

How Entertainment-Education Programmes Promote Dialogue in Support of Social Change

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Abstract

Mass media messages often prompt dialogue among listeners or viewers. Such dialogue may reinforce social stability or lead to pro-social change. If the dialogue prompted by a mass media programme is central to understanding media effects, what forms this dialogue, and how does it influence people to change their thinking and actions? These questions formed the basis of the present investigation, which examined an entertainment-education (E-E) programme in India, developed with the intention of promoting pro-social change (e.g., gender equality, family planning, etc.). We discovered that internal dialogue (parasocial interaction) between listeners and media characters lead to conversations about the educational content of the media programme that fuelled support for social stability and for pro-social change. Second, interpersonal dialogue within families, and dialogue at the group level among community members, facilitated discussion of sensitive or taboo subjects in ways that were supportive of social stability as well as social change in family and community dynamics. Finally, listeners and viewers of E-E programmes confronted powerful forces of resistance as they attempted to change community power dynamics. Despite these difficulties, our findings suggest that synergistic possibilities for social action emerge when E-E broadcasts disseminate pro-social models of behaviour that spark various forms of dialogue among audience members.

Keywords

Entertainment-education, dialogue, parasocial interaction, social change

Theories of mass media effects and group dynamics have wrestled over understanding and explaining how the mass media influence audience members' thinking and action at the individual and collective levels (McQuail 2010). Up until the 1940s, the mass media were primarily viewed as being magic multipliers of invariant messages, leading to direct, immediate and powerful effects on audience members (Harris 2009; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). This early view of media effects viewed the audience as a group of passive, atomized and disconnected individuals (Bryant & Oliver 2008). Several studies conducted after World War II showed that conception of powerful mass media effects was problematic, and that media effects were better explained by what came to be known as the two-step flow model (Dearing & Singhal 2006; Katz & Lazarsfeld 1955; Rogers 2003). In the first step, mass media influenced only a limited number of individuals in a social system (often called opinion leaders), mostly through a process

of information transmission (Papa et al. 2006; Rogers, 2003). Media effects, however, were more pronounced in the second step—from opinion leaders to other individuals in the social system, connected through existing social networks. Here interpersonal communication, discussion and dialogue were the key vehicles of influence (Rogers et al. 2009).

The role of the media in promoting dialogue, including the impact of such dialogue, was illustrated in the famous 1956 Pune Radio Farm Forum project in India, which was a field experiment to evaluate the effects of radio farm forums, each consisting of several dozen villagers who gathered weekly to listen to a half-hour radio programme (broadcast by All India Radio) and then to discuss its contents (Kivlin et al. 1968). The theme of the radio forums was ‘Listen, Discuss, Act!’ One of the radio programmes might deal with rodents as a problem. Following discussion of this topic in a radio forum, villagers may decide to mount a rat-control campaign in their community (Singhal & Rogers 2001).

The Pune radio farm forums helped ‘unify villagers around common decisions and common actions’, widening ‘the influence of the *gram pachayat* [village government] and broadening the scope of its action’ (Mathur & Neurath 1959: 101). The farm forums spurred discussions among villagers, often leading to decisions about digging wells, adopting pure bred bulls and Leghorn chickens, and establishing *balwadis* (children’s enrichment centres) (Singhal & Rogers 2001). At the village level, the radio forums acted like voluntary organizations ‘whose members were neither appointed by authority nor elected to represent specific group interests’ signifying an important experiment in village democracy (Mathur & Neurath 1959: 101). Influenced by the media-sparked group discussion, radio listeners engaged voluntarily in village clean-up drives, planting papaya trees and building pit latrines.

If the dialogue resulting from viewing or listening to a mass media programme is central to understanding media effects, what forms does this dialogue take, when does it emerge and how does it influence people to change or not change their thinking and actions? These questions form the basis of the present investigation. Specifically, we examine dialogic processes in *Taru*, an entertainment-education radio programme in India that was purposely developed to promote pro-social change.

The present research study is part of a series of studies that has examined the impact of *Taru* in the villages of rural India—Singhal et al. (2004) studied how *Taru* sparked social change through the integration of both mass media messages and on-the-ground service activities; Singhal et al. (2006) examined how *Taru* promoted social change through encouraging the development of social capital in communities; Singhal et al. (2006) explored how *Taru* facilitated second-order changes in Bihar’s rural areas; Papa et al. (2006) studied how *Taru* activated a dialectical tension between information dissemination and dialogue in promoting social change; Harter et al. (2007) studied how participatory folk performances by *Taru* listeners’ groups represented acts of social activism and reform; Sengupta et al. (2008) studied how gendered identity was constructed among *Taru*’s listeners in the context of socio-spatial relationships; and Singhal (2010) summarized *Taru*’s impacts in promoting gender equality and smaller family size norms. The present investigation digs deeper into the various dimensions of *Taru*-sparked internal, familial and community dialogue that promotes a dialectical relationship between social stability and social change. More specifically, a theoretical model of testable propositions is proposed that clarifies how various forms of media-sparked dialogue promote this dialectical relationship.

To prepare the reader for our description of this specific media approach to sparking internal, familial and community dialogue for social change, we first describe the general attributes of entertainment-education media programming and our perspective of dialogue and how it relates to both social change and social stability. Then, we explain our data collection methods including a description of the storyline and the main characters of the entertainment-education programme. Next, we present our analysis and

interpretation of data by describing the various forms of dialogue that contributed to social change and social stability in different communities. Finally, we conclude by focusing on the various roles that dialogue can play with regard to mass media campaigns and the conditions under which we can expect those roles.

Entertainment-Education and Social Change

Entertainment-education (E-E) is the process of purposely designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate, in order to increase audience members' knowledge about an educational issue, create favourable attitudes, shift social norms, and change overt behaviour (Singhal & Rogers 1999, 2002; Wang & Singhal, 2008). The purpose of an E-E intervention is to present models of behaviour, positive or negative (or in-between), including their consequences, sparking intrapersonal, interpersonal, and group conversations, contributing to the process of directed social change, which occurs at the level of an individual, community, or society (Bandura 2004; Singhal 2010). The E-E strategy has been implemented worldwide in radio and television soap operas, popular music, comic books and other entertainment genres to promote a broad range of educational issues, especially in the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The entertainment-education strategy contributes to social change in multiple ways. E-E can influence audience members' awareness, attitudes and behaviour towards a socially desirable end. Here the anticipated effects are located in an individual or a collective of which an individual is a part (Lacayo & Singhal 2008). Often E-E programmes spark conversations among audience members about the social issues that are addressed, leading to dialogue, decisions and individual or collective actions. An illustration is provided by a radio soap opera, *Twende na Wakati* (Let's Go with the Times), in Tanzania that convinced several hundred thousand sexually active adults to adopt HIV prevention behaviour (like using condoms and reducing their number of sexual partners) (Rogers et al. 1999; Singhal & Rogers 2002).

