Entertainment-Education Behind the Scenes

Lauren B. Frank • Paul Falzone
Editors

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Foreword

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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