Module 2 Unit 2

This is an **OPTIONAL READING: SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY**.

Papa et al., (2000). Entertainment education and social change: An analysis of parasocial interaction, social learning, collective efficacy and paradoxical communication. Journal of Communication 50(4), 31–55. [24 p.]

Entertainment-Education and Social Change: An Analysis of Parasocial Interaction, Social Learning, Collective Efficacy, and Paradoxical Communication[1]

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Most past studies of entertainment-education programs have not provided an adequate theoretical explanation of the process through which community members enact system-level changes as a result of exposure to entertainment-education media messages. Here we study the effects of an entertainment-education radio soap opera by means of an observational case study in one Indian village. We investigate the paradoxes, contradictions, and audience members' struggles in the process of media-stimulated change, a process involving parasocial interaction, peer communication, and collective efficacy.

This article explores the processes of social change initiated by an entertainment-education media program in India. Mass media communication can be an agency of national development in both developed and developing countries. Several decades of communication research on the effects of the mass media provide understandings of their ability, or inability, to influence social and behavior change.

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In recent decades, media effects studies generally emphasized the limited, conditional, and contingent role of mass communication in bringing about behavior change in developing nations (Contractor, Singhal, & Rogers, 1988; Melkote, 1991; Rogers, 1976). The typical design in this past research focused on obtaining data about media effects from individual audience members, who are then the units of analysis. As a result, scholarly attention is usually deflected from the social context in which media effects occur, and from system-level effects (Rogers & Kincaid, 1981). This article draws primarily upon data from a rural Indian village where an entertainment-education program seemed to engender strong audience effects, providing an unusual opportunity to examine the social context in which media-sparked effects occurred.

Entertainment-Education

A mass communication strategy called, variously, "enter-educate," "info-tainment," or (most commonly in recent years) "entertainment-education" has gained prominence as a purveyor of social and behavior change (Bouman, 1998; Singhal & Rogers, 1999). This strategy involves media programs that intentionally incorporate one or more educational issues in an entertainment format in order to influence audience members' knowledge, attitudes, and overt behavior regarding an educational issue (Church & Geller, 1989; Cooper-Chen, 1994; Singhal, Rogers, & Brown, 1993; Singhal & Rogers, 1999; Storey, 1998). This strategy has been implemented in radio and television soap operas, popular music, comic books, and other entertainment genres to promote various educational issues, especially in the developing countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. For instance, radio and television soap operas have been consciously designed to promote gender equality, adult literacy, smaller family size, and HIV/AIDS prevention in India, Turkey, Pakistan, Mexico, Tanzania, and in numerous other countries (Kincaid, Yun, Piotrow, & Yaser, 1993; Lettenmaier, Krenn, Morgan, Kols, & Piotrow, 1993; Nariman, 1993; Piotrow, Kincaid, Rimon, & Rinehart, 1997; Rogers, Vaughan, Swalehe, Rao, Svenkerud, Sood, & Alford, 1997; Singhal & Rogers, 1989, 1999). In addition, popular music has been used to promote sexual responsibility among listeners in Mexico, the Philippines, and Nigeria (Kincaid, Jara, Coleman, & Segura, 1988; Church & Geller, 1989; Rimon II, 1989; Piotrow, 1994).

Studies of the effects of these entertainment-education programs report changes in audience members' knowledge, attitudes, and overt behavior regarding the educational issue being promoted (Singhal, 1990; Brown & Cody, 1991; Cambridge, 1992; Piotrow, Rimon, Winnard, Kincaid, Huntington, & Convisser, 1990; Rogers et al. 1997; Valente, Kim, Lettenmaier, Glass, & Dibba, 1994; Valente & Saba, 1998; Valente, Watkins, Jato, van der Straten, & Tsitol, 1997). However, several scholars in the 1990s, have voiced concerns about certain limitations of the entertainment-education strategy. For instance, Brown and Singhal (1990, 1993) pointed to the ethical problems associated with entertainment-education programs. Others have suggested that the educational intentions of an entertainment-education program may be misinterpreted by some audience members (Malwade-

Rangarajan, 1992; Sherry, 1998)[2] or even be counterproductive (Ram, 1993). Some scholars found that the effects of an entertainment-education program may be weak in changing overt behavior (Yoder, Hornik, & Chirwa, 1996). New insights concerning the strengths and limitations of the entertainment-education strategy continue to emerge as further evaluation research of entertainment-education is conducted.

In our opinion, most past studies of entertainment-education programs, with a few exceptions (Brown & Cody, 1991; Lozano, 1992; Lozano & Singhal, 1993; Svenkerud, Rahoi, & Singhal, 1995; Storey, 1998; and perhaps some others) have not provided an adequate theoretical explanation of how audience members' change as a result of exposure to entertainment-education programs. Most studies assumed, often a priori, that intense audience involvement with the entertainment content (for example, involvement in the lives of a soap opera's characters) leads to role modeling, which may be strengthened by the peer communication of listeners with other listeners. These studies report aggregate changes among audience members' knowledge, attitudes, and behavior, but do not illuminate the social process through which such changes occur. Further, most past studies of entertainment-education programs subscribed, at least implicitly, to a linear model of these effects.[3] Entertainment-education can attract an individual's attention, which can then produce knowledge, which then leads to attitudinal and behavior change by an audience member. This ignores, however, the complexity of social change processes that require interaction, deliberation, and action by members of the social system.

Here, we investigate the effects of an entertainment-education radio soap opera, *Tinka Tinka Sukh* (Happiness Lies in Small Pleasures), on its audiences in India. We argue that such a media program can stimulate the process of social and behavior change by drawing listeners' attention to socially desirable behaviors. Furthermore, when listeners develop parasocial relationships with the characters in an entertainment-education program, they may consider changes in their own behavior. The mass media alone seldom effect individual change, but they can stimulate conversations among listeners, which create opportunities for social learning as people, individually and collectively, consider new patterns of thought and behavior. We also direct our attention to the nonlinear, circuitous, and complex process of social change that is often fraught with paradoxes and contradictions as participants engage in new patterns of thinking and action.