E-E interventions can also influence the audience's external environment to help create the necessary conditions for social change at the system level (Lacayo & Singhal, 2008; Singhal et al. 2004; Singhal & Rogers 2002). Here the major effects are located in the social–political sphere of the audiences' external environment. E-E can serve as a social mobilizer, an advocate or agenda-setter, influencing public and policy initiatives in a socially desirable direction (Lacayo & Singhal 2008; Usdin et al. 2004; Wallack 1990).

Dialogue

Dialogue occurs when people 'meet to reflect on their reality as they make and remake it' (Freire & Shor 1987: 98). The words produced by any party are not as important as the 'spaces between' where people co-create (Yu & Wen 2004), co-author (Cissna & Anderson 1998; Palmeri, 2004) and co-construct (Pearce & Pearce 2000) emergent meanings. Importantly, dialogue requires a reciprocal relationship between participants as well as a reciprocal responsiveness (Yu & Wen 2004). Dialogue cannot be effective unless participants commit themselves fully to the process. Emphasizing the importance of dialogue in human interaction, Bakhtin (1984: 293) observed:

The single adequate form for verbally expressing authentic human life is the open-ended dialogue. Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue.... A reified model of the world is being replaced by a dialogic model.

The initiation of dialogue does not mean that participants soften their positions or compromise their ideas to move towards middle ground. In fact, positions or interests may be stated strongly as participants stand their ground, while also being open to the other's standpoints (Arnett et al. 2006), as they search for resolution or insight, recognizing that the answer is not located in any person but embedded between partners (Arnett 2001; Buber 1958).

The creative force of dialogue is energized by the integration of multiple voices into the process. In dialogic interaction multivocality refers to the existence of multiple perspectives, values and orientations in a tension-filled unity of embattled voices (Bakhtin 1984; Bathurst 2004; Collier 2006; Tovaes 2006). One reason for the existence of these multiple perspectives is that all participants in a dialogue are socially located with respect to class, gender, occupation, culture and other social categories producing the 'interanimation of competing socio-ideological languages' (Baxter et al. 2004: 230). As these voices are expressed, evaluation becomes an integral part of dialogic partners understanding one another. In fact, Bakhtin (1990) argues that understanding devoid of evaluation is impossible.

Conflict is inevitable as voices clash in multivocal dialogue. Specifically, heteroglossia refers to dialogic conflicts between centralized and decentralized or official and unofficial discourses (Yu & Wen 2004). Rather than view such clashes as necessarily undesirable, they may be considered alternatively as constructive cacophony (Barge & Little 2002) that contributes to the eventual decision that is reached. Through encouraging dissent during dialogue there is a greater likelihood of reaching high quality decisions (Janis 1989) that are innovative and creative (Stacey 1996). The task for dialogic partners in this process is to 'create multivocal oppositions that are generative in nature and keep the [conversation] moving forward as opposed to blocking movement' (Barge & Little 2002: 532).

Although dialogue requires assertion and the voicing of perspectives to be effective, there is also a receptive stance that is necessary for people to move forward together. To illustrate this point Cissna and Anderson (1998) focussed on the 1957 dialogue between Martin Buber and Carl Rogers. Each emphasized mutuality or the need for each party to dialogue to *turn towards the other*. Specifically, high quality dialogue requires listening intently with the goal of experiencing the relationship as the other person experiences it.

DeTurk (2006) also concentrates on the receptive component of dialogue by describing the importance of perspective taking. Specifically, dialogue requires stopping to 'suspend one's routine frame of perception to try on someone else's while at the same time recognizing that to understand the other's experience fully is impossible' (DeTurk 2006: 41).

Arnett et al. (2006) frame dialogue as a communicative invitation and as a choice to learn from the other. When dialogic partners learn from each other they are capable of collaborating in producing solutions to commonly experienced problems. The receptive stance each person must display towards the other involves suspending disbelief, respecting, empathy, reciprocal responsiveness and a willingness to be affected and to be vulnerable (Barge & Little 2002; Burkhalter et al. 2002; Hawes 1999; Issacs 1999). As Arnett et al. (2006) conclude, dialogue is a passionate pursuit where each participant becomes lost in the conversation; 'giving one's self to it, surrendering to it without either giving it up or taking it on' (pp. 240–41). Partners in dialogue need to shift away from winning and losing and being and identity to *becoming* and *difference*. Given this description of dialogic communication, we now consider different forms of dialogue and how dialogue may both support and resist social change.

Parasocial Relationships as Internal Dialogue

Most discussions of dialogue focus on conversations between people who meet to accomplish something together. The mass media, however, creates another space or context for dialogue to emerge. When listeners or viewers of a media programme become attached to the characters portraying specific roles, they may engage in an internal dialogue with those characters in ways that approximate face-to-face relationships between people, known as a *parasocial relationship*. Parasocial relationships are the seemingly face-to-face interpersonal relationships that can develop between a viewer and a mass media personality (Horton & Wohl 1956) that is analogous to the real interpersonal relationships that people develop in a primary face-to-face group (Papa et al. 2000; Perse & Rubin 1989; Rubin & Perse 1987; Sood & Rogers 2000). Horton and Wohl (1956) argued that when a parasocial relationship is established, the media consumer appreciates the values and motives of the media character, often viewing him or her as a counsellor, comforter and model. Rubin and Perse (1987) argued that parasocial interaction consists of three audience dimensions—cognitive, affective and behavioural.

Cognitively oriented parasocial interaction is the degree to which audience members pay careful attention to the characters in a media message and think about its educational content after their exposure (Papa et al. 2000; Sood & Rogers 2000). Such reflection on the educational themes can help media consumers recognize that they could make different behavioural choices in their personal lives. Bandura's (1977) concept of self-efficacy is linked to the behaviour change that a person considers and/or enacts. *Self-efficacy* is an individual's perceptions of his/her capacity to deal effectively with a situation and to control this situation (Bandura 1995).

Affectively oriented parasocial interaction is the degree to which an audience member identifies with a particular media character and believes that his/her interests are joined (Burke 1945). The stronger this identification, the more likely it is that the character's behaviour will affect the audience member. Affective identification may even be so strong that audience members adjust their daily schedules to listen to the radio programme to maintain an ongoing relationship with their favourite characters.

Behaviourally oriented parasocial interaction is the degree to which individuals overtly react to media characters, for instance, by 'talking' to these characters, or by conversing with other audience members about them. Such conversations may influence audience members' thinking about an educational issue and motivate them to change their behaviour in a specific way. The centrality of interpersonal or group interaction to behaviour change has been documented by various researchers (Papa et al. 1995, 1997, 2000; Rogers & Kincaid 1981).

