertainment medium with characteristics of such traditional forums as the village square, the community market and the age-grade gathering—all of which are community situations that facilitate the common exchange of information and sharing of values.

Television drama in particular addresses viewers on their own terms, involving them in the reproduction and development of society by contributing to the creation, maintenance, and interpretation of essential forms of social and cultural knowledge. TV entertainment

programs presuppose and communicate insight into various social strata and life modes, everyday knowledge about the handling of domestic chores and social norms for behavior, as well as insight into contemporary trends and tastes [...which are] transformed into knowledge through viewers' active negotiation with the subject matter. This process takes place by individual acquisition and in the exchange of insights with others through various forms of interest, support or experience in communities (Frandsen, 2008, p. 134).

Soap operas, like other entertainment programs, have latent power capable of hooking the audience through providing them with therapeutic regimes of pleasure (Ang, 1991). Hence, these programs can be used as vehicles for carrying various messages that draw the audience's attention to all manner of interests or objectives (King'ara, 2010). As ideological tools, soaps appear to reflect "the way we experience life. Ideology arises out of our quotidian existence and is indivisibly part of that set of social structures which make up social activities and experience (e.g. the social practices we engage in [...])" (Tomaselli and Teer-Tomaselli, 1985, p. 3).

Nevertheless, packed with "pleasure/entertainment" value, soap operas appear less didactic, harmless. Therefore, they are less antagonistic in reaching out to the audience. They are inviting, welcoming. Hence, producers can rely on the audience to accommodate the ideological messages they encode in soaps because the audience approaches such programs with the least amount of apprehension. It is conceivable, therefore, that social education messages encoded in soap operas produce preferred social realities that might in turn promote positive behavior modification (King'ara, 2010). This may happen when television programs continually and consistently propound the audience with given messages, influencing audience inclinations toward conceiving a social reality that is consistent with the outlook proffered by such television programs (Gerbner et al, 1996). As a powerful socializing agent, television is able to cultivate specific worldviews (Wood, 2000) because its messages enter the circuit of culture as raw materials where they are received and exchanged between people who may later transform them into the ideals of their given society through social practices (Du Gay et al., 1997). Long term experiences with television in this manner could create impressions in the audience representing the social education objectives of specific producers.

Consequently, according to Roome, entertainment television programs are laden with symbolic forms of expression, and these reflect “the thinking, values, ideology, behavior and myths of society—or its deep structure” (1998, p. 66). In order for television to transmit socially constructive myth, it has to appear to be working naturally from within society. It has to reproduce society and reveal its internal conflicts within society’s cultural order, and be able to reflect the “structure of practices and meanings around which the society takes shape” (Gitlin, 1979, p. 251) but without upsetting it. Social education through soap operas has the greatest impact on the audience when it appears as part of such society shaping practices and meanings (King’ara, 2010).

As cultural objects, television programs facilitate the self-production and reproduction of society and create symbolic spaces for social-cultural interactions between producers and audiences. These interactions do represent a dimension of the social reflexivity that allows the audience to contemplate their being in their world, hence enabling them to actively evaluate how they “are” and who they are as a society. Since conventional soap operas (such as *Uhondo* and *Reflections*) are usually in a position to engage the audience in an effective prosocial manner as I have suggested above, they present an interesting case for validating the fact that strategic encoding of program content with particular types of raw materials can have desired effects on the audience. Indeed, the soap opera can sometimes be said to have a near indoctrinating hold on the audience, and this same powerful characteristic appears to be a practical tool for imparting social education.

Conclusion

What clearly emerges from the overall theme of this article is that conventional soap operas have the potential to reflect on and question in some degree their own cultural practices. Furthermore, when audience members and producers of conventional soap operas are preoccupied with a search for moral lessons in the realism depicted in these types of entertainment programs, a socially responsible television production-viewing culture emerges. This in turn creates an enabling environment for conventional entertainment programs to influence viewers in lasting ways. Audience members in such an environment expect that each entertainment program presented details of everyday

life as the “inevitable outcome of preceding sequences of moral action” (Barber, 2000, p. 266). In this respect, entertainment programs should be functional tools, for guiding the audience toward moral actions that directly relate to their real life experiences. In the Nairobi study, audience members seemed to perceive their realities as plagued with problems that needed solving. Hence, their engagement with entertainment programs was utilitarian and at a level deeper than mere entertainment. They looked to the programs as a resource for improving their plight, and in this respect concurred with the programs’ producers about the role entertainment programs should play in the lives of their viewers. Entertainment programs, they claimed, should assist audience members in their responsibility to social development.

