

Audience Involvement and Entertainment-Education

The present article explores the role that audience involvement plays in the effectiveness of entertainment-education programs. Utilizing data from a popular 104-episode entertainment-education radio soap opera from India, Tinka Tinka Sukh, it argues that the concept of audience involvement is multidimensional, and serves as a mediator for promoting behavior change. Audience involvement is characterized as being composed of two dimensions: (a) affective-referential involvement, and (b) cognitive-critical involvement. Involvement appears to be a precursor for increasing self-efficacy and collective efficacy, and in promoting interpersonal communication among individuals in the audience.

Poonam's suicide, Kusum's death at childbirth, Sushma's struggle to stand on her own 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.

Kumari Firdaus Safali, a listener of *Tinka Tinka Sukh*.

My brother got married recently and we did not even bring up dowry. Our entire village has collectively decided to renounce dowry. In fact, there have been three weddings in our village in recent months where the issue of dowry never came up. There were some people who previously wanted to take dowry but based on the education we received from the radio, the discussion on dowry has now ceased

Chandra Bhan Yadav, a listener of *Tinka Tinka Sukh*.

These quotations indicate a high level of audience involvement with an entertainment-education radio soap opera in India, *Tinka Tinka Sukh* (which literally means "happiness lies in small things"; referred to as *TTS* hereafter). The entertainment-education strategy has been used with increasing frequency over recent decades as a means to bring about social change at both the individual and collective level. Entertainment-education programs utilize a variety of media to incorporate educational messages within an entertaining format. Much of the early research on entertainment-education focused on assessing *whether* the strategy had

effects. These studies documented the aggregate changes in audience members' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors but did not report on *how* these changes in the audiences occurred. In recent years, scholars have begun to explore the process through which entertainment-education programs have their effects (Lozano, 1992; Singhal and Rogers, 1999; Storey, 1998). The present article argues that audience involvement is a key factor in the effectiveness of entertainment-education interventions.

The present objectives are (a) to gain a better understanding of the theoretical construct of audience involvement, and (b) to assess what role audience involvement plays in influencing audience members' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. Here the focus is not only on studying direct, tangible effects but also on intermediate audience effects (Piotrow, Kincaid, Rimon, & Rhinehart, 1997). The current article argues that audience involvement is associated with specific intermediate media effects such as, an increase in self-efficacy, an increase in collective-efficacy, and greater interpersonal communication among audience members.

The present article uses data about a popular a 104-episode entertainment-education drama serial *TTS*, broadcast from February 19, 1996 to February 15, 1997, over 27 radio stations of All India Radio in Hindi-speaking North India. While no precise listenership figures exist, All India Radio sources estimate the program's regular listenership ran into the tens of millions, perhaps reaching 40 million (Papa et al., 2000). *TTS* promoted the educational themes of gender equality, women's empowerment, dowry-related issues, small family size, family harmony, environmental conservation, issues facing youth, community living, substance abuse, and HIV/AIDS prevention. *TTS* accomplished these goals within the context of dramatic and entertaining plots and subplots.

Theoretical Perspectives on Audience Involvement

Involvement has been a key construct in several scholarly fields and has been the focus of considerable research on consumer and communication behavior (see Salmon, 1986, for a comprehensive review). Consumer research focused on involvement as an active, motivated state signifying interest and arousal (Mittal, 1989). Involvement is a mediator of responses to the advertising of products and is therefore affected by individual needs, sources of communication (such as their credibility), and environmental factors. Communication scholars further indicate that it is important to focus on the antecedents and outcomes of involvement (Andrews, Durvasula, & Akhter, 1990; Krugman, 1966).

Communication researchers focus on the role of involvement in persuasion. In a meta-analysis of the effects of involvement on persuasion,

Johnson and Eagley (1989) distinguished three types of involvement: (a) value-relevant involvement; (b) outcome-relevant involvement; and (c) impression-relevant involvement. Social judgment theory and its key concept of ego involvement is value-relevant involvement. Social judgment theory posits that the degree of personal relevance of an issue affects an individual's self-concept and the importance that he or she assigns to the issue. Individuals with high ego involvement are less likely to undergo changes in attitudes and are therefore more difficult to persuade. Persuasion scholars argue that individuals can process messages in different ways, for example, in some cases messages undergo elaboration through critical thinking. Critical elaboration of messages, which is part of the elaboration likelihood model developed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986), is an example of what Johnson and Eagley (1989) refer to as outcome-relevant involvement. Johnson and Eagley (1989) introduced a third type of involvement based on Philip Zimbardo's notion of response involvement, which states that individuals who are concerned with impression-management will tend to resist extreme arguments in an attempt to maintain flexible attitudinal positions.

