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Entertainment Education as a Community Development Strategy

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Abstract

Entertainment-education is a development communication strategy that involves strategic placement of educational messages in entertainment texts to increase knowledge, change attitudes, affect social norms or change overt behavior. This approach is called prosocial because it promotes positive behaviors and goals deemed desirable by a large part of society. With a few exceptions, this strategy has not been used for faith-based community development initiatives. This study documents audience involvement with an African film, *Yellow Card*, designed to reduce unwanted pregnancies and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases among African youth. It highlights the potential of communication campaigns in holistic development, especially those that utilize proven entertainment education strategies in promoting individual and community change.

Bios

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Entertainment Education as a Community Development Strategy: A Case Study of Audience Involvement in Africa

Various development strategies have been tried around the world in an effort to solve problems and facilitate change in both individuals and communities. These efforts have been given various names including community development, nation building and, by some faith groups, transformational development and disciplining nations. Each of these has to do with bettering a society. For the sake of this article, we will use the term community development, realizing it can encompass various philosophies and approaches.

After World War II, development was equated with a need to modernize regions such as Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. The term *Third World* was created to refer to people, institutions and cultures that were considered ignorant, poor and inequitable (Shah, 2003). The development industry was driven primarily by Western models of economic growth that measured progress in terms of gross national product (GNP) and other physical indicators. The prevailing belief was that in order to develop (modernize and solve many poverty-related issues), the Third World would have to experience the same stages of economic growth the West had experienced, articulated by Rostow (1960) as traditional society, preconditions for take-off, take-off, drive toward maturity, and the age of high mass consumption. The hope was that the post-colonial world would catch-up with the West by adopting media technologies such as newspapers, radio, films, and later television, as well as other innovations. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, or UNESCO as it is commonly called, began gathering statistics on newspapers, radios and television sets per capita by country and region as a measurement of development (a practice it does to this day). Primary concerns of modernization were economic development, literacy and national identity.

Community development initiatives work to develop infrastructures, promote justice, improve education, facilitate economic growth, and help solve a number of societal issues including crime and health concerns.

Viewing every aspect of life as sacred has a long tradition in the Christian faith. Throughout history, Christians were leaders in science, the arts, education and many other fields. Catholic monks carried their missionary message throughout Europe, encouraging converts to develop every aspect of their lives, from private devotion to academic scholarship (Pierson, 1989). Martin Luther believed that the work of monks and priests was no more holy in the sight of God than the efforts of “the rustic laborer in the field or the woman going about her household tasks, but that all works are measured before God by faith alone” Tappert (1967, p. 430). He fought vigorously for the education of poor children and low-interest loans for workers. William Carey brought the gospel to India, translating the Bible into Bengali, Oriya, Marathi, Hindi, Assamese, and Sanskrit. He also translated parts of the Scriptures into 29 other languages and dialects. He also founded a university, an Agricultural and Horticultural Society, and a savings bank, published dictionaries and books on grammar and botany, fought for the

conservation of forests, and openly resisted the cultural tradition of widow burning (Mangalwadi, 1999). William Wilberforce worked with the British Parliament to abolish slavery and helped found the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Puritans, Pietists, Moravians and Methodists fed and clothed the poor, established schools, and fought for social issues such as the rights of women and slaves. William and Catherine Booth, who started The Salvation Army, met both physical and spiritual needs of the poor, addicted and otherwise “undesirable” populations. And Martin Luther King, Jr. “led a social movement that confronted systemic evil—the evil of racism—and made national policy makers end legal segregation and the denial of black peoples’ right to vote,” (Miller, M., personal communication, January 7, 2009). King’s efforts moved a nation towards racial equality. Most of these initiatives relied, to some extent, on utilization of communication strategies, including speeches, communication campaigns to raise awareness, influence politics and raise funds, community organizing, letter-writing campaigns, printing of booklets and newspaper articles, and advertising.

Entertainment-Education Interventions

Entertainment-education (EE), also referred to as edutainment or infotainment by health practitioners and media professionals, is a development communication strategy that involves designing entertainment productions with strategically placed educational messages in order to increase knowledge, change attitudes, affect social norms or change overt behavior concerning a specific social issue (Singhal & Rogers, 1999, p 9). This EE approach is often called prosocial because it promotes positive behaviors and goals deemed desirable by a large part of society (Brown & Singhal, 1997). Effective prosocial entertainment presents emotional and relational conflicts to which people can relate as well as skills or strategies for dealing with those conflicts (Lovelace & Huston, 1983). With a few exceptions, this strategy has not been widely used for faith-based community development initiatives.