The literature reviewed in this article on the characteristics of conventional soap operas has highlighted the fact that the conventional soap opera can provide opportunities for passing messages meant to encourage social responsibility in their viewers. While they may differ from entertainment education dramas in their strategies of incorporating educational messages in their storylines, conventional soap operas do carry educational messages nonetheless. Also, like EE programs, conventional soap operas powerfully appeal to their viewers through the viewers’ involvement with characters and narratives, identification with character and situations featured in the narrative, and through the para-social relationships viewers seek to have with performers in such soaps. Hence, one can argue that such similarities between conventional soap operas and EE dramas suggest that there is need for research into the potential of soap operas in influencing specific behavior change in members of selected societies as may be desired by concerned stakeholders. This author suggests an untested hypothesis for such research, by concluding that conventional soap operas can achieve some key goals of EE television dramas. However, this can only happen when there exists in society the belief that any form of storytelling via television is predicated by the quest for lessons worth teaching and learning.

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Mass media and engagement: Encouraging participation in a public health initiative through open auditions for intersexions

By Emma Durden

Abstract

Intersexions is a South African television series that follows the infection chain of HIV through a range of different character's stories. The popular first season gave rise to a second season where producers aimed to build social mobilization around the pre-production processes of the series, by encouraging a participatory process to involve people through an open call for auditions for the series. This research explores the participatory process of *Intersexions II*, and the complexities involved in including non-professionals in a professional television production. The research includes interviews with the production company, producing agency and participating partners. Six focus group interviews were conducted with people participating in the audition process, and three email interviews were conducted with those selected to appear in the new series. The collected data reveals some of the complexities that arise in the process of introducing participation into a professional process. These are both ethical and practical, and include the raising of expectations, with the potential for wide-scale disappointment; lack of necessary skills for full and genuine participation; the difficulties of blending professional and non-professional actors; and the potentially mixed reaction of the audience to the use of this strategy.

Key words: HIV, participation, social mobilization, entertainment education, professional process, participatory process

Introduction:

Television as entertainment education

Using popular media to communicate about health issues through Entertainment Education (EE) is based on the premise that health messages couched in familiar and entertaining forms are more likely to

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reach their target audience (Piotrow, Linkaid, Rimon and Rinehart, 1997). Kimani Njogu (2005) notes how young people, in particular, are anxious for information regarding their sexuality and how to deal with it, and that EE initiatives can help them negotiate the conflicting signals from the mass media and their immediate environments.

Entertainment Education strategies are generally informed by a theoretical approach to promote behavior change (Singhal & Rogers, 1999; Piotrow, Linkaid, Rimon and Rinehart, 1997), and this often determines how an EE intervention is both conceived and received. The application of EE is predominantly reliant on Albert Bandura's (1977) social learning theory and social modelling, where audience members observe and learn from characters on television. Kim Witte's (1994) expanded parallel process model is also used to inform many EE interventions, where fear-based appeals warn viewers about the dangers of unhealthy behaviors, but at the same time offering a sense of self-efficacy.

Television has become an increasingly popular medium for the exploration of health issues. More than 60% of surveyed South Africans over the age of 50 find television a useful and understandable source of information about HIV and AIDS in particular, and more than 70% of people under the age of 50 recognize its use (Shisana & Simbayi, 2008). Television is rated highly by viewers as a medium that makes them take HIV and AIDS more seriously, and the 2012 South African National HIV Communication Survey reflects that many South Africans view health messages on television (Health Development Africa, 2012).

In South Africa, the series *Soul City* was the first of these strategically designed EE dramas, and has been aired since 1994. However, the program has come under criticism regarding the greater focus on education rather than entertainment, which may cause viewers to switch channels (Copley & Mkhize, 2012). For health communication such as *Soul City* to be effective, "it is essential that the message is realistic and credible to the audience, in the sense of 'true to life characters' and realistic, credible plots and storylines" (Bouman, 1999, p. 61). The educational aspects of the series cannot, however, outweigh the entertainment aspect, and it is important to retain popularity through entertainment "to keep them hooked on the programme" (Hobson, 1982, p. 47).

Other popular African television dramas focused on HIV and AIDS issues, and designed to encourage reflection and behaviour change, include *Centre 4* in Uganda (2002), *Siri yaMtungu* in Tanzania (2012) and *Love Games* in Zambia (2013). Many of these have been created in partnership with Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Centre for Communication Programs (JHUCCP). These programs have had the dual purpose of disseminating health messages, encouraging dialogue as well as developing skills and opportunities for local scriptwriters, cast and television crews (JHUCCP, 2012).

These programs therefore have an element of development and participation, encouraging the inclusion of local voices in message creation, which makes for more effective messaging, and promotes community ownership of the messages that could bring about both individual behavior change and broader social change. In the African context, participation in health communication is recognized as an important factor in ensuring that messages are locally appropriate and effective (Airhihenbuwa & Obregon, 2000; McCall, 2011).