Some communication researchers focus on the participatory nature of involvement. For example, Krugman (1966) measures involvement as an individual's direct personal experience during message reception (Rubin & Perse, 1987). Researchers label this participatory involvement as interaction involvement, the degree to which individuals are engaged, cognitively and behaviorally, in their conversations with others. Involvement could be regarded as a personality trait (Perse, 1990).

Lessons from consumer and persuasion research can help to design and study entertainment-education media programs. For example, involvement can be a mediator of responses towards prosocial behaviors that are promoted by an entertainment-education program. The present article focuses on cognitive and affective involvement. Media research studies following the uses and gratifications paradigm place involvement in the context of audience activity (Palmgreen, 1984; Rubin 1994). Involvement has been studied as a characteristic of audiences who purposefully seek the media to fulfill certain expectations and needs.

Involvement has been studied in the media effects literature (a) from a reception/critical studies perspective, and (b) from a media effects perspective. Reception/critical studies began with the works of James Lull (1988) and David Morley (1986). Other influential works include Radaway's (1984) study of a virtual community of women readers of devalued fiction (romance novels); Livingstone's (1988) study of British soap operas; Brown's (1994) ethnographic study of conversational networks of soap opera viewers; and Ang's (1985) analysis of *Dallas*. Livingstone's (1988) work is particularly important as most of these

soap operas (unlike their American counterparts) are developed with a view to inform, educate, and entertain. They are a type of entertainment-education. Livingstone devised categories including escapism (entertainment), realism, relationship with characters, critical response, problem solving, and the role that the soap opera plays in the viewer's life, to explain the popularity of British soap operas. Liebes and Katz (1986) qualitatively analyzed audience involvement with the television soap opera *Dallas*. Although valid generalizations might not be possible from qualitative methods, we can learn much about involvement and media effects through such investigations (Lindoff, 1991).

Most media effects scholars examined audience involvement as parasocial interaction. The concept of "parasocial interaction" was coined by Horton and Wohl (1956), who were influenced by Merton's concept of "pseudo-gemeinschaft" (Merton, Fiske, & Curtis, 1971). Horton and Wohl (1956) defined parasocial interaction as a perceived relationship of friendship or intimacy by an audience member with a media persona. Levy (1979) developed a 7-item scale to measure parasocial interaction of viewers with television newsmen. Rubin, Perse, and Powell (1985) expanded the scale developed by Levy (1979) into a 20-item parasocial interaction scale for local television newscasters. This 20-item scale was subsequently adapted for "favorite TV personality," "favorite soap opera character," "favorite TV shopping personality," and "favorite characters from a just-watched program" (Auter, 1992; Grant, Guthrie, & Rokeach, 1991; Perse & Rubin, 1988, 1990; Rubin & Perse, 1987; Turner, 1993).

Some researchers related parasocial interaction to viewer cognitions (Rosengren, Windahl, Hakansson, & Johnsson-Smaragdi, 1976; Tsao, 1992). On the other hand, parasocial interaction has been viewed as equivalent to affective interpersonal involvement (Perse, 1990; Rubin & Perse, 1987). Recent qualitative research on the concept of parasocial interaction studied the affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions of parasocial interaction (Papa et al., 2000; Sood & Rogers, 2000).

Operationalizing Audience Involvement

The review of literature suggests that audience involvement may be a rather complex concept. Audience involvement is the degree to which audience members engage in reflection upon, and parasocial interaction with, certain media programs, thus resulting in overt behavior change. Audience involvement can be seen as being composed of two main elements: (a) reflection (critical and/or referential), and (b) parasocial interaction (cognitive, affective, behavioral participation or any combination of these) with the media. Given that entertainment-education programs are carefully designed to promote specific types of behavior change,