Bandura (1977b) discovered that people learn by accomplishing tasks and making mistakes, but also by observing the actions of others. So in reality, all mediated texts on radio, television and film present prosocial and antisocial content, accidentally or deliberately. It can be argued that storytellers, musicians, poets, and actors have embedded educational themes in entertainment through much of history; in fact, Aesop’s Fables were meant to teach lessons to children.

Entertainment-education interventions are sometimes part of public communication campaigns, which are either service programs supported by the public and policymakers to address social problems, or advocacy strategies dealing with controversial issues (Paisley, 2001). The goal of campaigns is to generate specific outcomes in large numbers of people within a specified time period through organized communication efforts (Svenkeruk, 1987). Campaigns have been employed to affect attitudes and behaviors concerning many issues including health, environmentalism, justice, public safety and citizenship.

While teaching through stories has been done for centuries, using entertainment-education as a systematic development strategy did not begin until the growth of

electronic media. The historic growth of EE worldwide has been well documented by a number of communication scholars (Brown & Singhal, 1999; Singhal & Rogers, 1999; Singhal et al., 2004). EE is widely accepted as an effective strategic for promoting social change, particularly as a means to change health beliefs and practices. Since the focus of this study is on sexual responsibility and HIV/AIDS, we provide a review of some of the important studies that have addressed these issues through EE interventions in Africa.

The EE strategy for visual media grew largely out of the study of unintended effects of a successful Peruvian soap opera called *Simplemente María*, one of the most beloved Latin American commercial television series of all time. The widely popular Peruvian telenovela broadcast 448 episodes throughout Latin America between 1969 and 1971. Based on the rags-to-riches story of a character named María who moved to the city to better her life, the serial showed the power of media to model behavior, which could influence audiences to emulate a character and storyline. Audiences felt they knew María and identified with her struggles. This motivated audiences to imitate her by becoming domestic workers, enrolling in literacy classes and buying Singer sewing machines, steps María had taken to become successful and happy.

After studying the commercial success and unintentional effects of *Simplemente María*, Mexican producer Miguel Sabido realized the power of using mass media in a systematic way to foster change in his native country (Brown, 1990; Singhal, Obregon & Rogers 1994; Singhal & Rogers, 1999). He devised a theoretical framework, based on his research, which will be discussed later. Combining his multi-disciplinary theory with a production strategy that took advantage of the extremely popular soap opera melodramatic format, Sabido produced seven telenovelas (television novels) between 1975 and 1982, which tackled topics such as family planning, adult literacy, and responsible parenthood.

EE Interventions around the World. Based on his strategy, a team in India, with guidance from EE professionals, including Miguel Sabido and David Poindexter from Population Communications International (PCI), produced *Hum Log (We People)*. The soap opera was televised in 1984 and 1985 to deal with several issues, including family harmony, dowry, education, spousal abuse, teenage marriage and the status of women. Like Sabido's telenovelas broadcast in Mexico, *Hum Log* proved that entertainment-education soap operas could experience great popularity and be a viable channel for promoting prosocial messages.

In Japan, a similar strategy was implemented in the production of *Oshin*, which broke audience ratings and was eventually televised in twenty-eight countries. It followed the tragedies and disappointments of a girl's life and how she learned to deal with them, moving from poverty to prosperity. *Oshin* proved that prosocial interventions could appeal to large audiences across many cultures (Svenkerud, Rahoi & Singhal, 1995). Viewers changed their beliefs and values as they engaged with the central character and learned universal human values from her.

The entertainment-education strategy has not been limited to television. The *Bienvenida Salud!* (*Welcome Health*) campaign was centered on a radio program broadcast three times per week since 1997 in remote river regions of the Peruvian jungle (Sypher et al., 2002). The goal of the radio series was to empower women by teaching them about social justice, healthy lifestyles, income generation and sustainable development. The power of *minga*—an Incan concept of collaborative community work—was demonstrated as health workers, educators, communication professionals, social scientists and traditional healers carried out the campaign. The program reportedly brought about changes in radio listening habits and social interaction that in turn facilitated changes in attitudes and behavior related to reproductive health. The entertainment-education strategy—which can include mass media such as radio, print, television and film, as well as traditional and folk media such as community theater, art and music—has been used to promote various prosocial issues. It has been used in virtually every country of the world, but predominantly in developing regions where it has helped promote educational messages on various topics, such as agricultural methods, gender equality and especially, health issues.