Background to *Intersexions*

Intersexions is a South African television drama series that follows the HIV infection chain through a range of different characters and their personal stories. *Intersexions* was first screened in South Africa in 2010, building a large local fan base and receiving a number of national and international awards, including 11 South African Film and Television Awards in 2012, and the prestigious Peabody Award in 2011. Building on this success, the series' producers embarked on the casting of a new season of *Intersexions*, filmed in late 2012, and broadcast in early 2013. They aimed to build social mobilization around the pre-production processes, and made a public call for open auditions for the series. Approximately 4600 people who participated in the auditions received HIV information and were encouraged to make use of voluntary HIV counselling and testing (HCT) services on audition days. In this way, they were engaged on issues related to HIV and AIDS, as well as having the opportunity to show their talent to the series' directors.

This paper focuses particularly on the new generation of EE, which facilitates exchange and encourages the participation of all stakeholders, rather than upholding a didactic divide between the message makers and the audience. This new generation of EE goes further than the transmission of health information to involve

community members in problem-posing, social critique and social change (Tufte, 2005). This approach is strongly influenced by the work of proponents of participation, such as Paulo Freire (1985, 2002), and “seeks to articulate a dialectic process of debate and collective action” (Tufte, 2005, p. 700). However, there is much debate about how participation occurs, who participates, to what degree, and to what effect (Agunga, 1997). This research explores the motivation for adopting a participatory approach for the television series *Intersexions II* and some of the challenges of this approach.

A motivation for participation; and some limitations

Participatory methodologies have become popular because they are rooted in the interests and struggles of ordinary people, are overtly political and critical of the status quo, and are committed to progressive social and political change (May & Craig, 1995). In terms of Freireian theory, the primary purpose of participatory processes is to develop a critical consciousness about the causes of poverty and oppression and to overcome those through acting on this reflection (Freire, 1985; 2002).

Participation demands dialogic communication which allows all participants an equal voice and calls for listening and trust between those involved (Omamo & von Grebmer, 2005). This practice essentially involves a change in the thinking of development communicators and requires that expert knowledge and local knowledge are recognized as equally valid. Participation has the ability to build a sense of collective efficacy within the community, where people feel more empowered to make changes because they are doing so together in a group (Bandura, 1977).

However, this concept of participation as an emancipatory process is not always realized in participatory projects. Cleaver (2001) distinguishes between participation as a means to an end (of the goal of development), and participation as an end in itself. As a means, participation is primarily concerned with being an effective way to reach development. As an end in itself, participation is seen as a process that “enhances the capacity of individuals to improve or change their own lives” (Cleaver, 2001, p. 786). While participation is the preferred paradigm for current development programs, Servaes (2007) criticises it as being a poorly defined and idealistic notion that is often difficult to put into practice.

There are a number of challenges to the implementation of participation. These include the lack of a clear definition of what participation means, the conflict that it can cause in communities, the difficulty in replicating or up-scaling successful participatory projects, and the need for flexibility on the part of the catalyst organization and a long-term commitment of time and resources to the project (Boon & Plastow, 2004; Cadiz, 2005; Chin, 2006).

Although participatory health education is a popular concept, the extent to which the practice can be truly participatory is questionable when donor funding determines specific outcomes, and “expert” western medical knowledge has more influence than traditional cultural beliefs and practices. This practice undermines the participatory notion of equal voices and dialogue. Because HIV and AIDS are seen as a bio-medical “problem” and not an issue of human development, control of such projects and the messages incorporated into them rests in the hands of experts (Waisbord, 2008). Because EE is a strategy that is purposely selected to pass on information and persuade an audience to make changes, it is difficult to see the opportunities for participation.

To try to understand how participation can be encouraged in an EE intervention such as the *Intersexions* series, I refer to Narayanasamy’s (2008) four key identifiers of participation: (1) voluntary involvement in the project (2) involving shared decision making (3) including participation at different levels and (4) ultimately aiming to improve the well-being of the participants.

Voluntary involvement in the project

Involvement in any development project must be voluntary for those involved to have any kind of power. Forced involvement can be a disempowering process, contrary to the empowering nature of participatory projects.

Shared-decision-making

If community members are involved in the decision-making processes of a project from start to finish, then the project is likely to be more participatory as the participants have more control. Chin (2006) suggests that participation in implementation, benefits and evaluation of a project is in fact “false participation”.

Participation at different levels

There are a number of different ways in which a community can participate in a development project. These are generally identified as: participating in the decision-making processes of the project, participating in the implementation phase of a project, participating in the benefits of the project, and participating in the evaluation phase of the project (Uphoff, 1985; Chin, 1996).

However it is recognized that participation at all stages in a program does not have equal relevance (Arnstein, 1969). Few participatory development projects include full partnership with the target community and participation in all four phases. In cases where decisions are made outside of the community, but the community is actively involved in the program implementation, participation is limited to instances that depend on the imposed decisions. In such instances, the community can be seen to be beneficiaries of the project rather than partners in the project. Because of the many different layers and levels of participation, a number of projects that purport to be participatory may in fact simply be imposed interventions indicative of the modernization paradigm (Durden, 2011). These imposed projects are simply whitewashed with participatory practices.