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[2] One type of audience misinterpretation of entertainment-education is the "Archie Bunker" effect (Vidmar & Rokeach, 1974), which occurs when a negative role model, representing the opposite of the educational value being promoted in an entertainment-education program, is perceived by an audience member as a good model to emulate in his or her life. This effect occurs for a small percentage of the audience, usually those initially most opposed to the educational value (Rogers et al., 1999; Singhal & Rogers, 1999).

[3] These models, including McGuire's (1989) hierarchy of effects, Rogers's (1995) five-staged innovation-decision process, and Prochaska, DiClemente, and Norcross's (1992) stages of change, are linear or at least sequential in that exposure to an entertainment-education message is expected to move individuals from knowledge of the educational issue (for example, HIV prevention) to a favorable attitude toward the educational issue and to behavior change (adopting a means of preventing HIV).

Parasocial Interaction and Entertainment-Education

Horton and Wohl (1956) originally described the parasocial relationship between media personality and audience individual as giving the illusion of a face-to-face relationship. An audience member forms a relationship with a performer that is perceived as analogous to the interpersonal relationships of people in a primary, face-to-face group. Parasocial interaction between audience individuals and media characters like newscasters and actors has been investigated in various research studies (Auter, 1992; Avery & Ellis, 1979; Babrow, 1987; Conway & Rubin, 1991; Gans, 1977; Grant, Guthrie, & Ball-Rokeach, 1991; Houlberg, 1984; McGuire & LeRoy, 1977; Perse & Rubin, 1989; Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Rubin & Perse, 1987; Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985; Sood & Rogers, 1996; Turner, 1992, 1993).

Entertainment-education programs are designed to generate socially desirable effects among audience members. What is the role of parasocial interaction in bringing about these socially desirable effects? Horton and Wohl's (1956) initial description of parasocial interaction argued that this relationship can be extremely influential for an audience individual. Once a parasocial relationship is established, a media consumer appreciates the values and motives of the media character, often viewing him or her as a counselor, comforter, and role model. Horton and Wohl (1956) argued that enactment of the parasocial role may "constitute an exploration and development of new role possibilities, as in the experimental phases of actual, or aspired to, social mobility" (p. 222).

Rubin and Perse (1987) proposed that parasocial interaction has three dimensions for audience individuals.

1. *Cognitively oriented parasocial interaction* is the degree to which audience members pay attention to a particular media character and think about the character's actions. Reflecting on the educational themes present in a media program can help viewers recognize behavioral alternatives in their lives. Little evidence exists that cognitively oriented parasocial interaction can influence behavior change. Nevertheless, theoretical arguments and findings in other social science research shed light on this issue. For example, the concept of *self-efficacy* (Bandura, 1995, 1997; Gecas, 1989; Schwarzer, 1992) is often involved in behavior change that is considered or enacted by an individual. Self-efficacy is a belief in one's ability to organize and execute courses of action to manage prospective situations (Bandura, 1995). This concept draws our attention to the importance of a person's cognitive reflections when he or she evaluates a media message. For example, after exposure to an entertainment-education program, is a person persuaded that he or she has the ability to change his or her behavior in a socially desirable way? Bandura's (1995) theory proposes that cognitively-oriented parasocial interaction must lead to perceptions of self-efficacy before an individual considers enacting a behavioral change.

Recent research by Papa, Auwal, and Singhal (1997) suggested that cognitive reflections can produce behavioral change. Meaningful change began when members of a development organization internalized the perception that their personal abilities and actions could improve their lives. Papa et al. (1997) found that low-income women who were Grameen Bank members in Bangladesh were able to

lift themselves from poverty after recognizing that their own abilities and behaviors could contribute to improving their economic situation. Our perspective is (1) that self-efficacy is a central part of cognitively oriented parasocial interaction, and (2) that the effects of an entertainment-education program are related to its ability (through character portrayals) to promote self-efficacy among audience members.

2. *Affectively oriented parasocial interaction* is the degree to which an audience member identifies with a particular media character, and believes that his or her interests are joined (Burke, 1945). The stronger the identification, the more likely that character's behavior will affect the audience member. Papa et al. (1997) reported that when participants in a development program identified with change agents (of the Grameen Bank), behavior change was more likely to occur.

3. *Behaviorally 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 behavior in a specific way. The centrality of interpersonal or group interaction to behavior change has been documented by various researchers (Auwal & Singhal, 1992; Papa, Auwal, & Singhal, 1995, 1997; Rogers & Kincaid, 1981). The present study, however, draws attention to a specific type of interpersonal communication that creates opportunities for collective efficacy, a concept discussed in a later section.

Katz, Liebes, and Berko (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 or her personal experiences. Before audience members consider behavior change as a result of exposure to a media character, they must be able to relate the experiences of the character to their own lives. If such a connection cannot be made, behavioral change is less likely.

Thus we contend that parasocial interaction with characters in entertainment-education programs may initiate a process of behavior change for certain audience members by influencing their thinking. Parasocial relationships can prompt role modeling as media consumers carefully consider the behavioral choices made by media performers (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Parasocial interaction can also lead audience members to talk to one another about the media message to which they have been exposed (Rubin & Perse, 1987). These conversations can create a social learning environment in which media consumers test new ideas that can spark behavior change (such as not giving or accepting dowry) in India. More specifically, a social learning environment exists when a group of people talk about a new behavior, persuade one another of the value of the new behavior, or articulate plans to execute it (Papa et al., 1995).

Social Learning and Entertainment-Education

Conversations among audience members regarding the content of a media program may create a social learning environment that serves as a catalyst for behav-

ioral change. Bandura's (1973, 1974, 1977, 1997) social learning theory draws attention to important aspects of change processes. An entertainment-education program provides audience members with examples of behaviors that are socially desirable or undesirable through positive and negative role models. These behaviors are enacted by media characters that are appealing or unappealing to audience members.