The Problem of HIV/AIDS

HIV infection is rampant in much of the world, especially among young people across the continent of Africa (Hayes & Weiss, 2006). Investment into HIV/AIDS prevention programs during the past two decades has produced encouraging results, as HIV infection rates are leveling off or declining in many nations (UN AIDS, 2008). The United Nations continues to promote education as a strategy for combating AIDS, and with the rapid diffusion of entertainment media throughout the world, more funding programs are encouraging the use of entertainment media to promote health messages (Brown, 2007; Kreuter, et al., 2007). The purpose of this paper is to assess the effects of an award-winning feature film, *Yellow Card*, which was intended to promote sexual responsibility among African youth. Before explaining the film, we first provide a theoretical context for understanding the role of film in influencing sexual behavior.

EE Interventions in Africa. Across Africa, nations are implementing the entertainment-education communication strategy to promote sexual responsibility (Brown, Kiruswa, & Fraser 2003; Singhal & Rogers 2003). We provide examples from three countries, Kenya, Tanzania, and South Africa, in promoting HIV/AIDS prevention through their use of entertainment-education (EE) films.

Sexual Responsibility EE Programs in Kenya. Kenya's introduction to the systematic use of entertainment-education (EE) to address sexual responsibility issues such as family planning and sexually transmitted diseases began during the 1980s. A radio soap opera, *Ushikwapo Shikamana* (*Hold on to He Who Holds on to You*), aired in Kenya from 1987 to 1989. The dramatic program reached an estimated 7 million people, about 40 percent of the population of Kenya in 1987 (Mazrui & Kitsao 1988), and 60 percent by 1989; a projected 75 percent reported that they understood the family planning messages (Singhal & Rogers 1999, pp. 130-131). Other health-related themes addressed by the program included: the benefits of smaller family sizes, husband and wife communication and respect, and the disadvantages of polygamy.

In 2003, Kenya initiated its first widespread EE film project through the Kenya military. With support from the United States Government, a non-profit organization, Earth Conservancy, collaborated with Kenya military leaders to produce *Red Card: Sammy's Final Match* with a group discussion guide. Research of the film's effects indicate the film reduced the number of sexual partners among all military personnel, increased monogamous sexual relationships among those who were married, and increased abstinence or condom use among those who were not married (Brown, Kiruswa, & Fraser, 2005).

Sexual Responsibility EE Programs in Tanzania. Following Kenya's example, the Tanzanian government launched *Twende Na Wakati (Let's go with the Times)*, a radio series that addressed teen sexuality, family planning, HIV/AIDS, education for girls, women's status, and domestic violence. An evaluation of the series indicated listeners of the program demonstrated an increase in self-efficacy with regards to protecting themselves against HIV/AIDS, reduced risky sexual practices, and increased their use of condoms (Vaughan et al., 2000). *Twende Na Wakati* was especially effective in promoting discussion about sexual practices and family planning among sexual partners (Rogers et al. 1999) and promoting self efficacy, "the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (Bandura (1977a, p.3).

In 1999 and again in 2001, despite massive education efforts, AIDS resulted in the death of 140,000 people each year in Tanzania (*The World Factbook*, 2004). Due in part to the success of *Twende na Wakati*, the Tanzanian government began producing the country's second ever television soap opera to promote HIV/AIDS prevention and address the problems of crime, alcoholism, and drug abuse. *Maisha (That's Life)* began airing in 2000, targeting an urban audience. A study of viewers of *Maisha* indicated they adopted HIV/AIDS prevention attitudes and behavior in response to the program (Brown, Kiruswa & Fraser 2003); in particular, those who were more emotionally and/or cognitively involved with Mashaka, the star of *Maisha*, were more powerfully influenced by the health messages communicated through the program.