Improving the well-being of participants

Most health related development programmes would argue that the well-being of participants is at the core of what they do. However, many projects (particularly those from a modernist paradigm of development) impose a sense of what is “good” for a community from an outside perspective, without considering the target group’s own perceptions about what is good for them or will enhance their own well-being. Acknowledging the possibility of this conflict is an important part of the process of participation.

A number of criticisms of participation come from a purist view of what constitutes participation, and do not allow that participating even to a small extent in such projects may have benefits for the participants. Peruzzo (2005) suggests that if the project is rooted in democratic practice then participation at any level can be desirable. My own previous research (Durden, 2011) supports this assertion, noting that even minimal participation can have worthwhile consequences that improve the well-being of project participants.

Mass media and participation

Mass media is generally recognized as those channels of communication that reach large groups of people at one time, such as television, radio and the press or other print campaigns. Although mass media channels have the ability to reach large numbers, and exert influence over audiences, there are drawbacks to their usage. This type of media is generally expensive to produce and requires that the audience have access to technology or literacy. The tendency to rely on mass-media campaigns has been found to fall short of what is needed to bring about significant change (Myhre & Flora, 2000; Kiragu, 2001). This is because local conditions and needs vary amongst the audience, and cannot all be taken into account in the message creation phase.

A further criticism of the mass media is its tendency towards top-down messaging. HIV and AIDS communication is traditionally based on western bio-medical knowledge, that is created by "experts" and disseminated to the general public (Waisbord, 2008). Tomaselli (1997) asserts that this practice of top-down message imposition has an alienating effect and results in audiences feeling that the message is not relevant to their own circumstances. If audience reception and understanding are not taken into account in the message-creation phase, it is likely that these messages will be misinterpreted. Mass media programs are designed to appeal to a wide audience, with a resulting wide range of interpretation of the media messages by its audience. Abraham Kiprop Mulwo (2008) explores how meaning about HIV and AIDS is produced within different social groups amongst young South Africans, and this highlights the likelihood that the intention of messages will be understood differently by different groups within a mass audience. A further criticism of mass media messages is that they cannot always take into account the social consequences or constraints that influence action, and may therefore not be relevant to the audience (Tomaselli, 1997).

However, the effect of the mass media on health promotion should not be discounted entirely. The originally defined lines between mass media and small media campaigns have become blurred, and combining different types of media channels is the currently preferred approach (Parker, Dalrymple & Durden, 2000). A number of mass media interventions that have television as a central component have made use of smaller media to support or supplement their campaigns.

An example of this is the approach of the organization Soul City, which combines a television program with small media interventions including an interactive magazine and other outlets. Similarly, the first series of *Intersexions* was supported by radio phone-in shows, an active Facebook page, and participatory workshops. The second series of *Intersexions* goes one step further by encouraging participation in its audition processes.

Combining the mass media and small media elements of a campaign may heighten the efficacy of each element of the campaign, so that people are not being involved by just watching a series, and are also actively involved in other initiatives. However, there are challenges with encouraging participation within the mass medium.

Challenges associated with the mass media and participation

New media technologies have made television a more interactive experience in many countries. The phenomenon of social interactive television is common, but researchers assert that it is focused on “providing the user with synchronous communication mechanisms while watching television” (Bulterman, Cesar, Jansen & Guimaraes, 2009, p. 68), making for interaction, but not direct participation. De Maegd and Taelman (2009, p. 1) note that participation by television audiences can take many forms, including “clicking a web link; watching an online video; playing a game; creating a profile; communicating with others about online content; searching for hidden content; participating in events”. Audience participation in live entertainment television, including reality television shows, talk shows, game shows and other interactive television media is a recent but common phenomenon. García-Avilés (2012) notes that this participation is a result of a variety of platforms available for audience members to interact with television content and its makers principally through the internet allowing for audience engagement and feedback.

In many instances this participation is in the manner of the audience voting for televised competition shows, and audience support or commentary on the production and content of TV drama. Nadine Dolby’s (2006) research into Big Brother Africa explores how engagement with popular television influences citizenship practices. There are also recent instances of more active involvement with reality television, such as Soul City’s Kwanda Initiative in South Africa. The *Kwanda* reality series focused on community members getting

involved in addressing health and development issues in their own areas. Viewers then voted for the most successful community, and feedback indicated that many viewers were motivated to take action in their own areas (Ramafoko, Andersson & Weiner, 2012). The evaluation of the program led researchers to the conclusion that there are possibilities for using the reality TV format to actively foster meaningful participation and community development. However, participation in the development of professionally produced drama series is less common than the processes of viewing and voting. De Maegd and Taelman (2009) differentiate between quality and quantity in participation, suggesting that 10% of a community participates actively, whereas 90% participates passively. In their definition, a passive viewer is simply a member of the television audience who watches the fiction. This passive member can choose to become active through becoming an online visitor, and then an active player in associated games and activities, collaborating with others, until such point as they become involved in co-creating the drama (where allowed by the production company).