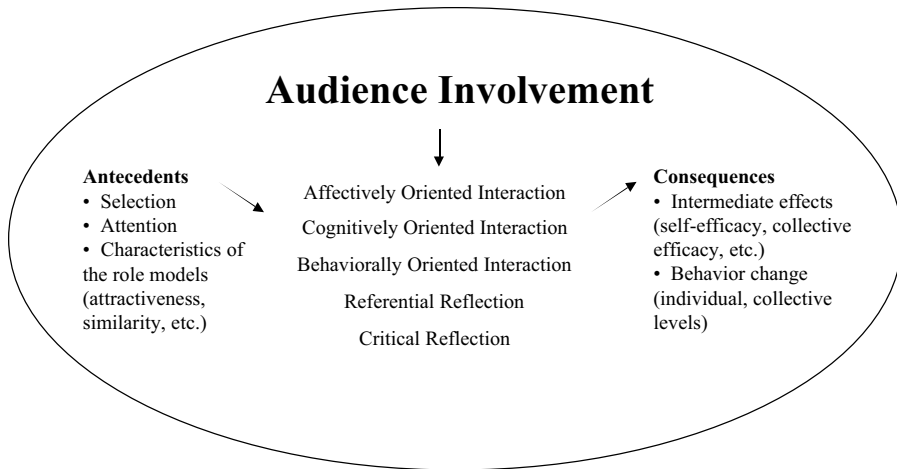


Figure 1.
The Role of
Audience
Involvement
in Spurring
Entertainment-
Education
Effects

it is important to look at the antecedents and consequences of audience involvement to understand how entertainment-education works.

Reflection

Reflection is the degree to which audience members consider a media message and integrate it in their own life. Liebes and Katz (1986), in their qualitative analysis of audience involvement with the television soap opera *Dallas*, focused on individuals' referential and critical reflection on the media messages contained in this popular television program. *Referential reflection* is the degree to which audience individuals relate a media program to their personal experiences. Audience individuals engage in referential reflection by discussing a media program or message with others, in terms of their own lives and problems. *Critical reflection* is the degree to which audience members distance themselves from, and engage in, aesthetic construction of a media program. Audience individuals engage in critical reflection by reconstructing a media program and suggesting plot changes.

Referential and critical reflection have been qualitatively analyzed in past research. Scales can be developed to measure these constructs quantitatively. For example, referential reflection can be measured through scale items such as: "I felt that the story is just like that of my own community," "I felt that the characters are like my friends," and "I felt that the characters were like people I know in real life." Critical reflection can be measured through scale items such as: "I disagreed with the way a character was depicted," and "I made suggestions on improving the conditions depicted in the program."

Parasocial Interaction

The concept of parasocial interaction is described earlier as consisting of affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. *Affectively oriented*

interaction is the degree to which audience members identify with characters or with other salient characteristics of a media program (for example, a place or community). *Cognitively oriented interaction* is the degree to which audience members pay careful attention to a media program/episode and think about its educational content once it is over. *Behaviorally oriented interaction* is the degree to which individuals talk to, or about, media characters and rearrange their schedules to make time for exposure to a media program.

The 20 items in the parasocial interaction scale developed by Rubin et al. (1985) can be classified into cognitive, affective, and behavioral categories. For example, “I feel sorry for my favorite character(s) when he or she makes a mistake”; or “I find my favorite character(s) to be very attractive”; indicate an affective parasocial interaction. Scale items such as, “I like to compare my ideas with what my favorite character(s) say”; and “When my favorite character(s) show me how he or she feels about a issue, it helps me make up my own mind about the issue”; indicate cognitive parasocial interaction. Items in the 20-item scale that pertain to a behavioral parasocial interaction include: “I sometimes make remarks to my favorite character(s) during the airing”; and “I adjust my schedule to make time for the media program.”

Intermediate Effects

Strategically planned entertainment-education programs designed to promote social change focus on changing specific behaviors, for example, increasing visits to family planning clinics, abstinence, safe sex, enrollment in adult literacy classes, etc. (Piotrow et al., 1997). Skeptics argue that there is a lack of evidence to show that entertainment-education programs actually cause behavior change at the individual level (Sherry, 1997; Yoder et al., 1996). Despite this skepticism most scholars acknowledge the possibility of indirect effects of communication exposure on health behaviors, probably by way of ideational factors, that is, the ability of audiences to form ideas related to the educational messages contained in the communication exposure. Piotrow et al. (1997) postulated that in order to understand the impact of communication on behavior change, it is important to focus not only on direct, tangible effects but also on the intermediate effects that lead to changes in individuals' behavior. Three specific intermediate effects are (a) an increase in self-efficacy, (b) an increase in collective efficacy, and (c) increased interpersonal communication among audience individuals.