Katz et al. (1992) argued that parasocial interaction can prompt referential involvement on the part of audience members. *Referential involvement* is the degree to which an individual relates a media message to his/her personal experiences (Papa et al. 2000; Sood & Rogers 2000). Before audience members consider behaviour change as a result of observing or listening to a media character, they must be able to relate the experiences of the character to their own personal lives, or behaviour change would certainly seem less likely for that individual.

Dialogue and Social Change

Recent scholarship has highlighted the importance of dialogue in social change processes (Anderson et al. 2003; Gergen et al. 2004; Hammond et al. 2003; Papa et al., 2000, 2006; Reardon 2003;

Stewart & Zediker 2000; Zoller 2000, 2004). For example, Zoller (2000: 193) argues 'dialogic relations involve risking one's position in order to arrive at a new understanding'. This observation highlights the fact that risk is always part of any substantive change in a community.

Dialogue may also focus on the tensions that surface when social changes are debated. For example, how do we balance the need to arrive at consensus for change while still respecting voices of opposition (Barge 2006; Stewart & Zediker 2000)? Zoller (2004) extends this position by explaining, 'dialogue requires collaboration that does not rule out disagreement and debate but presumes a focus on joint sense making and a willingness to be vulnerable to be changed through interaction' (p. 214). Dialogue thus represents a primary resource for transforming how we understand ourselves and others and the organizational worlds we inhabit.

Given the challenges associated with confronting entrenched social problems, dialogue helps people build support for engaging in struggle together. Dialogue revitalizes agency (Hawes 1999) and develops self-efficacy 'in the forms of validation, voice, confidence and skills to engage in a struggle for social justice' (DeTurk 2006: 75). Dialogue may bring like-minded people together who provide support for one another in continuing struggles that promote social justice. As Shotter (2004) explains, 'what the voices of others can do for us that we can't do for ourselves is to arouse a dialogically-structured response in us, they can create the possibilities for change within us that we cannot create within ourselves alone' (p. 211).

Habermas' (1989) theory of social change also provides insight into the type of dialogue necessary to produce substantive change in communities. Specifically, dialogue is necessary to create de-centred identities capable of participating in democratic ethics (Habermas 1987). De-centred identities are important because they allow actors to focus objectively on the quality of arguments supporting new ideas rather than on personally derived meanings based on traditions historically opposed to such ideas. Furthermore, in periods of rapid cultural change it is important that changes being considered be thematized in the public sphere and interpreted by the public. As Storey and Jacobson (2004) explain, 'Decisions to abandon, or to retain, traditions need to be made collectively if they are to continue providing normative frameworks within which social integration and identity formation can be achieved' (p. 296). Thus, community dialogue is absolutely essential for any substantive social changes to occur in a locality (Jacobson 2000).

If dialogue has the potential to spark social change within families and communities, what evidence suggests that it does so? Reardon (2003) documented how community dialogue by residents of Decatur, Illinois led to collective actions that confronted pediatric asthma and cardiovascular disease and led to the development of youth leadership programmes. Several other studies have also reported examples of E-E programmes sparking interpersonal dialogue within families and communities that has been linked to various types of social change (Lacayo & Singhal, 2008). For example, Valente et al. (1994) described a radio programme in The Gambia (*Fakube Jarra*) that encouraged family discussions about family planning and motivated viewers to visit family planning clinics. Sharan and Valente (2002) and Storey et al. (1999) examined a radio programme in Nepal (*Cut Your Coat According to Your Cloth*) that promoted spousal discussions about family planning and decision-making. Yoder et al. (1996) focussed on a radio programme in Zambia (*Nshilakamona*) that resulted in increased family discussions about AIDS. Finally, Vaughan et al. (2000) examined the highly popular Tanzanian radio series, *Twende na Wakati*, that spurred interspousal and community dialogue about the adoption of family planning and HIV-prevention behaviour.

Dialogue and Resistance to Social Change

Attempts to describe social change from the perspective of communication theory require consideration of the nuances and contradictions that emerge when people try to change their behaviour at the individual or collective level. Social change seldom flows directly and immediately from exposure to an entertainment-education media programme. Conversely, a dialogic environment may be created that justifies resistance to social change. For example, conversations may take place that draw attention to the community resistance and opposition that will surface if new behaviour are considered, resistance that may not be realistically depicted by the media programme. Alternatively, although a person may talk about supporting social change, these words may not be reflected in subsequent action.

The literature on power provides us with one way of understanding the nonlinear process of social change by drawing our attention to the role that both power and resistance play in the process. For example, Mumby (1997) sees power as a productive, disciplinary and strategic phenomenon with no specific centre. Power in a social system is dispersed widely and unevenly. For instance, in many developing countries, gender and class mediate the extent to which people can overcome restrictions and barriers to progress. Mumby's (1997) perspective situates power as 'neither simply prohibitive nor productive, but recognizes it as simultaneously enabling and constraining human thought and action' (pp. 357–58). Indeed a number of scholars have encouraged examining discursive practices of social system members as they resist and subvert the dominant social order (e.g., Bell & Forbes 1994; Benson 1992; Burrell 1993; Collinson 1994; Jenkins 1988; Jermier et al. 1994; Lamphere 1985; Maguire & Mohtar 1994; Mumby 1987). The enactment of resistance can be particularly interesting to explore because resistance itself 'can be complex, contradictory and tenuous. Resistance does not simply occur in opposition to dominance, but often is implicated with it in mutually defining ways' (Mumby 1997: 362). So, although a particular social change has the potential to empower community members, people resist it through dialogic interaction because they support the status quo.

Gramsci's (1971) views on hegemony are also informative in understanding the paradoxical and contradictory nature of social change processes. Hegemony is a process of struggle that embodies simultaneously forces of domination and resistance. Consider, for example, how women struggle with dominance and resistance by engaging in seemingly contradictory thinking, behaviour or both. For instance, women in India may talk to one another about the practice of giving dowry and recognize that the practice should end because it is a social ill. Simultaneously, however, these women also recognize that dowry secures the position of the girl in her in-laws' home. Without dowry she may be abused and tortured for not contributing to the economic well-being of her in-laws. So, essentially, these women, through dialogic interaction, justify their resistance to messages advocating the elimination of dowry. Thus, the key to understanding the process of media-sparked social change is to carefully assess the meanings people give to their specific actions and the contexts within which these meanings are situated. Ultimately, this raises the question of how dialogue may both support social change and reinforce the status quo or social stability.