The encouragement of these active viewers/participants is dependent on the production company. There are a number of difficulties in involving ordinary people in a medium that requires technical expertise and experience. Television production is an expensive exercise and the costs involved in training non-professionals in productions may discourage participation. The strategy to encourage greater quality participation in *Intersexions II* is therefore a complex one, and raises distinctions between passive involvement and more active participation.

Methodology for the study

This qualitative study involved a number of purposively selected interviews with the production company behind *Intersexions*, Quizzical Pictures, the technical support organisation Johns Hopkins Health and Education South Africa (JHHESA), and a number of their partners, who were involved in developing the participatory strategy for *Intersexions II*. It also involved interviews with partners who assisted at the massive auditions for the series. Participant observation was conducted by observing auditionees for the television series at one open audition session which was held in Durban. Six short individual or focus group interviews were conducted with auditionees at this audition session. Interviews were also conducted via email with three of

the actors who represent the new talent who came through the open auditions and were cast in the series.

Interviews with the production company and partners were predominantly conducted by email, with some follow-up questions and clarifications conducted by telephone, and the interviews with audition participants were conducted in person on the audition day in Durban in September, 2012.

Respondents drawn from young people auditioning for the show were selected through convenience sampling. Two of the interviews were conducted with individuals, and four small group interviews were conducted with two or four people each. The size of the interviews was determined by the convenience of the venue and the proximity of others around those who were selected. Six of the respondents were male and six were female. A follow-up interview with Quizzical Pictures reveals that none of these interviewed respondents were selected to appear in the new season.

Contact was made with the individuals who had been through the open audition process and were cast in *Intersexions II*, in an effort to understand their experience of participating in the program. Of the five emails sent, two responses were received. Respondents were given an informed consent form to sign before the interviews commenced, to provide some information about the research and to assure them that their confidentiality would be protected. The face-to-face interviews were voice recorded, and transcription and analysis of these interviews were conducted manually. Data from the email interviews was saved into word documents and analysed.

Findings and discussion

The objectives behind the participatory process

When asked what prompted the decision to have open auditions for the second series of *Intersexions*, the technical partner (JHHESA) responded that the decision had many layers of benefit that they could see. The process would afford an opportunity to promote the show to audiences, and it would also allow the public to engage more directly with the issues explored in the show through attending the audition, thus contributing to social learning.

The response to the open auditions superseded their expectations, with extensive interest from both the media and the public.

The number of people who showed up for the auditions was much more than expected. The online queries on both the *Intersexions* [Facebook] page which has more than 40,000 members, and the twitter page were also phenomenal. Our JHHESA website also experienced a great increase of traffic, with downloads of the monologues and scripts used at the audition (JHHESA interview, 2012). The goal of publicizing the auditions and building support for the show was met, and over 4,600 people attended the auditions countrywide. Attending these auditions is an example of active participation in the process. A further objective for the participatory strategy was defined by JHHESA as a way to provide an opportunity to “showcase social learning and promote HIV counselling and testing as was done on the show” (JHHESA interview, 2012). The audition process was designed so that HIV counselling and testing (HCT) and information was available for all those who attended the open auditions, and that popular actors from the first series would be making use of these services, encouraging the modelling of positive health behavior.

The JHHESA staff noted that observational learning was frequent during the audition process, and that the health support partners recorded high numbers for HCT in each city (although specific figures were not available). They felt that the activities such as music, talks by people living with HIV, and forum theatre sessions that were offered throughout the day offered an opportunity for dialogue and participatory learning for the participants.

Quizzical Pictures, the production company behind *Intersexions*, concluded that the first season of the program had received overwhelming support, interest and viewership from South African audiences. In response to this interest, they felt that having open auditions for the second season would provide “a great opportunity to engage with audiences who identified so strongly with the first season” (Quizzical Pictures interview, 2012).

They further identified that the auditions would allow them to identify new talent and to “create opportunities for real viewers to take ownership of the new season and see themselves in *Intersexions* stories” (Quizzical Pictures interview, 2012).

They also felt that the participation generated through open audition process would impact on the reception of the program in various ways. Viewers will recognize themselves in the series, both literally and figuratively. If seeing themselves, a friend or a family member in the

series brings these messages closer to home and engages them with the series then we are winning on a number of levels both for the messages to the audience and in viewership.

Quizzical Pictures interview, 2012.

JHHESA also anticipated that the participatory nature of the new season would build audiences and build interest in the series, as viewers would be “looking out for friends and new faces who were found at the audition” (JHHESA interview, 2012).