Promoting Sexual Responsibility in South Africa. One of the most successful and long-running entertainment-education campaigns has been produced in South Africa. Since 1994, *Soul City* has taken a multi-media approach to solving problems at the individual, community and policy levels. Founded by Garth Japhet, a Christian medical doctor who saw the need to empower poor Blacks and Coloreds with health information through channels that were easily accessible to them, the *Soul City* campaign has addressed topics as varied as prenatal care, crime and domestic violence. Centered on a nationally televised soap opera, the themes of *Soul City* are reinforced with radio dramas in nine languages, music, community theater, puppetry, printed booklets and newspaper articles and inserts. *Soul City* has also addressed the most pressing needs surrounding the HIV/AIDS epidemic, working to prevent further spread of the disease and fighting cultural stigmatization against those who are already infected. In addition to changing beliefs about sexual practices and sexual behavior,

many of these programs have been among the most highly rated television programs in South Africa (Usdin et al, 2004).

Later, the Soul City Institute launched a film initiative called *The Heartlines Campaign* called “8 weeks-8 values” (2009). Phase one launched in July 2006 and included a series of eight, hour-long television dramas to promote discussion of core values by telling modern African parables that focus on critical social issues, such as poverty, HIV and AIDS, inequality, racism and discrimination that aims to speak to all South Africans. The values central to the film themes included acceptance, perseverance, forgiveness, honesty, responsibility, self-control, compassion and second chances. Each of the eight films was broadcast from 16 July – 10 September 2006, across all three South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) channels. Each film also was introduced by Nelson Mandela.

In 2010, *Heartlines* produced a feature film, *Hopeville*, based on the TV series; it was shown in theaters and training events. The initiative partners with faith-based organizations and public groups to help communities solve their own problems. In conjunction with SABC radio stations, 60-second radio ads have been used to raise awareness of issues and motivate listeners to live out good values. It is estimated that SABC has a potential 93% reach in South Africa.

The Film *Yellow Card*

The EE film *Yellow Card* (2000)—the focus of this study—was produced by Media For Development International (MFDI), a non-profit development organization then headquartered in Harare, Zimbabwe. The 35-mm feature-length film was the centerpiece of a campaign intended to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS and the number of unintended pregnancies among Africans under the age of 25. In addition to the film, study guides were produced to guide discussions among youth in schools and clubs. A web site was launched with photos, background information and the opportunity for fans to email the characters (though there were no responses or follow-up).

Yellow Card follows the life of Tiyane, a high school soccer player whose goal is to become an international sports star. However, Tiyane’s life is interrupted when he learns that a one-night stand with his classmate Linda resulted in an unwanted pregnancy, even after he has become romantically involved with Juliet, a mixed-race girl from an upper-class family. When Linda abandons the baby on Tiyane’s doorstep and leaves town with another man, Tiyane is forced to deal with the consequences of his sexual encounter: to raise the child despite his dreams of a successful future. At the same time, his promiscuous friend Skido is hospitalized with AIDS. The audience is left to speculate on what eventually happens to the each of the characters.

Yellow Card was a cultural phenomenon throughout much of sub-Saharan Africa, having been seen in movie theatres and video cantinas, on television and on videocassette and VCD (video-CD) in many nations since its release in 2000. According to associate producer Steve Smith, it is likely one of the most watched African films of all time, with an estimated audience of 50 million in West Africa alone (S. Smith,

personal communication, April 24, 2003). *Yellow Card* enjoyed the support of NGOs, governments and schools, which made it one of the most widely popular African entertainment-education campaigns ever. According to viewer feedback, many young fans appear to have watched the film multiple times. Despite limited access to computers and the Internet, and as early as 2002, a few thousand viewers logged onto the *Yellow Card* website; many used the chat forum to beg for a film sequel.

Yellow Card was used by Filmaid, an international nonprofit organization that screens films as a strategy to entertain, educate and empower Africans who were displaced and are living in refugee camps (filmaid.org). When Media For Development International founders and *Yellow Card* associate producers Steve and Sally Smith visited the Kakuma refugee camp of 80,000 mostly “lost boys of the Sudan” in northern Kenya in 2004, residents seemed to know the main character Tiyane. After accepting a new copy of the film (because they had worn theirs out), the refugees pleaded with the producers to send Tiyane to visit them.

In 2013 the producers signed an agreement to televise the film on virtually all television stations in every country on the African continent in the next five years.