Papa, Auwal, and Singhal (1995, 1997) explained that the process of change is facilitated when people share stories about how to respond to commonly experienced problems. The members of Grameen Bank in Bangladesh participated in conversations about strategies to end the practice of dowry. Although not always effective, these conversations were a central part of the learning process experienced by the program participants in creating collective strategies to solve a social problem that could not be dealt with on an individual basis.

Although group interaction is central to the social learning process, modeling promotes social learning as well. As Bandura (1973, 1974, 1977, 1986) argued, person A can observe person B perform a particular behavior and subsequently acquire that new behavior by observing B's actions. A community member who changes his or her behavior does so within a social environment in which other people support, oppose, or are indifferent to that behavior. How does a person go through the process of deciding upon, and enacting, a new collective behavior that is socially desirable? We consider Bandura's (1995, 1997) views on collective efficacy.

Collective Efficacy

Collective efficacy is the degree to which individuals in a system believe that they can organize and execute courses of action required to achieve collective goals (Bandura, 1997). Collective efficacy helps to promote meaningful social change because such change is embedded within a network of social influences. Collective efficacy is concerned with people's confidence in their joint capabilities to accomplish set goals and to withstand opposition and setbacks (Bandura, 1995, p. 33). Individual and community change require that people in a system work together to change their lives for the better. For this process to begin, people need to believe that they can solve their mutually experienced problems through unified effort. As Bandura (1995) concluded: "People who have a sense of collective efficacy will mobilize their efforts and resources to cope with external obstacles to the changes they seek" (p. 38). Here we examine (1) the degree to which collective efficacy emerges in an environment (the Indian village of Lutsaan) in which people learned from one another in various social fora, and (2) the consequences of collective efficacy for social change at the system level.

Shehabuddin (1992) provided an example of collective efficacy in the activities of the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh. Village women discussed how to confront moneylenders who charged exorbitant interest rates. They recognized through their discussions that the power of these men could be broken only through collective action. Shehabuddin (1992) explained:

> A money-lender threatened to break the legs of a [Grameen] Bank worker. . . .
> When they heard about this, the thirty women at the centre showed up at the
> moneylender's house. They told him that he could threaten the bank worker
> only if he himself was prepared to lend them the money they needed on the
> same terms as the Grameen Bank did. The money-lender, of course, was not
> willing to give up his exorbitant interest rates, but he promised to stop harass-
> ing the bank workers as well as the members who no longer came to him for
> money. So you see, there is power in numbers: Thirty landless women can
> intimidate a wealthy man if they join forces. (p. 83)

When people believe they can accomplish a social change through collective action, they increase the probability of effectively reaching group goals. We need to gain a clearer understanding of the process through which collective efficacy emerges within a system.

Paradoxes, Contradictions, and the Nonlinearity of Social Change

Attempts to describe social change from the perspective of communication theory require consideration of the nuances and contradictions that emerge when people attempt to change their behavior at an individual or collective level. Social change seldom flows directly and immediately from exposure to an entertainment-education media program that prompts parasocial interaction. Instead, audience individuals who are exposed to the program may create a social learning environment in which new behavior options are considered but they discover that change often proceeds in a circuitous, nonlinear manner. What works for a media character may not work so easily in real-life situations in which there is community resistance to new behaviors. Certain community members may develop a sense of collective efficacy in solving a social problem, but the solution they devise is not effective. Although a person may say that they believe in performing a certain action, these beliefs may not be reflected in his or her actions.

The literature on power is particularly illuminating as we attempt to describe the nonlinear process of social change. It draws our attention to the important role that both power and resistance plays in the social change process. For example, Mumby (1997) sees power as a productive, disciplinary, and strategic phenomenon with no specific center. Power in a social system is dispersed widely and unevenly. For instance, in India, caste, 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. 357–358). 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, Knights, & Nord, 1994; Lamphere, 1985; Maguire & Mohtar, 1994; Mumby, 1997). 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, p. 362).

Additionally, Gramsci's (1971) views on hegemony are particularly informative in understanding the paradoxical and nonlinear nature of the social change process. Gramsci views hegemony as a process of struggle that embodies simultaneously processes of domination and resistance. Consider, for example, how certain women struggle with dominance and resistance by engaging in seemingly contradictory thinking, behaviors, or both. These contradictions emerge as they struggle to carve out spaces of control in patriarchal social structures. For instance, women can pressure one another to provide emotional care for their family members yet not protest the fact that they fail to receive emotional support in return (Bartky, 1991). Consistent with Gramsci's perspective on hegemonic processes, many women can derive an intense feeling of satisfaction and joy from caring for family members. So, 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. Specifically, in this study we examine how the path from media-sparked parasocial interaction, to peer-based social learning, to collective efficacy is frequently not direct. Rather, members of a social system invariably struggle with paradoxes and contradictions, complicating the social change process.

Research Questions

Our analysis of the process of media-sparked social change is informed by the perspectives of parasocial interaction, social learning, and collective efficacy. We also focus on the paradoxes, contradictions, and struggles that are involved in the social change process at the community level. Our present study is guided by the following research questions?

> RQ1: How does parasocial interaction within the context of entertaiment-education initiate the process of change through directing the audience members' attention to new patterns of behavior?
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> RQ2: When an entertaiment-education program promotes interaction among audience members about the educational content, how do these conversations create a social learning environment that facilitates social change?
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> RQ3: How is collective efficacy displayed by people who have been influenced by an entertainment-education program?
>
> RQ4: What paradoxes and contradictions do people confront as they try to enact social change in their systems?

Methods of Analysis and Interpretation

Most past communication research on media effects consists of surveys or experiments in which unconnected individuals are the units of response and the units of

analysis. Such research designs necessarily make it difficult to investigate the social context in which media effects occur, and concepts like collective efficacy and community action cannot easily be measured. We gathered multiple types of data to investigate the processes through which the Indian entertainment-education radio soap opera, *Tinka Tinka Sukh*, engendered certain audience effects, especially focusing our inquiry on Village Lutsaan in the Uttar Pradesh state of India, where the soap opera seems to have particularly strong effects.