The comments from the production company and partners refer predominantly to building the profile and the popularity of the program, rather than to the benefits of participation for the participants. This lack of focus on the importance of the participants as the primary stakeholders in the process may be an example of what Sherry Arnstein (1969) calls “tokenism”. Tokenism involves a symbolic gesture of recognition and power-sharing, but is essentially a substitute for the real thing. Although the notion of “ownership” is raised by the production company, it is unlikely that ordinary people can have an equal stake in a technical and expensive process that is controlled by many partners.

The experience for participants

Approximately 4600 people were seen through the audition process around the country. The sheer volume of people suggests that it was a hugely popular initiative, with great potential to build the brand of *Intersexions*. Observing the participants at the Durban audition revealed a great deal of excitement, and despite many people standing in long queues before being seen, there was a general air of celebration that lasted throughout the day. Some of the interviewed participants were visibly nervous, and all were excited at the prospect of being “discovered”. All of the interviewees had seen the first series of *Intersexions*, and most noted that they had loved the show, and the fact that it portrayed a reality seldom seen on television: “It actually deals with reality issues, because these things happen every day ... It spoke to people, to society ... it’s created an awareness even for my life” (Participant interview 2, 2012).

This notion of reality was expanded on by another participant: They showed things that are really happening in our community so that our traditions, even if I have never been through that stuff I feel like I have been through it because I have seen it happening in my

neighborhood. Because I am from a rural area, it was exciting to really see that some directors, actors and producers they actually care about what happens in the rural areas.(Participant interview 3, 2012).

When asked why they had come to the auditions, most of the participants responded that they wanted to be in the entertainment industry. A number of responses were about the love of acting, and when one participant was asked why he had come, he responded: "To do what I have always wanted to do. To try my luck. I love acting and presenting and everything about the media" (Participant interview 3, 2012).

Other participants noted that they liked the series so much that they wanted to be part of it: "Well for me I came here today because I love acting and, you know *Intersexions*, it teaches young people you know, and would I love hmmm to also be a part of that you know" (Participant interview 2, 2012). One noted: "I enjoy *Intersexions*. I believe that it tells a beautiful story that I like to be part of," (Participant interview 6, 2012).

A further participant commented on the appropriateness and reality of the program: Watching *Intersexions* opens most people's eyes ya, so I am so interested in having a role in *Intersexions*. I feel it's a good message and it connects with what I am seeing in the public so as a realistic person you know. *Intersexions* is like reality TV. (Participant interview 4, 2012).

This notion of being part of something "good" or beneficial that has a genuine impact on lived experience is a common factor in participatory projects, where people feel compelled to get involved in something that is for the benefit of others. However, most of the participants had less altruistic motives, and were hoping to be involved for their own benefit, and for the establishment of a career in the arts and entertainment. Many were grateful for the opportunity to be "discovered", with one participant commenting: "I am so happy to be here. I am so happy that *Intersexions* chose to audition normal people so that a new talent can be introduced" (Participant Interview 5, 2012). Others were more cynical about the process. One of the selected new cast members commented:

Honestly speaking, I thought it was bogus. I thought no there's no way one can be casted in this much confusion punctuated by mostly newcomers trying their luck. I really feel sorry for the

individuals who came, despite all, they weren't successful. (New cast member, Interview 2, 2013).

While participation in the audition process was entirely voluntary, there was a feeling that holding open auditions for untrained people could be seen as offering false hope, and the interviews did reflect a high sense of hope amongst them. The cast member noted above also commented that those who did not move through the audition process to the end point of a screen test had to "walk a walk of shame, going back to where you came from with your dreams of appearing on *Intersexions II* shattered" (New cast member, Interview 2, 2013).

Many of the participants who were interviewed were very confident of their chances of being selected, despite some having never auditioned for anything before, or never having performed before. The interviews reflected a high level of self-belief. Interestingly, one of the interviewees was a professional actress, and she was more circumspect about the process and her chances. She also commented that the process was unfair to professionals, voicing her feeling that:

People who are not interested in acting, they are going to come here, maybe somebody who is doing law, who is doing medicine; they come here and get lucky. And what happens is that I, who am an actress, who has been trying to make it for so many years, I don't make it and somebody who is not passionate about it they make it. (Participant interview 6, 2012)

A number of the participants felt that having "normal" people, not trained actors, was going to make a difference to the series, because they had "natural skills ... that is going to make them (the audience) love us" (Participant interview 1, 2012). Another participant noted that it was the normalness of including ordinary people in the series that would make it even more effective:

So then it will become real, because now its celebrities, but now that they going to be using something like people from the society. It's going to put the realness into it. Participant interview 2, 2012.

Another participant noted that there was a difference in how people would respond to actors and non-actors in the series:

It will make a difference, because if you are using normal people like us, it's better to relate to us than an actress. Because you know that it's their job to act, whereas with us ... its genuine ... I mean we are real people and we live the experience. (Participant interview 3, 2012)

Although it is disingenuous to think that actors do not experience life like "real people" do, this participant recognizes the likelihood of audiences being able to relate to normal people more easily than to celebrities, and that the series may become more realistic and effective as a result. This is echoed by the interviewed new cast member, who commented:

"When people see someone they know on TV, acting out any role, I think it hits home more as they link character to actual person ...they get to relate more and reflect on their own life" (New cast member, interview 1, 2013) .