Given the preceding descriptions of E-E media programmes and dialogue, the following questions guide the present inquiry: *In what ways do E-E programs generate dialogue among listeners that helps to facilitate the process of social change at the community level? How does dialogue reinforce social stability?*

Analyzing Data from an E-E Project

Data from the *Taru* E-E radio soap opera research project in India, carried out between 2002 and 2005, was examined in the present investigation. The present authors, with other in-country colleagues, served as principal research investigators/research advisors on this E-E project, leading aspects of research design, data collection and analysis and reporting of results. Here we describe the E-E project, including its purposive storyline and pro-social themes and our data collection methods.

This research project focussed on the effects of an E-E radio soap opera, *Taru*, on several villages in the state of Bihar, India. The *Taru* serial (broadcast during 2002–03) promoted gender equality, small family size, reproductive health and caste and communal harmony. The story revolved around *Taru*, a young, educated woman who works in Suhagpur village's Sheetal Centre, an organization that provided reproductive health services, carried out village self-help activities and fought social injustices through collective action. *Taru* is a close friend of Shashikant, a social worker at the Sheetal Centre, who as a dalit (low caste) faces caste discrimination in the village. An undercurrent of romance characterizes their relationship, although it is not explicitly expressed, especially as Shashikant is mindful of his lower caste status relative to *Taru*'s upper caste family. Their friendship represents a call to caste and community harmony.

Overall, *Taru*'s characters modelled several new behaviour, challenging existing social norms—a friendship between a high-caste girl and a dalit social worker; the stopping of a child marriage; a high-caste *bahu* (daughter-in-law) stepping out of the home to start a school for dalit children; a first-time celebration of a girl's birthday and others. Our research on *Taru*, led by the present authors, draws on various types of qualitative data collected over a period of 30 months from four villages in Bihar—Abirpur, Kamtaul, Madhopur and Chandrahatti. Our data sources from these villages included (a) 75 transcripts of in-depth and focus group interviews with listeners of *Taru*; (b) transcripts of 18 *Taru* listeners' club diaries (each with weekly entries); (c) 22 transcripts of audio-taped listeners' club discussions; (d) 14 hours of videotaped testimony provided by listeners of *Taru* and their community members; and (e) extensive field notes of the present authors who made a total of five visits to these villages between 2002 and 2005.

In *Taru* the media text itself is dialogic, given the multiple conversations that occur between multiple characters on multiple issues with multiple responses, actions and consequences. Previous research has identified this multiplicity of dialogues as critical to the creating of high quality E-E programmes that engender strong audience effects (Piotrow et al. 1990; Singhal & Rogers 1999, 2002). This dialogic interaction provides viewers with a multi-dimensional, nuanced and rich understanding of the social issue. The dialogues in these long-running narratives are also ongoing, that is, they unfold over a period of time, allowing audience members the time and the space to reflect about complex social problems that are difficult to solve with a single-shot message. Thus, in this study we draw upon data collected about what are essentially dialogic interventions to answer our research questions.

Analysis and Interpretation

We posed the questions: *In what ways do E-E programmes generate dialogue among listeners that helps to facilitate the process of social change at the community level? How does dialogue reinforce social stability?*

Our analysis revealed several components of dialogue that were central to the relationship between the media stimulus provided by an E-E programme and their audience effects which supported both social stability and social change. The first is *internal dialogue* (a function of parasocial interaction with favourite characters). Second, *interpersonal family dialogue* and *community dialogue* helped to promote both social stability and pro-social change in a variety of ways. Third, we observed a reflexive turn from community dialogue to mass dissemination of socially relevant information. Finally, we found dialogue supportive of social change often must confront forces of power, resistance and paradoxical behaviour.

Internal Dialogue (Parasocial Interaction)

Our interviews with residents of the four villages in Bihar, India (Abirpur, Kamtaul, Madhopur and Chandrahatti) yielded many interesting examples of cognitive, affective and behavioural parasocial interaction (Rubin & Perse 1987). Let us begin by considering a few examples of *cognitively oriented parasocial interaction*.

In Kamtaul village, Rural Health Practitioner (RHP) Shailendra Singh noted how listening to *Taru* motivated him to intervene in a delicate situation: ‘We have applied the learnings of *Taru* in real life. Just as *Taru* and Shashikant prevent a girl child marriage in the radio serial, we also stopped a child marriage from occurring in Kamtaul. We politely said that this was wrong and concerned people came around and changed their decision’ (personal interview, 19 August 2002).

Sunita, Singh’s wife, greatly admired Neha, a friend of *Taru* in the radio serial, who establishes a school to educate dalit (low-caste) children. Sunita launched adult literacy classes for 20 lower-caste women in Kamtaul’s Harijan Tola (the lower-caste settlement). It is highly uncommon in an Indian rural setting for a high-caste woman to interact with women of lower castes. ‘If Neha could do it, so could I’, Sunita noted (personal interview, 19 August 2002).

Ratneshwar, the younger brother of the RHP in Village Madhopur, also wished to start a school but did not feel efficacious to do so. After listening to *Taru* and particularly being influenced by characters like Shashikant, *Taru* and Neha, he was able to realize his dreams: ‘I really enjoy teaching children. After listening to *Taru*, I turned this dream into reality’ (personal interview, 20 August 2002). Ratneshwar’s School, which meets in front of the Titly Centre, is attended by 25 to 30 children aged 10 to 12 years. Ratneshwar charges a minimum admission fee.

Cognitively oriented parasocial interaction is displayed by specific references to the educational themes (child marriage, education for the poor and inter-caste relations) presented in the radio soap opera (Papa et al. 2000; Sood & Rogers 2000). These listeners, through their comments and their actions showed how they paid careful attention to the characters in *Taru* and thought about its educational content after their exposure. Now let us focus on examples of affectively oriented parasocial interaction.

Affectively oriented parasocial interaction is the degree to which an audience member identifies with a particular media character and believes that his/her interests are joined (Burke 1945). The stronger this identification, the more likely that the character’s behaviour will affect the audience member. Soni in Village Abirpur exemplified this identification: ‘I love *Taru*. She is so nice. I also like Shashikant. When *Taru* is sad, Shashikant makes her laugh. When *Taru* is sad, I am sad. When Mangla asks her to not see Shashikant and *Taru* feels bad, I feel bad’ (personal interview, 5 March 2003). Audience members view

their favourite characters as close personal friends and become emotionally upset when certain characters face difficult personal situations.

Affective identification may be so strong that audience members adjust their daily schedules to listen to the radio programme to maintain an ongoing relationship with their favourite characters. As Dhurandhar Maharaj, a male listener in Abirpur Village, noted, 'Every Friday at 8 p.m. I have to be close to my radio. It is like meeting friends' (personal interview, 6 March 2003).

For some audience members, the identification with a character is so high that they cannot distinguish the fictional character from the actor. For instance, Kumari Neha, a member of the young women's listener group in Abirpur said, 'I wish Taru could come to our village. She is so sweet and polite. If I learn so much from hearing her voice, what will she do to me when I see her in person' (personal interview, 7 March 2003)? Neha identifies so strongly with Taru that she cannot make the distinction between the 'reel' Taru and the real Taru. Finally, let us turn to examples of behaviourally oriented parasocial interaction.