While foundations and corporations are often eager to fund prosocial communication campaigns, they are less likely to fund evaluation research. *Yellow Card* was no exception. However, a handful of studies (three unpublished papers and one dissertation) were conducted on this campaign, namely, *A preview evaluation of Yellow Card* (Johnston, 20002); *Yellow Card & Chitungwiza's youth: A study on the film's accessibility and impact* (Mueller, 2001), *Sex, AIDS and videotape: Video as a tool in informing about HIV/AIDS among young people in rural Mozambique* (Ngenge, 2003) and *Audience Involvement with Yellow Card, an Entertainment-Education Initiative Promoting Safe-Sex Behavior Among African Youth* (Buenting, 2006).

Learning through Drama

In order to explore the influence of *Yellow Card*, we developed a theoretical framework based on various types of audience involvement to explain how they learn through entertainment. Though dramatic and humorous narratives have been used for centuries to teach lessons, the process of how learning takes place through entertainment is only partially understood. Audience involvement is thought to hold a key to learning effects (Liebes & Katz, 1986; Rubin & Perse, 1987). Kincaid (2002) highlighted the need for research to explore how social relationships, emotion and the narrative affect audiences. Sood (2002) echoed this research need in her theoretical contribution on audience involvement, which she described as a multidimensional activity between audiences and texts characterized by both affective-referential (emotional) involvement and cognitive-critical (mental) involvement. Several scholars see audience involvement as a key component to effective EE interventions (Basil, 1996; Basil & Brown, 2004; Singhal, Obregon, & Rogers, 1994; Singhal et al., 2004; Sood & Rogers, 2000), and Sood (2002) notes that high levels of audience involvement increase both self-efficacy and collective efficacy.

Parasocial Interaction. One of the most common measures of involvement of audiences with media personas is through the process of parasocial interaction, which occurs when audience members form imaginary relationships with mediated personalities. Horton & Wohl (1956) believed these perceived, or parasocial relationships, are developed over time, as in a soap opera series or network news broadcasts, creating a sense of shared history and “accumulation of shared past” (p. 216). However, Rubin, Perse & Powell (1985) and Rubin & McHugh (1987) found that neither history of viewing nor amount of exposure are predictors of parasocial interaction and called for studies to focus on genres other than television to make further discovery of their findings. Rubin & Rubin (2001) concluded that the length of interaction “may play a different role in parasocial relationships than it does in interpersonal relationships” (p. 327).

To date, most studies of EE productions have been conducted on multiple exposure interventions where audiences interact with media personalities over time. These include mostly radio and television serials where characters change over a period time as the story develops. In long-running soap operas, audiences get to know and love (or hate) characters, developing strong parasocial relationships. These pseudo-relationships that audience members form with both real celebrities and fictional characters sometimes lead to identification, a social influence process in which audience members adopt the perceived values, beliefs, and behavior of media personas (Brown, Basil & Bocarnea, 2003a, 2003b; Brown & Fraser, 2004; Fraser & Brown, 2002).

Perceived Similarity. Perceived similarity is another important variable that affects how audiences respond to media personas. Perceived similarity is often explained in the context of homophily. Eyal and Rubin (2003) identify homophily as an important dimension of audience involvement. It can be viewed as the degree to which two individuals who interact are similar to one another in certain attributes (Rogers & Bhowmik, 1970); whereas perceived similarity is the degree to which a person believes he or she shares certain attributes such as beliefs, values, worldviews, etc. with another person with whom he or she is interacting. People tend to notice and pay attention to those who are similar to them. For example, not only do people notice those of similar race and gender, they also tend to pay closer attention to them, desire to be like them, and receive confirmation and reinforcement of their own preexisting ideas, opinions and behaviors from them (Vidmar & Rokeach, 1974 and Hoffner & Cantor, 1991). Just as people use observations of others to create opinions within interpersonal relationships, audience members observe and evaluate media personas, imposing their expectations on characters based on their own personal and cultural perspectives.

People are initially attracted to those they perceive to be similar to them (Byrne, 1971) and are more likely to communicate with them, making attraction a key aspect to both interpersonal (Rogers & Bhowmik, 1970) and mediated communication (Hoffner & Cantor, 1991). McCroskey and McCain (1974) surmised, the more people are attracted to one another, the more they will communicate, and the more a person can influence another.

Perceived similarity is thought to be an antecedent to parasocial interaction (Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985; Rubin & McHugh, 1987) as it tends to foster credibility and reliability, key factors for developing trust and predictability. Similarity also appears to be important in establishing what Krugman (1965) called “‘bridging experiences,’ connections, or personal references” (p. 355), essential elements of parasocial relationships.