Self-Efficacy

In 1997, Albert Bandura, a social psychologist at Stanford University, published his seminal book, *Self-Efficacy: The Essence of Control*, thus

introducing the concept of perceived self-efficacy in the context of cognitive behavior modification. The present article uses Bandura's definition of self-efficacy as peoples' beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy can be acquired through experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, or physiological feedback (Bandura, 1997).

Over the years, the notion of self-efficacy has become increasingly appealing to many scholars and has been incorporated in many behavior change models. These include the health belief model (Becker & Rosenstock, 1987), the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), and protection motivation theory (Maddux & Rogers, 1983). According to Bandura, perceived self-efficacy should be measured as situation-specific as possible. However, the literature reveals that self-efficacy has also been examined as a general measure (Mittag & Schwarzer, 1993; Schwarzer, Bäßler, Kwiatek, Schröder, & Zhang, n.d.).

Collective Efficacy

Collective efficacy has been conceptualized as a system-level aspect of Bandura's social cognitive theory. Bandura (1995) defined collective efficacy as "people's beliefs in their joint capabilities to forge divergent self-interests into a shared agenda, to enlist supporters and resources for collective action, to devise effective strategies and to execute them successfully, and to withstand forcible opposition and discouraging setbacks" (p. 33). A majority of entertainment-education programs are implemented in cultures in which collective, rather than individual, action is more likely to bring about behavior change.

Collective efficacy only recently appeared in the scholarly literature, so relatively little research has been conducted on this concept. A survey of the literature revealed no scale with adequate predictive power for collective efficacy. Measures of empowerment and community mobilization may provide insight into the nature of, and measurement of, collective efficacy (Bhatnagar & Williams, 1992; Eng & Parker, 1994; Israel, Checkoway, Schulz, & Zimmerman, 1994; MAP International; 1997; Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1994).

Spurring Interpersonal Communication

Some scholars believe that interpersonal communication is essential for behavior change (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1968). Others argue that strategically designed mass media messages can serve as a precursor to behavior change (Rogers, 1996). Other scholars believe that the distinction between mass media and interpersonal communication may be exaggerated in a "false dichotomy" (Gumpert & Cathcart, 1986; Reardon & Rogers, 1988). Entertainment-education programs have been shown to spur interpersonal communication about the media program (Rogers & Kincaid, 1981; Rogers et al., 1999; Valente, Poppe, & Payne-Merritt, 1996).

Research Questions

Based on the preceding discussion of audience involvement and intermediate effects, the present article examines data from *TTS* to seek answers for the following four research questions:

RQ1: What are the various dimensions of the construct of audience involvement?

RQ2: Does audience involvement lead to increased self-efficacy by audience members?

RQ3: Does audience involvement lead to increased collective efficacy by audience members?

RQ4: Does audience involvement spur interpersonal communication among audience members?

Methodology

The data used to examine audience involvement comes from a questionnaire for registered listeners in India. Prebroadcast publicity for *TTS* through radio, television and press advertisements encouraged enrolling as a registered listener for the radio serial. All India Radio estimated that *TTS* had approximately 6,000 registered listeners. A questionnaire was mailed to approximately 600 registered listeners of *TTS* (randomly selected from a list of over 3363 names and addresses of registered listeners). Approximately 224 responses were received (26 questionnaires were returned as undeliverable by the Indian postal system). This response rate of approximately 39% is rather high, given that the questionnaire was mailed over 6 months after the broadcasts of *TTS* ended, and that no reminder letters were sent. The sample of registered listeners is by no means representative of the population of all listeners of *TTS*. However this sample can give us important insights into how entertainment-education effects occur. A general profile of the respondents to the registered listeners questionnaire indicates that they are young unmarried men in rural areas of North India, many of whom are relatively well educated. Almost three fourths of them had heard most of the episodes of *TTS*.

Multidimensionality of Audience Involvement

RQ1 asked: What are the various dimensions of the construct of audience involvement?