Behaviourally oriented parasocial interaction is the degree to which individuals react overtly to media characters, for instance, by 'talking' to these characters, or by conversing with other audience members about them (Rubin & Perse 1987). Usha Kumari, a college student from Abirpur is indebted to Taru for making her strong and inspiring her to implement her dreams: 'There are many moments when I feel that Taru is directly talking to me at night. She is telling me "Usha you can follow your dreams." I feel she [Taru] is like my elder sister...and giving me encouragement. I thank her for being with me' (personal conversation, 4 September 2002). Usha's uncle, Manoj Maharaj, is Abirpur's village RHP. He frequently treats villagers for minor ailments. Usha was fascinated by the sight of her uncle giving injections and dreamed that one day she would be able to serve her people's health needs. However, it was difficult to implement, as the movement of young, unmarried women is considered inappropriate in her village. Impressed with the boldness of Taru to fight social obstacles, Usha went through an important change in her personal life: 'Previously I lacked in self-confidence, but I have slowly gotten out of my shell. I am learning how to administer medication, including injections and saline drips from my uncle' (personal interview, 4 September 2002). Usha estimated that between June to August, 2002 (a three-month time-period), she administered over 200 injections.

Additional evidence of behaviourally oriented parasocial interaction was linked to the many young women listeners of *Taru* who spoke to how they were 'transformed' by the programme. Meenakshi, a member of a 16-year-old listeners group in Madhopur talked 'on camera', in front of her parents, about the importance of using a condom to protect oneself from HIV infection. She also mentioned that she would encourage her partner to use condoms when appropriate. Meenakshi noted, 'I learned this information about HIV/AIDS from the episodes of *Taru*. After listening to these episodes, I took a decision that I will discuss how to protect oneself from AIDS with my friends and family members' (personal interview, 7 March 2003). Meenakshi's desire to openly discuss information on sex-related topics in Madhopur Village is remarkable, given that such topics are taboo.

The preceding examples show how *Taru's* disseminated content led to parasocial interaction, a form of internal dialogue, between certain audience members and characters in the soap opera. Audience members also modelled certain newly disseminated behaviour in *Taru*, for example, Sunita Singh in Kamtaul Village established a school for dalit women, modelling her behaviour after Neha who implemented a similar practice in the radio serial (personal interview, 5 March 2003). The fact that parasocial interaction reflects a type of internal dialogue does not minimize its ability to influence audience member thinking and behaviour. In fact, the genesis of social change often resides in how

messages influence our thinking about possible alternative courses of action. Also important to note, however, is that parasocial interaction may serve to anchor pre-existing beliefs in support of social stability rather than social change. Let us consider two examples from Bihar, India.

Mukesh from Abirpur explained that in his community there are no longer clear divisions between people based on caste. People from different castes sit together and talk and they share things with each other. As he reflected carefully on the storyline from *Taru*, however, he recognized that there are necessary limits for how far inter-caste relations may progress. Specifically, for Mukesh, when it comes to inter-caste marriage, the line is drawn. ‘We can’t go for inter-caste marriage. We can’t think of any love story, like is going on between Shashikant and Taru’ (personal interview, 25 July 2003). This aspect of the storyline angered Mukesh because it disrespected community traditions and it served to increase his opposition to such relationships.

Our next example refers again to Meenakshi from Madhopur. Although she appreciated the message of empowerment for women, when she compared her life to Taru’s, she recognized her own limits. Meenakshi explained that taking the daring steps of *Taru* is not possible for her because she has to think about the expectations of her parents. She believes that she cannot dissent or cross the boundaries of gender expectations. So, although she has thoughts of emancipation from societal restrictions, she does not believe she can translate these thoughts into action. Furthermore, she believes that change will only be possible if boys take the lead in advocating social change. Until then, women will be suppressed in the name of ‘ghar ki izzat’ [maintaining the honour of the household] (personal interview, 3 March 2003). Interestingly, this example shows how parasocial interaction may have different effects on the same person.

So, parasocial interaction may both support and resist messages of pro-social change that are part of entertainment-education programmes. The impact of such programming clearly depends on how viewers or listeners process mass media messages and how strongly held their prior beliefs were in support or opposition to the proposed changes. Having considered the role of parasocial interaction in promoting or opposing social change, let us now consider different forms of interpersonal and community dialogue.

Interpersonal Family Dialogue

Many of our interviewees explained how *Taru* prompted family dialogue supportive of social change. For example, Jitendra of Madopur explained that after listening to *Taru* his wife started to disagree with the decision they had made as a family to end the education of their daughters, not allowing them to pursue admission to the 12th standard. After talking about this issue extensively they changed their prior decision and sent their daughters to school. This was a significant family decision because they were required to pay private tuition (personal interview, 4 March 2003). Chandni of Chandrahatti also commented on family dialogue supportive of education for girls. Prior to listening to *Taru* her brothers would tell her that education for a girl is useless because she will only get married and take care of her husband and children. After listening to *Taru* they started to encourage Chandni to continue her studies arguing that girls may also work outside the home and earn money for their families (personal interview, 5 March 2003). These examples and others provide support for the view that dialogue in families has the ability to spark social change (e.g., Sharan & Valente, 2002; Vaughn & Rogers, 2000; Vaughn et al. 2000).

Family dialogue concerning pro-social change also has the power to challenge social and cultural constraints at the community level. Consider the case of the Singh family of Kamtaul village. Inspired by *Taru*, numerous discussions occurred over several months in the Singh household about the ill-treatment of dalits. The family, who were ardent members of a *Taru* listening group, discussed what they could do to combat caste discrimination in their village. How could they challenge a social practice that was so firmly engrained in Kamtaul's social ethos? They decided that they wanted to make a public statement about caste discrimination in their village and they played out various scenarios in their discussions, rehearsing and refining them. They noted that their discussions revolved mostly around how to reframe the issue of untouchability in a way that would be culturally acceptable and the wedding celebration of their eldest daughter Vandana provided the perfect opportunity.

Dalits are involved in almost all wedding celebrations in rural Bihar; however, their roles are limited to cleaning toilets, handling garbage and doing other menial jobs. So, rarely do dalits come into contact with guests and almost never would they participate in preparing or serving food because that would represent 'contamination'. The Singh family decided to break tradition.

A few days before the marriage, when guests began to arrive at the Singh household, Shailedra Singh asked several local dalits to help out. One evening, while chatting with other guests, Shailendra asked one of the dalits (whom he had asked previously to dress in clean clothes and be properly groomed) to serve him a glass of water. In full view of the others, Singh emptied the glass and asked the dalit to serve water to others. Some guests followed Singh's lead, even if somewhat reluctantly. Some relatives said they were not thirsty. Some others who were offended but felt that they could not say anything, got up from their chairs, gave some banal reason and left the scene.