Research Questions

RQ1: To what extent did audiences perceive similarity with the characters of *Yellow Card*?

Research indicates that intense audience involvement with characters of EE dramas facilitates the desired goals of entertainment-education initiatives (Brown & Cody, 1991; Sood, 1999, 2002; Sood & Rogers, 2000). As audiences perceive that they have close, personal relationships with mediated figures or characters, they are likely to think about, critique, process affectively and cognitively, and consider emulating the attitudes and behavior of mediated role models. With this in mind, a second research question is proposed:

RQ2: To what extent did audiences experience various types of involvement with characters of *Yellow Card*?

Little is known about how quickly parasocial interaction develops between audiences and characters, especially with one-time interventions such as films. Because film is seen as a viable entertainment-education medium (Brown, et al., 2005; Brown & Meeks, 1997; Church 1989; Kiruswa, 2004; Lovelace & Huston, 1983) and because audience involvement is thought to be a key to effective communication (Liebes & Katz, 1986), it is important to understand the role of exposure in determining the strength of parasocial relationships with characters in entertainment-education films. Thus, a third research question is posed:

RQ3: How did various levels of exposure (first time vs. repeated viewing) to *Yellow Card* influence audiences' parasocial interaction with the characters of the film?

The goal was to measure differences in parasocial interaction levels between first time viewers and those who were seeing the film again. Communication studies suggest that people pay attention to and learn from (Vidmar & Rokeach 1974; Hoffner & Cantor, 1991) characters they perceive to be similar to themselves and are more likely to role model such characters (Bandura, 1977b, 1994, 2004). Perceived similarity is thought to be a precursor to parasocial interaction (Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985; Rubin & McHugh, 1987), which then appears to facilitate motivations to adopt the behaviors of entertainment-education initiatives (Brown, 1988; Sood, 1999, 2002; Sood & Rogers, 2000). In light of this, the final research question is proposed:

RQ4: To what extent did parasocial interaction and perceived similarity play a role in realizing the desired effects of the *Yellow Card* campaign?

Methodology

At the Third International Entertainment-Education Conference for Social Change held in the Netherlands in 2000, EE scholars Kincaid (2002), Sood (2002), and Slater & Rouner (2002) called for further research to probe qualitative aspects of the processes involved in EE. Several factors contributed to the decision to conduct a qualitative study of *Yellow Card*. These factors included multiple visits by the authors to Africa (including meeting with the filmmakers), in-depth discussions with African students and media professionals in seminars, reviewing literature of qualitative research and the use of focus groups; and learning from African communication scholars who advocate culturally appropriate research methods. We concluded that collecting data through the use of focus groups and interviews was a culturally relevant and effective way to study an African film.

Triandis (2002) strongly recommends conducting contextualized research that avoids intellectual colonialism (studies conducted without indigenous collaborators) and that privileges responses routed individualism over responses routed in collectivism. Since the 1980s, several distinguished African communication scholars have articulated the need for a body of research that is both informed by and relevant to the West African situation. For example, Ugboajah (1985) emphasizes the importance of research that considers how Africans think and the role mass media play in African society. Obeng-Quidoo (1986, 1987) highlights the need for research methods that are appropriate to Africa's collectivist cultures. Obeng-Quidoo singles out the focus group as particularly suitable because it "harmonizes with their social-group orientation" (1987, p. 52) over research methods borrowed from the United States, Europe and the former Soviet bloc, which tend to emphasize hypothesis testing, critical approaches and ideologies, respectively. Since all cultures operate somewhere on a continuum between individualism and collectivism (as do individuals within cultures) (Singelis & Brown, 1995), we decided to collect both group responses and individual responses to the film.

Research Location and Staff

Nigeria was chosen as the research location because (1) it represents a large percentage of Africa's population, and (2) *Yellow Card* has been extremely popular in Nigeria, as evidenced by hundreds of emails that were written to the characters after the film was broadcast on Nigerian television. African facilitators were chosen to reduce ethnic and cultural bias.

Study Participants

Focus group literature suggests segmenting participants by similar characteristics such as age, income, education, gender, culture and language (Krueger & Casey, 2000). For this reason, eight focus groups were formed from a total of 56 participants within the target sample frame —Africans, under the age of twenty-five — who shared similar economic and educational backgrounds.