The registered listeners questionnaire included 33 questions designed to measure audience involvement, including the 20 item parasocial interaction scale. Dual scaling techniques were applied to examine the

	Scale item description	# 1	# 2
# 1	When a character expressed an opinion, it helped you make up your own mind on the issue.		.36
# 2	When listening to <i>Tinka Tinka Sukh</i> , you felt that you were a part of the story of Navgaon.	.50	
# 3	You felt comfortable when listening to <i>Tinka Tinka Sukh</i> as if the character(s) were your friends.	.50	
# 4	You felt that your favorite character(s) were like people you know.	.49	
# 5	You looked forward to listening to <i>Tinka Tinka Sukh</i> and your favorite character(s) when <i>Tinka Tinka Sukh</i> was aired.	.44	
# 6	You would listen to another program if your favorite character(s) appeared on it.	.48	
# 7	You missed your favorite character(s) when they were absent for a few episodes.		.46
# 8	You would like to meet the characters on <i>Tinka Tinka Sukh</i> in person.	.62	
# 9	Your favorite character(s) in <i>Tinka Tinka Sukh</i> are like old friends.	.38	
# 10	Your favorite character(s) in <i>Tinka Tinka Sukh</i> are very attractive.	.49	
# 11	You thought Navgaon was an imaginary village with little relation to reality.		.43
# 12	You disagreed with the way a character was depicted in <i>Tinka Tinka Sukh</i> .	.56	
# 13	You aspired to make improvements in the conditions depicted in <i>Tinka Tinka Sukh</i> .	.36	
# 14	You made suggestions for improving the conditions depicted in Navgaon.		.38
# 15	You felt Navgaon was a real village just like your own village.	.41	
# 16	You felt that any of the characters in <i>Tinka Tinka Sukh</i> were worth imitating in your own life.	.65	
# 17	You compared the characters in <i>Tinka Tinka Sukh</i> with someone you personally know.	.58	

Table 1.
Item-Total
Correlations
With the Two
Solutions
for Audience
Involvement
Using Dual
Scaling

multidimensionality of audience involvement.¹ Dual scaling of the 33 possible scale items revealed 10 solutions (called “factors” in factor analysis). Scale items with an item-total correlation of .36 or above were significantly different from zero, and therefore included in the present analysis (Table 1). Two solutions of audience involvement emerge from the dual scaling analysis. Solution #1 with 13 items indicated a referential-

affective dimension, and Solution # 2 with 4 items indicated a critical-cognitive dimension.

The following quotes from two letters written to *TTS* indicate the referential-affective dimension and the critical-cognitive dimensions of involvement, respectively.

Kumari Sunita, a listener of *TTS*, wrote:

TTS is the perfect depiction of village life. It indicates how one should live in a community through love, sensitivity and helping others. Like a lotus that blooms in muddy water and spreads its fragrance across the water, similarly *TTS* is spreading its message across our society and teaching us how to live a better life as members of a larger community.

Ravi Kumar, a listeners of *TTS* elaborated:

Dowry is a curse in our society. There are many Poonams in India today and we turn a blind eye to their plight. In my opinion, Poonam should not have committed suicide, like Susham she should have taken help from the legal system, gone to the police and lodged a formal complaint. This would have landed her husband and in-laws in prison and taught them a lesson. Dowry is illegal but so is suicide, so she should not have given up so easily.

Audience Involvement and Self-Efficacy

RQ2 asked: Does audience involvement lead to increased self-efficacy by audience members?

The present research adapted a 10 item generalized self-efficacy scale originally developed in German by Matthias Jerusalem and Ralf Schwarzer in the early 1980s. Research comparing the German, Spanish, and Chinese versions of the generalized self-efficacy scale with university students in Germany, Hong Kong, and Costa Rica showed that the scale emerged as unidimensional and had a high internal consistency across all three cultures (Schwarzer et al., n.d.). Self-efficacy was measured by a five point Likert-type scale, with potential responses ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” Each question was preceded with the phrase “listening to *TTS* lead me to believe that,” thus relating self-efficacy to involvement as a consequent variable. Principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation resulted in one factor with an eigenvalue of 5.5, accounting for 68 percent of the total variance. A single self-efficacy scale ($\alpha = .92$) included eight scale items (Table 2).