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

Although we interviewed many people who described family dialogue supportive of social change, we also encountered a number of examples of conversations that opposed such change. For example, Kumkum from Abirpur explained to us that when she became part of a *Taru* listeners' club that required her to write down her thoughts about the programme in a journal, her brothers protested. After listening to the programme themselves they recognized that their sister would not be respected in the community if she acted like *Taru* did. After talking among themselves, they decided to act. They told her, 'If you write, we will tear out the pages. When you got a watch you didn't give it to us. When you got a radio, you didn't give it to us' (personal interview, 18 August 2002). Kumkum responded by saying that even if they tear the pages, she will continue to write. Her mother was unsupportive as well; arguing that there was no purpose in Kumkum writing down her thoughts after listening to *Taru*. Her mother also told her to not talk to boys because other people in the community would talk and, ultimately, she was successful in preventing these conversations. Importantly, this example shows how voices may clash in multivocal dialogue (Barge & Little 2002; Yu & Wen 2004) in ways that may block progress towards social change.

In this section our data revealed how family dialogue may both support and oppose social change, often in powerful ways. When large number of community members listen or view an entertainment-education programme, it may also prompt dialogue among various community members about a broad range of issues both supportive and resistant of social change. Let us now consider some examples of such dialogue.

Community Dialogue

E-E effects at the community level require dialogue because of the collective inputs necessary to generate agreement for specific systemic change and the orchestration of activities across various social actors supportive of such change. For example, inspired by the character of Neha in *Taru* who establishes a school for dalit (lower caste) children, young female and male members of *Taru* listeners' groups, after seven months of dialogue and deliberation, started a school for underprivileged children in Abirpur. Some 50 children attended this school regularly, which met six days a week, from 4 to 6 p.m. by the village well. Young women of 15–20 years of age taught these children. Young men talked to dalit parents to convince them to send their children to school. They also had to convince their parents that this was a worthwhile activity to undertake. Establishing the school was a collective act of both young men and women in Abirpur. Such mixed-sex collaboration is highly uncommon in Indian villages. As Sunita Kumari noted, 'Before listening to *Taru*, we were shy and uncomfortable in talking to boys. Now that we are in a group, we feel comfortable talking to them and we do so on an equal footing' (personal interview, 19 August 2002).

The new school created by these listeners required deliberate and extensive dialogue that was multivocal and incorporated different perspectives and possibilities for change (Burkhalter et al. 2002; Hawes 1999; Issacs 1999). For example, listeners needed to select from among many possible initiatives discussed in the radio serial. The timing of meetings and the generation of human and physical resources (money, equipment, meeting place) also needed to be negotiated. Finally, continuing this school over time required continued meetings and discussions to sustain the commitment and energy needed to continue it.

Although community members in each of the four villages of Bihar recounted examples of community dialogue in support of social change, we also were exposed to stories that opposed change in community norms. For example, Neelam Devi from Madhopur explained how tight interconnectedness among community members led to negative outcomes in her family. After she had her first daughter her husband talked with her about having surgery to limit their family size, consistent with the family planning messages that were part of *Taru*. When Neelam talked to a number of her neighbours about the decision she made with her husband, she was strongly criticized. Her neighbours said that Neelam's family would be cursed if they did not have a boy. After listening repeatedly to their criticisms, she went back to her husband and they decided to have additional children until a boy was born. After the birth of a second and then a third daughter they remained influenced by the same community members until they finally had a son. Neelam realizes now that she should have limited the size of her family but the power of the community was too strong for her to resist (personal interview, 4 March 2003).

Reflexive Turn from Community Dialogue to Dissemination

One of the collectively generated responses prompted by listening to the E-E radio series, *Taru*, was a series of participatory theatre performances in India's Bihar state. By examining the process of how these performances emerged we gained insight into how media sparked community dialogue may take a reflexive turn producing new forms of mass dissemination of information and ideas.

Based on a high level of listenership (including group listening) and interest in the *Taru* programme, a number of community members in our four research villages of Bihar expressed interest in extending their involvement in promoting the messages highlighted in the programme. In July 2003, fifty members of *Taru* listener groups from these four villages (Abiripur, Kamtaul, Madhopur and Chandrahatti) took part in a three-day participatory theatre workshop. The workshop was led by professional folk artists who helped the participants develop skills in script writing, character development, costume and set design, voice projection, body movement, acting and singing (Harter et al. 2007).

At the beginning of the workshop the participants were asked to introduce themselves to the group by telling a story about their personal lives. These stories were situated in the context of the participants' families and communities. As the stories were told, a rich collage of narratives surfaced that held the potential for public performances focussing on the social issues at the centre of the *Taru* storyline. The facilitators then helped identify common themes among the various stories to create a 'meta-story' from which the performance script could emerge.

Facilitators encouraged the workshop participants to create performances that addressed important social issues in their communities. These personal stories were told in the participants' own vernacular and were woven together to create a master narrative to be performed publicly, providing a clear example of how dialogue activates the 'spaces between' where people co-create (Yu & Wen 2004), co-author (Cissna & Anderson 1998; Palmeri 2004) and co-construct (Pearce & Pearce 2000) emergent meanings. Importantly, every aspect of the production (from character development, dialogues and technical aspects of stage preparation) was co-created by the workshop participants. Thus, it was their dialogue with one another in story creation and in problem solving that made the productions possible.

The workshop was followed by two days of public performances in July 2003, widely promoted through word-of-mouth. The participants served as cast members, directors, stage managers and technical staff. Four performances, each about 90 minutes in length, were staged in each of the four villages for audiences that ranged in size from 300 to 500. Through engaging plots, songs and poetry, these performances advocated for social justice in rural communities, including gender equality, empowerment of dalits and small family size.

The dialogue between the 50 workshop participants, all avid listeners of *Taru*, shaped the public performances that were directly disseminated to some 1,500 audience members in the four village communities. So, what started as information dissemination in the form of a mass media message (*Taru*), became dialogue as listeners discussed the content of the programme among themselves. This dialogue, over a period of time, led to several instances of collective organizing and action at the village level. Importantly, every aspect of the performances required dialogue to negotiate the development of characters, storylines and outcomes. Dialogue then became mass dissemination as the plays were performed before large audiences in each of the four villages where the participants lived.