Focus Group Viewing and Discussion. The eight focus groups were held over a two-week period in February 2006. The groups were segmented by (1) those who had never seen *Yellow Card* (referred to as "first-time exposure") and (2) and those who had seen the film at least once (referred to as "repeated exposure"). Groups were further segmented by gender and by age. The target ages of the groups were 17-19 and 20-24,

however the actual ages were 16-21 and 19-25 primarily because Nigerians begin and complete school at different ages, (so classmates and peer groups are not necessarily the same age) and Nigerians are not used to divulging their age, often “round off” their birthdates, and can change their age depending on when they are asked and by whom. Age was not thought to be a significant factor as the participants were recruited from the same peer pool as others in their focus group. Groups ranged in size from three to 11 participants.

All participants were shown the film, *Yellow Card*, in its entirety. They were then asked to complete an open-ended post film/pre-discussion questionnaire, followed by the focus group discussion. After the focus group, each participant completed an open-ended follow-up questionnaire. Immediately at the conclusion of the focus groups, two or three participants were selected for one-on-one interviews, chosen primarily for their ability to articulate their thoughts during the group discussion. In all, seventeen one-on-one interviews were conducted. Time allocation was about three hours: 90 minutes for film viewing and 90 minutes for discussion. Focus group and interview results were analyzed with the research team immediately following each focus group and interview session.

Results and Discussion

Perceived Similarity. The first research question explored the perceived similarity of film viewers to the characters of *Yellow Card*. Although *Yellow Card* was shot in Harare, Zimbabwe, almost 4,000 miles and several countries away from Jos, Nigeria, the Nigerian participants found the settings and cultural traditions portrayed in the film to be familiar. They expressed elation that they could see film characters they could relate to, indicating what a pleasure it is to “see ourselves” (Ugo). Another participant said that what captured his attention was the background and the characters “because they are Black like me” (Patrick).

At the time of *Yellow Card*’s release, few African films were being produced. The Nigerian research team members commented that though participants watch foreign and up-and-coming Nollywood (Nigerian) movies, they have no relationship with the characters of those films. In contrast, they felt that *Yellow Card* was a film with characters like themselves. As one boy proclaimed, “It’s a typical African base film right from the root of our modern day living” (Godwin). Blessing U. (female) mentioned how Linda’s mother was “really African, even the way she was dressed.” They found the school to be like theirs, which as Henry mentioned, was “not a class of computers.”

Most participants were attracted to the actors and characters. Kamal said he liked the way Tiyane looked; “I see him as an African brother to me,” he continued, “because he’s an African.”

With few exceptions of a particular characters and scenarios, the participants found *Yellow Card* to be extremely close and relevant to them. Not one of the 56 participants said they disliked the film; in short, they loved it. Michael declared, “It’s reality, what’s happening in our streets and community.” Matthew deemed it the “kind of film you can repeat and repeat.”

Audience Involvement. The second research question explored the extent to which audiences became involved with the characters of *Yellow Card*. Participants showed both affective and cognitive dimensions of parasocial interaction with the film's characters. Participants demonstrated parasocial interaction with multiple characters.

Affective Involvement. The study participants had a great deal of affection for the *Yellow Card* characters, obvious not only by what they said, but also by the enthusiasm and excitement with which they discussed them. Daniel, a boy who claimed to watch the film three times a month, said he thought all the characters were "wonderful." He also liked the way the actors portrayed their parts. "For me," he said, "it was perfect." He identified Tiyane as his hero and expressed how close he felt to him, calling him "a brother and a friend." Several first-time exposure participants also described how they felt close to the characters. For example, Nike, a first-time exposure girl, developed an uncanny closeness to Skido's character. She brought him up so often, her focus group began to laugh hysterically every time she made a comment; the group also loved the character and were amused at the attachment Nike demonstrated toward him. "He's a friend to me now; I love him!" she proclaimed.

While several of the girls felt particularly close to the female characters, the boys were especially drawn to the male characters. Several boys said they thought of Tiyane, Nocks and Skido as friends or brothers. Some were also drawn to Tiyane's mother. They loved the fact that she was nurturing and did not overreact when Tiyane brought his son home. Shakka felt equally close, saying "I see her like a mom to me."