Case Study of Village Lutsaan

Our interest in Village Lutsaan began in January 1997, when a 21-inch by 27-inch poster letter was received by All India Radio (AIR) in New Delhi. The poster letter stated, "Listening to *Tinka Tinka Sukh* has benefited all listeners in our village, especially the women. . . . Listeners of our village now actively oppose the practice of dowry—they neither give nor receive dowry." The remarkable changes described by the listeners in this community led us to study Village Lutsaan in order to understand media-sparked parasocial interaction, social learning processes, attempts at collective efficacy, and the paradoxes and contradictions that emerge as people engage in social change initiatives.

Village Lutsaan has approximately 7,500 residents in 1,365 households. Two elementary schools and one junior high school enroll 700 students. There is no high school, as is typical of most Indian villages. Agriculture is the primary economic activity and farm work dominates the lives of village residents. Sixty percent of all households in this village have at least one radio, and group listening is common. There are five television sets in the village, which can be used only when central station electrical power is available (most radios, in contrast, are battery operated).

Three researchers from our collaborating research organization in New Delhi, the Centre for Media Studies, traveled to Village Lutsaan in August, 1997. This team spent 4 days establishing contacts with villagers who had listened to *Tinka Tinka Sukh* and who had signed the poster letter. They collected demographic and archival data about the village and its residents. The present authors joined the research team on a 2-day field visit to the village in August, 1997. We conducted 25 individual in-depth interviews and 4 focus group interviews with 20 individuals. These interviews were audiotaped and transcribed from Hindi into English. We gathered data on the process through which the poster letter was written and signed, and how exposure to the broadcasts of *Tinka Tinka Sukh* sparked social changes in the village.

A year later, in mid-1998, two members of our research team (including one of the present authors) spent 10 days in Lutsaan, interviewing and reinterviewing villagers. Twenty in-depth interviews and six focus group interviews with a total of 40 participants were conducted. Our team members also investigated examples of individual and social change reported by villagers. Various techniques of data collection were employed including participant-observation, note taking, and photo and video documentation. Finally, in January 1999, four researchers (including two of the present authors) returned to Lutsaan to make further observations, which included 10 in-depth interviews with key informants of the village and photo documentation.

In addition to the three site visits described above, we have corresponded with several residents of Lutsaan on a regular basis. We continue to receive an average of one letter per month describing the accomplishments and challenges associated with social change activities in Lutsaan.

Although we rely primarily on the data collected from Village Lutsaan, other forms of data were collected to deepen our understanding of how entertainment-education programs may potentially influence their audience. Our other data sources included (a) personal interviews with key officials involved in the production of *Tinka Tinka Sukh,* including its executive producer-director, writers, and actors, (b) a random sample survey of both listeners and nonlisteners in India, (c) a content analysis of a sample of listeners' letters in response to *Tinka Tinka Sukh,* and (d) a content analysis of the educational themes and character portrayals in the 104 episodes of *Tinka Tinka Sukh.*

Survey Data and Listeners' Letters

The random sample survey of 1,472 respondents in Gonda District in U.P. State was conducted in 1997, 6 weeks after *Tinka Tinka Sukh* completed its final broadcast. Data were collected in 50 localities (39 villages in rural areas and 11 urban neighborhoods) of Gonda District, yielding 88 listeners[4] (6%) and 1,384 nonlisteners. Twelve experienced interviewers from the Centre for Media Studies conducted the survey, which measured the effects of this radio soap opera.

Also, an estimated 150,000 letters were received by All India Radio in response to *Tinka Tinka Sukh* during its 1 year of broadcast. We obtained a sample of 260 letters through the courtesy of All India Radio. These 260 letters were then content analyzed (23 were discarded because of illegibility) to give us a sense of what issues were most prominent in the minds of the listeners, including indicators of parasocial interaction, social learning, and collective efficacy. The thematic categories were further validated by comparing our list of derived themes with the scripts of the 104 episodes of *Tinka Tinka Sukh,* which we had content analyzed previously. Audience members who wrote letters to *Tinka Tinka Sukh* represent very highly involved audience individuals, who are untypical of the entire radio listening audience.

The survey interview data and the listeners' letters are valuable sources of data, however. In the present study they are used as secondary support for our claims about social change. This allows us to focus primarily on the data collected in Village Lutsaan where we could observe how social change unfolds in a specific situated context.

The Entertainment-Education Stimulus: Tinka Tinka Sukh

The 104 episodes of *Tinka Tinka Sukh,* were broadcast twice weekly, from February 19, 1996, to February 15, 1997, over 27 radio stations of All India Radio, covering seven Indian states in the Hindi-speaking area of northern India: Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and Delhi.

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[4] These individuals reported listening to at least a "few" episodes of *Tinka Tinka Sukh* and could recall the salient details about the program's plot and its characters.

Some 600 million people comprising some 100 million households live in these 7 Indian states. Our random sample survey in Gonda District indicated that *Tinka Tinka Sukh* had a regular listenership of 36 to 40 million people in this Hindi Belt,[5] perhaps the largest listenership for any radio soap opera program worldwide.

The radio soap opera is set in Navgaon (literally "new village"), a farming community struggling to understand the value of modern traditions while moving in progressive directions. Chaudhri (literally "elder leader"), his wife Chaudhrian, and son Suraj represent an ideal family. They promote women's causes (antidowry, gender equality, and womens' empowerment) and the importance of creating a self-sufficient, harmonious village.

Chacha (literally "Uncle"), his wife Chachi, and their children Ramlal, Champa, Sundar, Suman, and Pappu, represent the antithesis of Chaudhri's family. Chacha believes he is absolved of all parental responsibilities since he is the family's breadwinner. Chachi is domineering, blindly traditional, and very vocal. The village gossip, she is overly indulgent of her eldest son Ramlal, a delinquent youth, critical of her daughters, and negligent of her younger children.