The self-efficacy measure was regressed on the two dimensions of audience involvement. Based on the standardized regression coefficients, the referential-affective dimension of audience involvement had a higher

Scale items	Factor loading
<i>Listening to TTS lead me to believe that:</i>	
I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.	.64
If someone opposes me, I can find means and ways to get what I want.	.76
It can be easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.	.80
I can deal efficiently with unexpected events.	.70
I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.	.80
When confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.	.69
If I am in trouble, I can usually think of something to do.	.71
No matter what comes my way, I can handle it.	.42

Table 2.
Factor
Loadings for
the Self-
Efficacy
Scale
(N = 221)

relative impact on self-efficacy in comparison to the critical-cognitive dimension. However this difference was not statistically significant. The multiple correlation coefficient was used to measure the collective impact of the two independent dimensions on self-efficacy scores. A statistically significant multiple correlation was obtained ($R = .38$; $F(2) = 18.68$; $p < .05$) for self-efficacy. The two solutions for audience involvement explain approximately 14% of the variance in self-efficacy scores.

As is evident from the following letter written by *TTS* listener Ashok Singh Bhatioria, *TTS* promoted self-efficacy among its listeners.

I empathize with Suraj who wanted to complain against Kusum's wedding as he felt she was too young to get married but he did not say anything since he was scared of the villagers' reactions. I too have been silent on the wrong things going on in my village. Recently Nandini commented that the village needed a new "Ram" one who would make his family and his community members proud of him. This statement had a profound effect on me. It drove out any self-doubts and anxiety I had. I have decided that I am no longer going to remain a silent spectator, I am going to speak out for my own and others' rights. The serial has given me the strength to realize that I can reach my goals in life. It has given a new meaning and purpose to my life.

Audience Involvement and Collective Efficacy

RQ3 asked: Does audience involvement lead to increased collective efficacy by audience members?

Collective efficacy was measured by a 5-point Likert-type scale consisting of 12 items (described earlier), with potential responses ranging

Table 3.
Factor
Loadings for
the Collective
Efficacy
Scale
(N = 221)

Scale items	Factor loading
<i>Listening to TTS lead me to believe that:</i>	
Our community could influence/share control over determining our needs.	.77
Our community could influence/share control in determining development initiatives that affect us.	.87
Our community can harness/mobilize resources to change things that affect us.	.83
We can discuss the issues that affect us freely among ourselves.	.87
There are community members who can take on leadership roles for meeting community needs.	.73
Community members can conduct meetings to discuss issues that affect us.	.73
We can create a formal community group to deal with the issues that affect us.	.85
We can work with preexisting community groups to deal with issues that affect us.	.83
The responsibility for making change in our community lies with community members.	.86
We can choose our own community leaders to bring about changes in our community.	.69
Marginalized sectors in our community (women, lower castes) have a say in changing the conditions that affect their lives.	.85
There are skilled community members who can tackle the issues that affect us.	.78

from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” Principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation resulted in one factor with an eigenvalue of 7.9, accounting for 66 percent of the total variance. A single collective efficacy scale ($\alpha = .85$) was constructed from the 12 scale items (Table 3).

The collective efficacy scores were regressed on the two dimensions of audience involvement. Based on the standardized regression coefficients, the referential-affective dimension of audience involvement had a higher relative impact on collective-efficacy scores in comparison to the critical-cognitive dimension. However this difference was not statistically significant. Multiple correlation coefficient was used to measure the collective impact of the independent dimensions on collective efficacy scores. A statistically significant multiple correlation was obtained ($R = .34$; $F(2) = 14.32$; $p < .05$) for collective-efficacy. The two solutions for audience involvement explained approximately 12% of the variance in collective efficacy scores. *TTS* promoted collective efficacy among its listeners, as evident from the following quote from listener Sukumar Sahni:

I am a regular listener of *TTS* and find it extremely educative and entertaining especially for youth like me. Inspired by *TTS* we have established a youth self-help association with 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 the children in our village about these social evils. In fact, *TTS* has awakened a lot of people and provoked them to rethink their attitudes.

Audience Involvement and Interpersonal Communication

RQ4 asked: Does audience involvement spur interpersonal communication among audience members?