This reflects recognition by the participants of the employed strategies of inclusiveness and participation, which may make the program more popular and more effective in encouraging behavior change and the uptake of services. Others noted that the process would unearth new talent, and that this would help to keep the high standards that *Intersexions* had set for itself:

You know, you cannot doubt that a person that has made it out of 15,000 or 30,000 people; surely he or she is talented... I think we are going to have a good show. (Participant interview 3, 2012)

This notion of new talent and making an impact on the television industry is commented on in the responses from Quizzical Pictures later in this paper. Only one respondent (the professional actress) commented that the inclusion of non-actors in the new series would be negative:

I am one of them who are going to be very upset because you know, we are going to see new faces on the TV, you know, not the normal people that we once knew. Participant interview 6, 2012.

Although this response can be understood as coming from somebody afraid of being overlooked for a part in the series because of “raw” talent being selected, it does also reflect a concern that without the celebrity element of a professional cast, viewers may be turned off the series. This is a further dilemma that has been identified in studies of participatory entertainment practices (Durden, 2004; Mavrocordatos, 2003) but further study into the reception of the new series with its inclusion of five new actors may shed more light on this.

Additional participatory aspects to the auditions

An additional aspect of the audition days was the provision of HCT services and participatory forum theatre and other activities that were in spaces throughout the audition area. This allowed for an additional element of involvement and an opportunity for enhancing well-being for auditionees. Although the uptake of these services was seen as good by JHHESA, most of the interviewed participants did not use these. Some were too nervous to focus on anything other than remembering their lines, while others felt that the services were not applicable: “I did see it, but I didn’t pay attention to it because it doesn’t affect me as a person” (Participant interview 2, 2012).

Most of the interviewed participants had noted, however, that the additional activities had, in fact, enhanced the experience of the day for them:

I think it’s a great idea because auditions ... like, they always do the same thing all over and I am not saying it’s boring, but (it was good) to bring entertainment. I think the fact that we have to get tested, it kinda like relates to our scripts. (Participant interview 3, 2012)

When asked whether he had been tested on the audition day, the same participant noted that he had not, but that he knew his HIV status. Another participant commented that the extra activities helped them to get through the day:

We as actors we need something to do before we do audition; just to get the nerves off. So it was very cool. Activities before acting is important just to... (Calm the) butterflies. (Participant interview 4, 2012).

For most participants, although they may not have used the services on offer, they felt that the additional participatory activities were good to warm them up, to entertain them, and to alert them to the issues that were the content of the scripts that they had learned for their auditions. One interviewed cast member who had been cast through the open auditions noted that: "I didn't get tested. All I was concerned about was my audition; but the talks they had were interesting, with the people's comments on the issues being discussed" (New cast member interview, 2013).

The additional activities opened up other avenues for greater participation and encouraged dialogue, particularly in the forum theatre activities, where auditionees were invited to participate in theatre performance. This satisfies the requirements of genuine participation to a far greater extent than the notion of involvement that is otherwise offered through individuals being part of the audition process.

Challenges and opportunities arising from the participatory process

Just five of the 4600 people who auditioned were selected for inclusion in the final show, with one of these from Durban. Of the five young people cast, three of them are in one episode only, one appeared in two episodes, and one young male was given a more substantial role, appearing in four new episodes. After the experience of working with the new actors, the production company commented:

As excellent and talented as the actors who were cast are, there is still a need to invest more in development in the form of workshops prior to shooting so they can learn more of what will be expected of them on set, as some do come with preconceived ideas of how the experience should be. (Quizzical Pictures, Interview 2, 2102).

This observation suggests that those without professional training and experience do not have the skills to be able to fit easily into a

professional production, and that providing skills and empowering these young people is a vital step in ensuring that this kind of participation does not slow down the production process. The interviewed cast member noted that the filming process was very exciting, and that she was welcomed by the more experienced cast and crew, although it was clear that she was “the new girl”. Balancing the professional and the participatory has long been identified as a dilemma in EE practices (Durden, 2004; Mavrocordatos, 2003). The process of the open auditions is also noted as having brought about potential benefits for change within the wider television and film industry:

Feedback from the team is that there is indeed talent out there, and hosting open auditions is an invaluable tool; to not only discover new talent, but to increase the pool of excellent professional actors in the industry. We only hope to discover even more in the following seasons. (Quizzical Pictures, Interview 2, 2102).

When asked about the impact of including non-experts on the final product, Quizzical Pictures responded that it is difficult to assess this before airing the program on national television and seeing how the new cast is received by audiences. I would anticipate that the marketing and positioning of the program as a participatory project may also make a difference to this, as viewers are encouraged to see ordinary people, like themselves, given an opportunity to become stars.