Gareebo, a village widow, and her three daughters, Nandini, Kusum, and Lali, depict the trials of women in a tradition-bound, patriarchal society. Gareebo feels societal pressure for her daughters to marry when they come of age. Nandini, the eldest, vows not to marry until she is self-dependent (she becomes the village teacher). Kusum is married as a child bride and dies in childbirth. Lali, the youngest daughter, overcomes various societal pressures in order to become a medical doctor, the first in Navgaon.

A tragedy occurs when a newly married woman, Poonam, is abused by her husband and his parents for bringing inadequate dowry, until she commits suicide. Another woman, Sushma (Kusum's sister-in-law), is abandoned by her husband for inadequate dowry. However, Sushma, with support from her parents and friends, rises over her tribulations, establishing a village sewing school.

Meanwhile, the delinquent Ramlal is transformed by the determination of Nandini. He comes to realize how his acts upset the community. He becomes a government development officer and requests assignment to Navgaon. Champa starts an adult literacy school, while Sushma's sewing school expands and creates economic opportunities for women.

We conducted a content analysis of the educational themes in *Tinka Tinka Sukh*. First, we examined the archival documents from All India Radio, which specified the educational themes that were consciously incorporated in the plot. We then listened to a sample of 20 episodes to derive a comprehensive list of thematic content categories, validating them with the scripts for these 20 episodes. We also met with the executive producer-director of the soap opera to further refine our content-analysis categories. Our content analysis identified 33 educational themes. The most highly emphasized educational themes dealt with com-

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[5] Some 6 percent of our sample respondents in Gonda District listened to *Tinka Tinka Sukh*, which would amount to about 36 million listeners among the 600 million people in the broadcast area of North India. Officials in All India Radio report that Gonda District is generally a low-listener area, so we estimate that the total listening audience to *Tinka Tinka Sukh* may have been about 40 million.

munity harmony, gender equality, small family size, family harmony, the ills of dowry, and the delinquency of youth.

Results and Discussion

Parasocial Interaction
RQ1 asked: How does parasocial interaction within the context of entertainment-education initiate the process of behavior change through directing audience members' attention to new patterns of behavior? Our interviews with residents of Village Lutsaan yielded many interesting examples of parasocial interaction. Consider the following statements from four village residents:

> After listening to *Tinka Tinka Sukh* I decided to get a vasesctomy. Jumman had too many children and could not support his family and was deep in debt. He got into the habit of drinking as a way out of his sorrows and contracted AIDS as well. I thought about this and did not want to be like Jumman. I realized the importance of a small family. I will be able to educate my two children better if I have a small family.

> I have learned [from the radio serial] that young girls should study. Their parents should not be in a hurry to get them married. I was inspired by Champa. If she could realize her potential, why can't I?

> Poonam had to commit suicide; she was harassed for dowry. It is a curse that for the sake of dowry, innocent women are compelled to commit suicide. Worse still women are murdered for not bringing dowry. The education we got from *Tinka Tinka Sukh,* particularly on dowry is significant. Those who practice dowry will see the right way and why they must change.

> Suraj represents what young people in Lutsaan should be like. He is an inspiration. When I listened to the radio program, I would often tell myself that I should strive to be like him. He was respectful and forgiving. He believed in the development of his community. I am also trying whenever I can to serve the community.

Cognitively oriented parasocial interaction is displayed by specific references to the educational themes (small family size, women's empowerment, dowry eradication, and community development) presented in the radio soap opera. The four preceding quotations also provide evidence of affectively oriented parasocial interaction, as each describes how he or she identifies with one or more characters in *Tinka Tinka Sukh*. Finally, referential parasocial interaction is suggested by the degree to which each interviewee relates the experiences of the *Tinka Tinka Sukh* characters to their personal lives, for instance, by undergoing a vasectomy, not giving or taking dowry, and working for community development.

Our survey data also measured the degree to which listeners of *Tinka Tinka Sukh* displayed parasocial interaction with the characters in the radio soap opera. Cognitively oriented parasocial interaction was measured by one survey question.

Forty-three of the 88 listeners reported that they felt like giving advice to particular characters in the radio drama about its main educational themes. These listeners critically thought about the contents of the radio soap opera. Affectively oriented parasocial interaction was measured by three questions in our survey interviews. Forty-three of the 88 listeners also reported that they adjusted their daily schedules to listen to the radio program. These adjustments were made so that listeners could maintain an ongoing relationship with their favorite characters. Seventy-one out of the 88 listeners felt they knew certain radio characters as close personal friends. Seventy-one listeners also reported that they became emotionally upset when certain characters faced difficult personal situations. These responses reflect close identification of listeners with the radio soap opera characters, an indicator of affectively oriented parasocial interaction. Behaviorally oriented parasocial interaction was measured by two survey questions. Forty-four of the 88 listeners reported talking back to the characters while the programs were being broadcast, and 8 out of the 88 listeners wrote letters to All India Radio expressing their ideas about the program.

The 237 listener letters that we content analyzed also offered evidence of the three dimensions of parasocial interaction. Consider the following quote from one letter writer that reflects each of these dimensions:

> Poonam's suicide, Kusum's death at childbirth, Sushma's struggle to stand on her own two feet, and Rukhsana's life and problems have shaken up my world and filled my heart with emotions. Nandini has taught me to stick to my ideals and fight against injustice, Champa has inspired me to realize my inner potential, and Suraj has taught me to be proud of my heritage and culture.

In summary, *Tinka Tinka Sukh* was a media program tha; led to high levels of parasocial interaction for certain audience members. Identification with characters who display prosocial behaviors does not necessarily lead directly to behavior change by audience individuals, which depends, in part, on the extent to which these parasocial relationships prompted conversations among listeners.

Social Learning Through Conversational Interaction

RQ2 posed this question: When an entertainment-education program promotes interaction among audience members about the educational content, how do these conversations create a social learning environment that facilitates social change? Our interviews in Village Lutsaan provided a clear picture of how social learning emerges in conversations among listeners to a radio soap opera. Consider the following comments about child marriage by three listeners:

> Kusum dies at childbirth and we discussed that incident. We work together in the fields, and when we took a break we discussed if we marry off our young daughters we might lose them.