Over 90% of the registered listeners indicate that they discussed *TTS* with someone. Over 75% of them had discussed *TTS* with their friends, 10% discussed the soap opera with their siblings and 8% had discussed *TTS* with parents. While it is important to know that *TTS* generated interpersonal communication, it is also important to find out the topics of this interpersonal discussion. Cross-tabulations were calculated to compare the respondents who had discussed *TTS* and those who had not discussed *TTS* by the two solutions for audience involvement. The results indicate that respondents who scored high on the referential-affective dimension were more likely to have engaged in interpersonal communication about *TTS* ($\chi^2[38, N = 221] = 58.3, p < .05$). No significant difference is found between scores on the critical-cognitive dimension and interpersonal communication, with the exception of one topic, interpersonal communication about divorce and legal issues ($\chi^2[7, N = 203] = 25.17, p < .05$).

TTS spurred interpersonal communication among its listeners, as is evident from the following quote from a listener:

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.

Discussion and Implications

The present research revealed two dimensions of audience involvement that included elements of four of the five dimensions identified in past research: Referential involvement, affective involvement, critical involvement, and cognitive involvement.² When audience individuals displayed identification with the *TTS* characters (affective involvement), they also related the radio serial to their personal lives (referential involvement). At the same time, when audience members paid close attention to the

radio serial and thought about the messages contained in *TTS* (cognitive involvement), they also reconstructed the radio serial by suggesting plot changes (critical involvement). In this respect, involvement is similar to the concept of “transportation” which also has an emotional and cognitive dimension.³ However, transportation also involves a lack of awareness of surroundings and mental imagery, therefore, it can be conceptualized as an extremely high level of involvement.

The 13-item scale of referential-affective audience involvement connotes identification with *TTS* and its characters. Identification was included as a part of involvement in Levy and Windahl’s (1984, 1985) typology of active audiences. The measure of identification involvement in the present research is different from previous measures of this construct (Fielitzen & Linne, 1975; Hoffner, 1996; Rosengren et al., 1976).

Fielitzen and Linne (1975) indicated that identification is a function of the type of program being analyzed. Similarity identification results from realistic programs like news and quiz shows and wishful identification results from fantasy programs like soap operas. Entertainment-education soap operas are designed to reflect reality within a fictional world. It is possible that in the case of entertainment-education soap operas, similarity identification (identification with characters perceived to be like the media characters) and wishful identification (the desire to be like, or behave in similar ways to, a media character) interact to create a holistic dimension of “identification.” Therefore, audience involvement might be one way to further the development of identification, and vice versa. The four items in Solution #2 of audience involvement are those that this research had indicated would fall within the cognitive and critical involvement. The four scale items included in this dimension also connote evaluation of *TTS* characters and content by the audience.

The overlap between the referential-affective and critical-cognitive dimensions is understandable. High levels of involvement with entertainment-education soap operas allow audience members to identify with, and evaluate, the soap operas in terms of their own lives and perceived realities. Audience individuals construct, reconstruct, and deconstruct the messages contained in an entertainment-education intervention, thereby making it a part of their popular culture (Storey, 1998). Entertainment-education interventions are, therefore, more than a vehicle for public advocacy, they become a part of the larger narrative of audience members’ lives. Involvement is thus part of “sense-making,” which according to Dervin (1990) is the process through which “individuals define and bridge gaps in their everyday lives” (p. 40). Audience members’ identification with an entertainment-education soap opera is reflected in their liking for the program (affective involvement). Audience members bridge the gap between their own lives and the entertainment-edu-

cation program they identify with by placing themselves within the context of the soap opera (referential involvement). Similarly, audience members' evaluation of an entertainment-education program is based on their degree of attention devoted to the program (cognitive involvement). Audience members bridge the gap between their own lives and the entertainment-education programs that they evaluate by suggesting plot changes that align with their own sensibilities (critical involvement). Instead of fitting audiences into preconceived categories, perhaps audience involvement can be better understood by researchers asking specific questions: How do audience individuals make sense of media to which they are exposed? How do audience members differ in producing meaning in their daily lives? (Jeffrey, 1994; Jensen & Rosengren, 1990).

Large-scale media projects are often criticized as being top down and insensitive to the needs of the people for whom they are designed. However, by focusing on audience involvement, it is possible to situate entertainment-education dramas within a Freireian (Freire, 1970, 1973) empowerment-education framework. Learners should be involved in: (a) defining and naming their own problems, (b) critically examining these problems and their root causes, (c) creating a vision of a healthier system, and (d) developing social action strategies necessary to overcome limits and achieve their goals (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1994). Audience involvement allows audiences to witness their own problems by examining the problems that the characters face in terms of their own lives. As suggestions for improving conditions and taking actions to improve these conditions unfold within an entertainment-education story, a high degree of involvement can motivate audiences to initiate changes in their own social conditions.