Interestingly, we observed a form of call and response in all of the participatory theatre performances in Bihar. Call and response, a tradition in African music, occurs when a singer produces a word or phrase that is repeated by the chorus and/or the audience (Smitherman 1977). During the plays in the villages of Bihar, message dissemination occurred as the actors performed and engaged in interaction with one

another in front of the assembled audience. The actors, in this instance, produced the call. The response was provided when audience members shouted a comment towards the stage, talked to another audience member, or provided feedback nonverbally (head nodding or shaking, clapping, etc.). Importantly, these responses both supported and opposed the call for social change in the performance. In addition, informal dialogue often emerged when a controversial issue was addressed by the actors and audience members talked among themselves about the message embedded in the play. So performers and audience members simultaneously engaged in both call and response and dialogue.

Dialogic Confrontation with Power, Resistance and Paradoxical Behaviour

Despite engaging message dissemination through E-E programmes such as *Taru* and compelling dialogue among audience members, our data provided numerous examples of how existing power structures in villages can serve as a barrier to social change. In fact, individuals or groups who wish to undertake a certain ameliorative action, often face resistance from social structures. For instance, in India, caste, gender and class mediate the extent to which people can overcome restrictions and barriers to progress.

Both in Abirpur and Kamtaul villages, members of the young women's listeners' club criticized the caste bias of their elders, which prevented them from listening to *Taru* with other friends, who belonged to another caste. Initially, the young girls felt powerless to oppose these parochial traditions; however, soon they devised ways to subvert them. In Kamtaul, the young women agreed to individually hear the *Taru* episodes at home and then later discuss them during school break. By August 2002, six months after *Taru's* broadcasts began, they felt efficacious enough to openly gather at the local RHP clinic, or at someone's home, to listen collectively (focus group interview, 17 August 2002).

Paradox and contradiction are also an integral part of the process of social change (Papa et al., 2000). Since established patterns of thought and behaviour are difficult to change, people often engage in an adjustment process until the new behaviour patterns are fully internalized. For instance, Manoj Maharaj, RHP of Abirpur village, talked at great length about how caste-based discrimination was on the ebb in Abirpur. However, in a casual conversation, Maharaj strongly supported other kinds of discrimination. When one of us asked him if Abirpur Village had any people living with AIDS, he said, 'There are two AIDS patients in the neighboring village. And he [despite being the sole health provider in the area], will not touch them' (personal interview, 7 March 2003).

Given the various forms of dialogue we discovered, which both supported and opposed social change, we propose the following model of testable propositions concerning media sparked dialogue and the dialectic of social stability and social change (Figure 1).

Discussion

The model presented in Figure 1 provides a visual representation of how our research questions were addressed through the data collected for this project. First, in what ways do E-E programmes generate dialogue among listeners that helps to facilitate social change at the community level? As the model and our data show, E-E programmes generate parasocial interaction (internal dialogue) and family/community



Figure 1. Media-sparked Dialogue, Social Stability and Social Change

dialogue that may facilitate social change at the community level. In addition, family and community dialogue may promote a reflexive turn from dialogue to mass dissemination of messages as occurred in the villages of Bihar when community members performed in front of some 1,500 audience members for the purpose of sparking social change. Finally, family and community dialogue may provoke acts of resistance to social change messages as well as prompt listeners to engage in paradoxical behaviour that ultimately oppose social change. Second, how does dialogue reinforce social stability? Our model and our data also show how the dialogue that is produced in response to mass media messages may run counter to these messages and actually support social stability instead of social change. This occurs due to the social opposition that may be present in a community that runs counter to the intention of mass media messages that attempt to promote social change. Given the co-presence of messages that support both social stability and social change, these two social factors are linked in a dialectic relationship that pulls community members in both directions.

In our proposed model of media-sparked dialogue, social stability and social change a number of testable propositions emerge for future research. First, our fieldwork and interviews in various communities in India provided support for a dialectic perspective on social change. Specifically, in all of the communities we entered there were forces embedded in communicative action that supported both social stability and social change. Within families and among community members dialogic struggles centred on whether to move in directions supportive of stability or change. This insight is consistent with Baxter and Montgomery's assertion that the dialectic of *stability* and *change* is ever-present in our personal and public lives. A similar dialectic was discussed by Burke (1954/1984) when he described human desires for both *permanence* and *change*. Finally, Papa et al. (2006: 260) highlighted the dialectic between stability and change by focusing centrally on poor people who were exposed to social change initiatives:

...control, oppression, dissemination, and fragmentation dominate the lives of the poor. When poor people participate in social change programs oppositional forces may surface, pulling them toward emancipation, empowerment, dialogue and unity. This struggle between opposing forces will likely be an ongoing one, even though a person, at any given time, may anchor their lives in forces dominated by stability *or* change.

Future research is needed to examine exactly how this struggle plays out in different communities. For example, how do different communicative actions and structures activate the dialectic of social stability and social change? More specifically, what types of communicative struggles occur in families and communities that are exposed to mass media messages supportive of pro-social change? Finally, in the context of developing communities where so many people experience oppression in myriad forms there will always be dominant internal and external forces that resist pro-social change to preserve the status quo. Future theorizing in the area of social change should focus on identifying actions and structures that foster emancipation, empowerment, dialogue and unity among the poor to confront oppression (Papa et al. 2006).

Second, our study provides insight into how entertainment-education programmes generate various forms of dialogue ranging from internal dialogue as reflected in parasocial interaction to dialogue in families and among community members. Importantly, as our descriptive model suggests, any single type of dialogue may initiate the process of social change, several different types of dialogue may work synergistically to facilitate change and dialogue may surface that both supports and opposes social change. Several lines of inquiry are suggested by our findings. Let us begin by considering the findings with respect to parasocial interaction. When audience members are exposed to entertainment-education programming how does parasocial interaction emerge, what forms does it take and how does it impact audience member thinking, behaviour and attempts at social action? Of course we also need to acknowledge the limits of parasocial interaction and its potential negative consequences. Reflecting on the actions of a character in a media programme may end with rumination and never result in changes in behaviour. Alternatively, parasocial interaction for some audience members may provoke entrenched commitment to social stability that denies empowerment opportunities for others.

With respect to behaviourally oriented parasocial interaction in particular, our findings should stimulate future research regarding entertainment-education. Prior research has documented the centrality of interpersonal or group interaction to behaviour change (Papa et al. 1995, 1997; Rogers & Kincaid 1981). Our research shows that particular types of dialogue sparked by behaviourally oriented parasocial interaction initiates steps towards pro-social change. We need to know more about how this process unfolds in different cultural settings and with different types of pro-social messages.

When we consider the forms of dialogue that may surface in families and communities, there are different lines of inquiry that may be pursued. Dialogue unfolds in many different ways. What types of dialogic processes move family or community members in directions that support social stability or social change? In addition, because evaluation is so often a part of dialogic discourse (Bakhtin 1990), we need to examine in further detail how evaluative messages are expressed and how they impact the dialogic process. Finally, what types of dialogue are necessary to prevent families and communities from reverting back to prior actions reflective of old forms of social stability?