> We had all listened to the serial and we would hold discussions afterwards. For example, when we listened in the afternoon, in the evening when we returned home we would talk about it with others. They would also say that they would

not give dowry and tell me that I would not have to give dowry. We would advise each other how we should counsel others not to give or take dowry.

Of course, I will not marry my daughter before she turns eighteen years [the minimum legal age in India]. Prior to listening to *Tinka Tinka Sukh*, I had it in my mind that I need to marry off my daughter soon. Now I won't at all and I tell others as well that they should not marry their daughters before the age of eighteen or the girl is ruined. If she marries early, she is bound to get pregnant early and that is ruinous for her. They understand and accept my advice.

One reason for the relatively strong effects of the media message in Village Lutsaan lay in the context of its reception. A village development organization (called Shyam Club) already existed in Lutsaan and was devoted to village improvement, preventing interpersonal conflict, and encouraging the arts. The radio soap opera activated the Shyam Club members to attack problems of gender inequality in their village. Further, many of the club's members were initiators and signers of the poster letter. A village tailor, whose life was changed by the educational contents of *Tinka Tinka Sukh*, led the effort to obtain signatures on the poster letter. Many signers listened to the broadcasts in his tailor shop, in a group of 10 or 12 individuals. The tailor raised social causes such as dowry eradication, promoting the education of girls, eliminating child marriages, and promoting small family size in several village-level discussion forums, spurring a variety of formal and informal conversations about these issues. Further, the tailor believed in practicing what he preaches. In 1998, he underwent a vasectomy to limit his family size to two children. He now tells other men in Lutsaan that vasectomies are "not painful" and do not prevent a man from leading a "happy married life." He believes that these conversations help to educate his peers.

The survey responses provided us with additional insights into how entertainment-education can promote social learning through encouraging conversations about the radio program's contents. Forty-three of the 88 listeners reported that they listened to the soap opera with relatives or friends. Thirty-five of the 88 listeners actively discussed aspects of the radio program with others, especially with their spouse and same-sex friends. The group-oriented exposure of our survey respondents promoted peer conversations that often initiated a process of social learning. For example, 44 of the 88 listeners said that they talked to their spouse about family planning after listening to the soap opera, and 51 of the 88 listeners reported talking to a same-sex friend about issues of gender equality.

We addressed RQ2 by describing the listeners' conversations about the educational contents of *Tinka Tinka Sukh*, such as dowry, a mother's age at childbirth, and age at marriage. These conversations helped to create a social learning environment in which conversational participants learned from each other by sharing ideas.

Collective Efficacy Sparked by Entertainment-Education

RQ3 asked how people who have been influenced by an entertainment-education program display collective efficacy. A sense of collective efficacy motivates people to mobilize their efforts to solve mutually experienced community problems.

Our data from Village Lutsaan provided us with an understanding of how *Tinka Tinka Sukh* inspired collective efficacy and community action to solve social problems. The following examples come from individual in-depth interviews in Village Lutsaan:

> Poonam's suicide in the soap opera resounded with us because we also practice dowry. Now after listening to *Tinka Tinka Sukh*, and after we took the vow that we will not give or take dowry, we have formed a group to end dowry in this village. In this way our sisters and daughters will not suffer.

> In the radio program Chaudhri starts a school. We started a Montessori school because we do not have that much money. We spoke to Masterji (the village school teacher) and invited him to teach here so that our children might be educated. Chaudhri started a school in the radio program because he had the funds. All of us here cooperated to start this Montessori school and our children are now being educated.

Our follow-up visits to Lutsaan in 1998 and in 1999 showed that the informal listening groups of *Tinka Tinka Sukh* (such as the group that met in the tailor's shop) had become formalized into a men's and a women's radio listeners club, each comprising over 25 regular members. The club members listened to a follow-up entertainment-education program, *Yeh Kahan Aa Gaye Hum* (Where Have We Arrived?), which is about preserving the environment. The members of the listeners' club listened to the program collectively and discussed the content, charting new courses for environmental action in Lutsaan. For example, they persuaded other villagers to build pit latrines to improve sanitation and launched a tree-planting campaign to beautify the environment and to produce fruits for home consumption and sale. Members of the listeners' club also went on a bicycle tour in order to educate surrounding villages about fuel conservation to reduce pollution. They told us of encountering several drivers of auto-rickshaws who were allowing their engines to idle at a railroad crossing while waiting for a train to pass. The club members explained to the drivers that they were polluting the environment, and they persuaded them to switch off their engines. Finally, members of the listeners' club approached villagers who smoke cigarettes, sparking conversations about potential health hazards and problems of air pollution. Thus, this organized group of listeners took responsibility for orchestrating collective efforts to improve the lives of others in Lutsaan. These examples show how conversations sparked by entertainment-education programs may inspire people to engage in collective action to address social problems.

In addition, several listeners' letters provided evidence of collective efficacy. For example, consider the following letter writer's words:

> Inspired by *Tinka Tinka Sukh*, we have established a youth self-help association for the sole purpose of tackling and eradicating social evils. Superstition and dowry are some of the problems we aim to tackle. We have also started to educate all children in our village about these social evils.

So, this radio soap opera initiated discussion about dowry and other social issues and motivated certain listeners to engage in collective action to solve community problems. The process of social change, however, does not unfold in a smooth, linear manner, as the following section indicates.

Paradoxes and Contradictions of Social Change

RQ4 asked what paradoxes and contradictions people confront as they try to enact social change in their system. Setbacks are often part of the process of social change. Because established patterns of thought and behavior are difficult to change, people are often resistant to social changes in their system, causing paradoxical activities as part of the adjustment process until new patterns are fully internalized. In addition, hegemonic struggles that are part of the social change process can also engender paradox and contradictions as people simultaneously resist domination and submit to the demands of intact power structures. These processes unfold in several different ways, as our study of Village Lutsaan suggests.