Audience involvement affects both self-efficacy and collective efficacy. Correlation between self-efficacy and collective efficacy was .75, indicating that these concepts are positively related. The planned incorporation of these intermediate variables within the narrative of a drama serial is likely to enhance its behavioral effects. For example, in an attempt to make audiences cognizant of their knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about an important social problem like dowry in India, the characters can demonstrate self-efficacy (individual decisions to abstain from taking and giving dowry) and collective efficacy (community decisions to abstain from taking and giving dowry). *TTS* demonstrated both self-efficacy and collective efficacy, which reinforce each other to initiate social change.

The influence of audience involvement on interpersonal communication shows an overlap of mass media and interpersonal communication. Audience involvement results in individuals discussing media messages in their social networks, thereby blurring the distinction between mass

and interpersonal communication. Affect and cognition are both key in activating interpersonal communication, which implies that the interplay between affect and cognition should be included in theoretical models of stimulating interpersonal communication.

Individuals who engaged in high levels of referential-affective involvement with *TTS* were more likely to communicate interpersonally with their friends and family members. Past research showed that affective responses are primary, they occur before, and influence subsequent, cognitive processing (Murphy & Zajonc, 1993). Entertainment-education programs can uniquely exploit the affective domain of audience response. Perhaps affective responses to educational messages spark interpersonal communication in order to help formulate a cognitive response.

Hewes and Planalp (1982) in studying the role of cognition in communication theory outlined seven interrelated cognitive processes, which serve as the mechanisms through which information is handled intrapersonally. Respondents who scored high in critical-cognitive involvement engaged in interpersonal communication about divorce and legal issues. Mrs. Usha Bhasin, executive producer of *TTS* at All India Radio, indicated that the episodes dealing with divorce and legal issues contained a great deal of technical information (Bhasin, personal communication, January 21–23, 1997). High critical-cognitive involvement with *TTS* led audience members to discuss this technical information in their social networks through activation of cognitive processes outlined by Hewes and Planalp (1982).

Much of the interpersonal communication occurred between friends. A majority of the respondents were young, unmarried men, which points to the importance of interpersonal communication among peers in this age group (Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs, 1995). Singhal and Rogers (1989), in their analysis of parasocial interaction by audience members with characters in the entertainment-education television program, *Hum Log* (We People) in India, reported that audience members tended to identify with same-gender and same-age characters. Many of the young characters in *TTS* discussed important educational issues. High levels of audience involvement led respondents to mirror the interpersonal communication that they witnessed in *TTS* in their own lives.

Additional research on audience involvement is required to refine the dimensions identified here. For example, the relationship between identification with characters and their prosocial and antisocial qualities should be studied. Sense-making and reception analysis techniques can be used to study audience involvement. For example, qualitative textual analysis of letters written by audience members can help in understanding audience involvement through the words of the audience themselves.

While the process of audience involvement is important to understand, we must also analyze the antecedents and consequences of audience involvement as well as the context within which it occurs. As Bruner (1990) indicated, even the strongest causal explanations about human behavior must be interpreted in the light of the cultural context within which these behaviors occur. Both affect and cognition seem to play a role in audience involvement. The exact role of audience involvement in encouraging interpersonal communication needs study. Audience involvement with an entertainment-education intervention is a complex process, and one that deserves greater scholarly attention.

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Author

¹ Dual scaling is an effective statistical analysis technique for categorical data, including dichotomous response categories, the analytical results of dual scaling are equivalent to those of principal component factor analysis (Nishisato, 1994).

² Behaviorally oriented interaction did not emerge as a distinct dimension. Instead, behaviorally-oriented interaction items tended to cross-load across solutions. For example, "Did you write a letter to TTS?" cross-loaded across the referential-affective and critical-cognitive dimensions of audience involvement, indicating that letter writing was a behavior associated with both identification and evaluation involvement. For the sake of conceptual clarity it might be feasible to examine the specific behaviors associated with involvement separately.

³ Transportation is the degree to which an individual suspends disbelief while engrossed in a narrative (Green & Brock, 2000).

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