Given our findings concerning dialogue, it may be fruitful to consider further Habermas' (1989) theory of social change that examines how dialogue potentially creates de-centred identities capable of participating in democratic ethics. Critical to this perspective is the participation of social actors who are willing to focus objectively on the quality of arguments supporting new ideas rather than to personally derived meanings historically opposed to such ideas. How may people be prepared to participate in this form of discussion, how do such discussions unfold and what are their outcomes?

Third, the data presented in this study gives some insight into the time dynamics of how dialogue sparked by E-E programming impacts audience members' behaviour and, ultimately, social change. Our insights into when and how dialogue influences behaviour and social change are relatively general, however. For example, Usha Kumari from Abirpur described for us a form of behaviourally oriented parasocial interaction when she detailed how she 'conversed' with the character of *Taru*. Then, we know from her account that (at some point in time) these conversations motivated her to pursue her dreams of serving the health needs of villagers in Abirpur. How this process unfolded exactly and what forms and types of interpersonal dialogue may have occurred prior to her actions are not clear. Future research needs to look more closely at the process of dialogue that is sparked by mass media messages to provide more detailed insight into how and when dialogue affects determinants of behaviour and social change. Carefully documented content analyses of conversations among audience members and detailed ethnographic accounts of how social change emerges in communities would be helpful in providing such insight.

Our understanding of the relationship between community dialogue and social change has been deepened by a series of research projects sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation since 1997. A model of social change emerging from these projects contains five components. A catalyst (*a*) such as the mass media initiates the change process, leading to: (*b*) community dialogue, (*c*) collective action, (*d*) individual change and finally (*e*) societal impact (Reardon 2003). This model has a number of similarities to the descriptive model proposed in this study. Furthermore, Reardon (2003: 5) observes that the Rockefeller Foundation model is iterative, not linear; 'its power lies in the fact that the outcome of any given phase feeds back into the process'. Future research and model testing is needed to provide further insights into the process of media sparked dialogue and social change.

Fourth, we need to understand more about the emergence of paradoxical actions and resistance in communities struggling with social change. Focusing on paradox is important for the designers of mass media messages. This is not just an issue of research; it also speaks to the issue of media ethics. When media programmers develop entertaining shows that spark change in families and communities they need to be mindful of the negative actions that may be taken by audience members who interpret the programme in ways not supportive of the intended pro-social changes. Recent research in this area has suggested that media programmers should consider supporting on-the-ground activities that stimulate dialogue supportive of pro-social change (Singhal et al. 2004). For example, listeners' clubs may be

established that encourage audience members to talk about the content of a programme and how actions may be taken at the community level to support pro-social change.

Fifth, the present study collected data from communities in India that are unique in their social and cultural context. For example, for the most part, these communities are collectivist in nature. In contrast to individualistic cultures (such as the United States), ‘collectivistic cultures are those in which the collectivity’s goals are valued over those of the individual’ (Rogers & Steinfatt 1999: 86). In collectivistic societies certain topics (e.g., sexuality, domestic violence, voluntary counseling and testing for HIV and others) cannot be so openly discussed due to face-threatening potential (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey 2003; Ting-Toomey & Chung 2005). In such contexts E-E programming is particularly relevant and powerful as private and taboo topics are put out in the public sphere, providing an opportunity to instigate audience conversations on these topics. These conversations become easier, more nuanced and richer given that the lives of fictional characters are under the microscope, not their very own. Thus, future research should be conducted to determine how the cultural attributes of a society, such as its degree of individualism versus collectivism, or its beliefs in individual efficacy versus fatalism, mediates the nature and scope of the E-E generated dialogue.

Finally, the most surprising of our findings is the reflexive turn from dialogue to dissemination that we observed in the four villages of Bihar, India. We are unaware of any prior research that has uncovered such a remarkable display of commitment to pro-social messages generated by an entertainment-education programme. What types of communicative actions and community dynamics are necessary to support this commitment to spreading messages of pro-social change? When community members take on the responsibility of spreading messages of pro-social change what impact does it have on how that community moves towards social stability or social change? How does this limited form of mass dissemination of information impact audience members similarly and differently in comparison to traditional forms of mass media?

Summary and Conclusion

The goal of the present article was to gain an understanding of how entertainment-education programming may spark listener dialogue that is supportive of pro-social change. The intention of entertainment-education programmes, which by themselves are dialogic interventions, is to foster desirable social effects among audience members. Here we examined one entertainment-education programme (*Taru* in India), which modeled various behaviour through protagonists and antagonists, sparking various forms of dialogue that facilitated a process of social change in four village communities.

The first form of dialogue that is helpful in facilitating desirable effects among audience members is an internal dialogue (parasocial interaction) between listeners/viewers and media characters. Audience members then reflect on the educational content of an entertainment-education programme. For some audience members behaviourally oriented parasocial interaction can lead to conversations about the educational content of the media programme, as seemed to occur in the villages of Bihar. Alternatively, we also discovered instances when parasocial interaction resulted in support for social stability rather than change.

Interpersonal dialogue within families and dialogue at the group level among community members was also prompted by the E-E programme we examined. Within families we found that media messages may provide the stimulus and context to discuss sensitive or taboo subjects in ways that are supportive

of change in family dynamics. At the community level, we found that dialogue was necessary to negotiate the complex dynamics of orchestrating social change activities and developing programmes that impacted many community members. In these instances dialogue helped to mediate between ideas and people representing different views. As with parasocial interaction, however, there were also forms of family and community dialogue that provided support for social stability and opposition to social change.

We also observed a reflexive turn from dialogue to mass dissemination of information when a number of *Taru* listeners from the four villages of Bihar staged participatory theatre performances for some 1,500 people. These performances helped to encourage further dialogue among audience members about the substance of the storylines and the experiences of the characters. In addition, these performances show that mass dissemination of information is not controlled solely by large organizations. At the local level people may join together in ways that expose large numbers of people to messages supportive of pro-social change. Although the reach of media through the radio and television is much broader, the fact that 1,500 people were exposed to pro-social messages is not insignificant.

Finally, we recognized that individual and social change is rarely a simple, linear process. Despite extensive dialogue at the interpersonal and community levels, listeners and viewers of E-E programmes may confront powerful forces of resistance as they attempt to change power dynamics in a community. The support and opposition to social change that we observed appears to be reflective of a larger dialectic struggle between social stability and social change that may be activated by any social change initiative in developing communities. In addition, attempts to change behaviour are often fraught with paradoxes and contradictions that point to the difficulty of altering entrenched actions within complex communities. Despite these difficulties, our findings suggest that synergistic possibilities for social action emerge when E-E broadcasts disseminate pro-social models of behaviour that spark various forms of dialogue among audience members. Future research is needed to test this claim in different social and cultural contexts.

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