Tinka Tinka Sukh taught that there is happiness in small families, that married couples should practice family planning, and that gender equality is a desired state in presently patriarchal Indian villages. Our respondents in Lutsaan exhibited contradictory reasoning in their attempts to internalize these new values. For example, a young man in Lutsaan testified about the importance of small family size and gender equality. He also stated, however, that sex-selective abortion (that is, aborting female fetuses after gender is determined by means of amniocentesis)[6] was an acceptable means of limiting population growth. This respondent had internalized the importance of small family size, but he did not recognize that his views on sex-selective abortion contradicted his professed support for gender equality. This type of paradox emerges when a person does not recognize that their ideas within one system (in this case, family planning) contradict their ideas within another system, gender equality (Weick, 1979).

The practice of abortion as a method of family planning is demonstrative of the hegemonic forces that operate in Lutsaan. Sheela Devi, who is only informally trained, performs approximately 15 abortions per month in Lutsaan. She is the only person who was willing to talk to us about this sensitive medical procedure. We learned from her that most women in Lutsaan undergo abortion as a primary form of family planning. When Sheela Devi was asked why she does not counsel these women about other safer family planning methods (e.g., condoms, IUD, tubectomy, etc.), she indicated that the women felt that they could not talk to their husbands about such matters. So, on one hand, these women demonstrate their right to control their own bodies and make their own reproductive choices. Yet, on the other hand, they willingly choose a procedure that has considerable medical risks (e.g., hemorrhage, infection, infertility, etc.), because they can not talk to their husbands about alternative family planning methods. Consistent with Gramsci's (1971) views on hegemonic relations, these women resist attempts by others to

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[6] Abortion as a means to guarantee birth of a son, although illegal, has become widespread in the past decade as the equipment needed to perform amniocentesis has diffused among Indian villages (Luthra, 1994).

control their choices while submitting to a dominant social structure that privileges male ideology.

People in Village Lutsaan frequently talked about the importance of gender equality and how their views on this issue were influenced by listening to *Tinka Tinka Sukh*. Clear signs of greater gender equality were emerging in this village for both girls and women. The enrollment of girls in the Lutsaan elementary and junior schools increased from 10 percent at the time of the radio broadcasts to 38 percent in early 1999, 2 years later. We were told of marriages in which dowry was not given or accepted, but in reality some type of dowry was always exchanged. Consider the case of a respected village opinion leader, who mediates local disputes and is a leading opponent of dowry. When we first met him in 1997, he told us that his elder son was recently married, but no dowry was received. In July, 1998, our research team returned to Lutsaan and learned that the bride's family gave in fact a rather sizable dowry, including a double bedroom furniture set, a color TV set, a steel armoire, and new stainless steel utensils. When asked to account for his actions, he said the dowry was offered by the bride's family "from their heart," so how could he turn it down?

Although there is increased sensitivity in Lutsaan about gender equality, women continue to be subordinated in public forums. For example, at a musical performance in the village in 1997, the research team was feted by approximately 200 men who played instruments and sang songs. The women of the village stood at the periphery of the crowd. One woman told us, "Come listen to us sing separately. We want to sing but the men won't let us." Finally, a woman performed a dance while remaining veiled. One male villager noted that although this woman was veiled, the fact that she danced in public was a sign of social progress. Finally, as the entertainment continued, not a single man left the performance; however, most of the women departed, presumably to start the evening meal.

As explained earlier, Gramsci's (1971) notion of hegemony embodies simultaneously the dynamic of power and resistance. We encountered a specific example of the process of hegemonic struggle among a group of women dairy farmers in Village Lutsaan who attempted to form a cooperative organization. Although the women received funding from the local district milk union for specifically forming an all-women's dairy cooperative, it is administered by two men. This male-controlled structure violates cooperative governance rules. The male officials indicated to us that some women in the dairy cooperative give the money they earn from milk proceeds to their husbands. The male officials do not try to promote discussions among these women concerning their rights to control the money they earn from dairying work. Thus, the women dairy farmers of Lutsaan participate in their own disempowerment by allowing the village men to control their cooperative. Conversely, these same women, through their own democratic decision making, decided to start a separate business venture that was outside the purview of men. A dozen women joined hands and started a business to make *ghee* (clarified butter) from surplus milk. They sold this ghee in their own village and in the neighboring township of Sasni through private vendors. In essence these women allowed men to retain their dominance in one arena, while carving out some personal space to pursue their own interests in another. This example

shows how hegemonic relations involve both processes of domination and resistance.

As mentioned previously, the percentage of girls attending school in Lutsaan increased from 1997 to 1999. Equal education, a value promoted in *Tinka Tinka Sukh*, is central to achieving gender equality. Some villagers' justifications for girls' education, however, were contradictory to their positions on gender equality. For example, a young male adult in Lutsaan argued that formal education was important for girls because it made them more qualified for marriage.

Some 184 villagers in Lutsaan signed a letter saying they were ending the practice of dowry and child marriage, as mentioned previously. During our 1997 field visit, however, we encountered a 14-year-old girl who was married in a double wedding with her older sister. The girls' father agreed to the double ceremony in order to save wedding costs; the girl did not even know that she was being married, until the marriage ceremony was well underway. Villagers dismissed this exception to the ending of dowry in Lutsaan. A village leader observed: "They are of a lower caste. There is nothing we can do about them." Child marriage and dowry are both illegal in India, but the authorities did nothing to punish the parents of the 14-year-old bride.

As villagers in Lutsaan continue to grapple with ways of ending the practice of dowry, it has become evident to us how complex the process of social change can be. Consider the following poem, written by a 15-year-old girl from Lutsaan named Seema:

> For how long will the daughters of India be sacrificed
> Ask their fathers who brought them up
> All they are thinking is how will we marry them
> Just end the practice of dowry
> Otherwise we will lose our dignity
> Those who want to go to heaven
> Will not find refuge in hell
> For how long will you see your daughter
> In pieces of gold and silver
> Her mother is full of hope
> Her daughter will be a queen one day
> She had no idea that one day
> Her daughter will cover herself with the garb of death

This poem reflects the simultaneous struggles with dominance and resistance that are part of the social change process. Seema is registering her protest against the practice of dowry. Yet, she also recognizes how parents in this village tacitly encourage this practice, despite their professed commitment to eliminate it. Parents view their daughters, at least in part, as financial liabilities and equate traditional social practices surrounding the marital ceremony (including dowry) as an essential rite of passage for their daughters to be accepted by other members of the community. So, Seema both registers her protest and acknowledges the powerful resistance she will face in combatting an entrenched social practice.