Balancing notions of participation and professionalism

The interviews conducted with participants and producers reveal a number of complexities that arise in the process of introducing participation into a professional process. These are both ethical and practical, and include: the raising of expectations, with the potential for wide-scale disappointment; lack of necessary skills for full and genuine participation; the difficulties of blending professional and non-professional actors within a tight filming schedule; and the potential of a mixed reaction from the audience to the use of this strategy. The strategy introduced by JHHESA and Quizzical pictures may become one that changes the face of the television industry in South Africa, and blurs the traditional boundaries between experts and “real people”, furthering possibilities for participation in the industry.

However, this can be seen as participation as a means to an end (creating a popular product) rather than participation as an end in itself (to empower the participants). This is because there is less focus on active participation in the project at a variety of different levels. While auditionees were actively involved in the audition process, dialogue was stimulated at the audition days, and participants may have accessed health services, there is little other evidence of their personal development or ability to make changes in their own health behaviors or in the health of their communities.

When assessed against theoretical discussions about levels of participation, participation in the *Intersexions II* project is limited. Uphoff (1985) and Chin (1996) identify participating in the decision-making processes of the project, participating in the implementation phase of a project, participating in the benefits of the project, and participating in the evaluation phase of the project. The *IntersexionsII* project encourages participation in the implementation phases only, and therefore may not encourage true empowerment in that the voices of ordinary people are not heard through the process, even though new faces are seen. JHHESA and Quizzical Pictures did make a public call for script ideas for content for episodes for *Intersexions II* in 2012, in a bid to encourage participation, but it is unclear to what extent these offerings were included in the final scripts.

Narayansamy's (2008) four key identifiers of participation are met in three instances, (1) voluntary involvement in the project (2) participation at different levels and (3) ultimately aiming to improve the well-being of the participants. However, there is no evidence in the *Intersexions II* project of the remaining identifier of involving shared decision-making. This may be one of the limitations of attempting to integrate mass media and participatory strategies, as decision-making powers rest firmly with the broadcaster, the production company and other partners. The very technical and expert nature of television may mean that expert knowledge and local knowledge cannot be recognised as equally valid, although this is a key tenet of participation. Perhaps the open audition process is then better described as a strategy of 'involvement' rather than 'participation' as understood in the context of development communication. Those who came to the auditions were involved in the process, but not in the decisions about the content, format or outcomes of the process, and so the process lacked

the elements of power-sharing or empowerment essential to genuine participation.

The open audition process, however, did promote limited participation at different levels. Being part of the add-on activities may have offered the most benefit for participants, creating excitement, building knowledge, opening opportunities for dialogue, and providing access to services. Perhaps the addition of an element of television performance skills-building (such as acting workshops) would further empower the participants, as well as benefiting the production company and the industry at large.

While the end result of just five young people having been selected from a pool of 4600 may not be the kind of representative sample that is expected of participation; the process of being involved certainly had an effect on the audition participants as well as those cast in the series. Whether this effect has translated into increased health benefits has yet to be explored.

Conclusions

The collected data reveals some of the challenges that arise in the process of introducing participation into a professional process. These include ethical issues around the raising of expectations, with the potential for wide-scale disappointment; and practical issues such as the lack of necessary skills and avenues for full and genuine participation and the difficulties of blending professional and non-professional actors.

The strategy of participation that was implemented for the *Intersexions II* auditions resulted in the involvement of large numbers of people in the process, but this *involvement* should be seen as distinct from *participation* as understood in the development sphere. The strategy did not result in obvious empowerment for those participating. Participation in the process may have resulted in behavior change and benefits for some individuals, but this has not been examined through this research. Beyond audience building, it is unclear what the impact of using ordinary people in the series has been on the audience; and this will need to be assessed after *Intersexions III* has been televised in South Africa in 2013.

Further research could explore how to encourage greater involvement in EE, particularly as television drama grows in popularity and becomes the medium of choice for communication to raise HIV and AIDS issues in Africa. There may also be greater opportunities for

blending the use of drama and reality television in the field of health communication. In the case of *Intersexions*, perhaps the addition of actively involving viewers in decision-making regarding story-lines and casting would encourage greater loyalty to the program. Adding a voting element, and a “behind the scenes” look at how the program is created could further enhance the social modeling impact of the program, where viewers feel more connected to the characters and their choices, because they have been part of selecting them.

The experience of the *Kwanda Initiative* could also serve as a model for future EE interventions, where reality television shows participatory development in practice, showing how these initiatives can work in selected communities, and encouraging individuals to group together in their own communities to bring about change. If we believe that EE in Africa should have a greater focus on participatory development and less on expert messaging and social marketing, then we need to encourage television production companies to embrace opportunities to involve more ordinary people in their processes.

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