Cognitive Involvement. Cognitive involvement with characters was also manifested. Tiyane's poor decision-making and irresponsibility was pointed out by a number of respondents. One participant noted, "He [Tiyane] knew he had a future that he must protect. When you know you have a bright future, there are things you have to abstain from. There are limits to what you should do. He was not cautious about the future" (Abubakar, male). Audiences realized how Tiyane failed to consider the potential consequences of having early sex, and that although he had advised his friend Skido to use a condom, he failed to follow his own advice. Whether his situation was from a lack of education (that pregnancy can occur from having sex only once), participants realized Tiyane became a father before he intended, and without being adequately mature or ready to take on such responsibility. "If he'd listened to his daddy's advice he wouldn't have fallen into this act," Daniel said.

Behavioral Involvement. Behavioral involvement is the third aspect of parasocial interaction experienced by viewers of *Yellow Card*, evidenced by viewers' discussion about characters or plots with their family or friends, or wanting to continue contact through repeated exposure or personal contact. Of the 22 repeated exposure participants in this study, 21 reported they had discussed *Yellow Card* with their friends after watching the film previously. Some felt compelled to tell their friends about the film because of its educational content which they thought is so often lacking in Nigeria, despite the prevalence of safe-sex campaigns and educational programs there.

Apparently some of the participants were influential, as Daniel, the boy who reported watching the film three times per month said, "My friends and family are dying to watch this movie." It appeared the repeated exposure participants would likely discuss the film with even more enthusiasm after seeing the film again and participating in this research.

Most first-time exposure participants reported they planned to talk about *Yellow Card* with their friends, expressing interest in discussing the characters, the plot and the educational messages of the film. Paul was so caught up in the story, he felt compelled to discuss the film with his friends to warn them about possible unwanted consequences.

Repeated Exposure and Parasocial Interaction

Parasocial Interaction. The third research question explored audiences' degree of exposure to *Yellow Card* and their parasocial interaction with the films' characters. The repeated exposure groups showed much more enthusiasm in talking about the *Yellow Card* characters and story. However, results show that audience members do not necessarily need a long history with or extended exposure to characters or a text in order to relate closely to them. This finding is significant as it is the first study to demonstrate that parasocial interaction can develop very quickly. It demonstrates that audiences can develop perceived friendships from a single exposure to a film.

The last research question explored the relationship between involvement with *Yellow Card* characters and sexual responsibility. Most participants reported that they would likely change their sexual behavior after seeing *Yellow Card*. When asked why they would change their behavior, some said they had gained knowledge, like realizing that girls can get pregnant from having sex only once, or that AIDS cannot be transmitted by hugging. Others said they would likely be more careful to avoid the potential negative consequences of premarital sex, such as sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, or an unplanned pregnancy. Others said they would be more careful for moral reasons, or to preserve their destiny. It was clear that personalizing the consequences of indiscriminate sex, through the eyes of and consequences realized by the characters, provided motivation for many of the participants to be more careful about their sexual encounters in not only avoiding unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, but any activity which could jeopardize their future. Of note was an admission by Victoria who said, "The first time I watched [the film] I had to change my behavior; and today I remember the things I stopped doing."

Conclusion

This study adds to the literature on the power of using entertainment-education as a community development strategy. Embedding educational messages in entertainment formats is a proven strategy for fostering change. It particularly demonstrates the role of facilitating various types of audience involvement, especially parasocial interaction, for when audience members actively participate in the story and develop perceived relationships with the characters, they are more likely to process and adopt the educational messages of the text. It also underscores the need to design EE

productions with a high degree of social and cultural proximity to facilitate learning and behavioral change.

Regarding parasocial interaction, two important findings emerged. First, parasocial relationships with *Yellow Card's* characters formed rapidly, even among those seeing the film for the first time. This is the first study to show how these types of relationships can be developed quickly (within a 90-minute film) and do not need extended time, as in watching a television series over weeks or months. Second, the intensity of parasocial relationships did increase with repeated exposure to the film. Instead of getting bored with the characters, repeat viewers expressed the greatest levels of enthusiasm and interest in the characters and the most resolve to consider the beliefs and behaviors the film promoted. These findings emphasize the importance of encouraging involvement with characters of entertainment-education dramas through cross-marketing, follow-up films, and contact through other media such as web sites, booklets, music and other texts.

Embedding educational messages in entertaining programming (particularly drama) is a proven effective strategy for facilitating change as part of community development initiatives. This study joins a long list of entertainment education initiatives that have been used around the world to address a number of societal issues. It is a proven strategy that is ripe for faith-based groups to use in building communities through values-based development efforts.

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