These paradoxes that we observed in Village Lutsaan can be understood in

light of various theoretical perspectives. Burke (1945) argued that paradox may occur when a person believes that a new idea such as gender equality is good for the system, but not for him or her as an individual. Individuals feel confident in speaking about the importance of adopting a new idea, but they do not always apply this idea to their own lives. This contradiction continues until the individual brings their own behavior in line with changes in the system.

Weick (1979) argued that social change often occurs by reconciling the need for flexibility with the need for stability. People accomplish this reconciliation through compromise, through alternating between the old and the new idea, or through expressing a contradictory idea in different parts of their system. Another manifestation of behavioral flexibility is to talk about the importance of a new idea (such as ending dowry or child marriage) while still engaging in behavior that is part of a prior repertoire. Ruesch and Bateson (1951) explained paradoxical behavior by arguing that a person will consider a behavior change and even express a verbal commitment to it; however, further pondering may drive the person back to his or her original behavior. Thus, some villagers in Lutsaan talked about certain changes (ending dowry, for example) that were not necessarily a part of their personal lives. In addition, a consensus paradox (Stohl & Cheney, 1999) may occur when many people in a system vocally support a given change, such as increasing the school enrollment of girls. Voices of opposition may be suppressed when this occurs so that a person who opposes the change may verbally support it while conversing with others. Their words, however, may not be consistent with their actions (for instance, they would not allow their daughter to enroll).

Despite the paradoxes and contradictions that we observed in Lutsaan, important changes were occurring, and exposure to *Tinka Tinka Sukh* played an important role in catalyzing these changes. Decreases in substance abuse (including alcoholism), smaller-sized families, and increased gender equality were prominent community changes. Conversation that supports such changes is important, even when such talk is not supported by subsequent action. As Rushton (1975, 1976) observed, words alone exert influence on the behavior of others. Thus, a mother who talks to her daughter about gender equality may influence her daughter to further her education, even though the mother continues to act under the dominance of her husband.

Our study of Village Lutsaan provided us with insights into the contradictions and paradoxes associated with social change. The change process is complicated and circuitous as members of a social system struggle with enacting new behaviors. Contradiction and paradox are not a barrier to social change, but, rather, parts of the process.

Conclusions

The goal of the present research was to explore the processes of social change initiated by an entertainment-education program. The intention of entertainment-education programs is to foster desirable social effects among audience members.

Here we examined an entertainment-education radio soap opera in India, *Tinka Tinka Sukh*, which seemed to lead to certain socially desirable effects in a village community.

Behavior change in response to media exposure can be facilitated by parasocial relationships between audience members and mass media characters (RQ1). Audience individuals then reflect on the educational content of an entertainment-education program. For some audience members behaviorally oriented parasocial interaction can lead to conversations about the education content of the media program, as seemed to occur in Village Lutsaan.

Conversations about the educational content of a media program can create a socially constructed learning environment in which people evaluate previously held ideas, consider options, and identify steps to initiate social change (RQ2). Our case study of Village Lutsaan and our examination of letters written by dedicated listeners of *Tinka Tinka Sukh*, show how important these conversations are in creating a social learning environment that provides opportunities for social change. Interpersonal conversations can lead to collective efficacy and to community action when individuals in a system believe that unified efforts can solve social problems (RQ3).

Importantly, the social change process is not a linear one, progressing from media-sparked parasocial interaction, to community-based social learning and collective action. For example, Gramsci's (1971) work on hegemony proved particularly informative as we examined the social change process in Lutsaan and observed how the villagers grappled with forces of dominance and resistance. Village conversations that provided opportunities for social learning did not lead directly and immediately to collective action, as people encountered barriers and restrictions embedded in community power structures. Also, as the social change process unfolds, contradictions and paradoxes emerge (RQ4). Sometimes these contradictions involve supporting an idea in words but contradicting the same idea in actions. At other times people do not recognize that certain actions support a new idea, while other actions oppose that idea. These contradictions and paradoxes are part of the complex process of social change. When the change process is initiated, people make errors in judgment, become confused about how to act in certain situations, and new behaviors sometimes produce unintended consequences. Thus, we need to describe more critically and evaluate the occurrence of paradox and contradiction in the process of media-sparked social change.

The present study suggests that entertainment-education programs can prompt changes in the thinking and behavior of audience members in several ways. Although some of these changes may be consistent with the prosocial intent of the entertainment-education program, not all changes may better the quality of the lives of listeners. All change occurs in a broad social context in which people actively juxtapose their past thoughts and actions with possible alternatives for the future. Additionally, social change requires system-level consensus and action. The conversations in which these social changes are considered by audience members can lead them to travel down diverse paths. Some of these paths may lead to outcomes that are contradictory to the intentions of the creators of enter-

tainment-education programs. Other paths may upset power dynamics in ways that lead to new problems for oppressed members in a community.

Our study raises vitally important questions about the ethics of entertainment-education programs. When millions of audience members listen to a radio program or view a television program, how can a programmer attempt to spark individual-level and social system changes without taking some responsibility regarding the changes that are produced? At the very least, we need sustained collaboration and discussion among media programmers, researchers, and targeted audience members about the ethical implications of changing the thinking and behavior of people in socially meaningful ways (Brown & Singhal, 1990; 1993; Singhal & Rogers, 1999). Audience members should not be viewed as passive receptors of information from experts. Rather, all stakeholders (policy makers, media producers, researchers, and audience members) should create and sustain a social learning environment in which they learn from one another as they confront mutual problems and attempt to remove disempowering structures from their lives.

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