THE CULTURAL SHAREABILITY OF EDUTAINMENT MEDIA IN GLOBAL AFRICA: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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The concept of Pan-Africanism, defined as the belief that all people of African descent have common interests and should work together in the struggle for their freedom (Williams, 1971), is not a new one. DuBois and Garvey spoke of the need for this union in the early 1900s and Nkrumah, Malcolm X and Sankara joined their ranks decades later. Today, the need for and viability of such a concept is more pertinent than ever, particularly with the changes in the world’s economy, power structure and subsequent redirection of aid.

The African-African-American Summit, held in the Ivory Coast in 1991, marks a recent major Pan-Africanist effort. The purpose of this summit was to promote Pan-African economic activities. It involved more than 300 participants from the United States and more than 1000 participants from 18 African countries (Lee, 1991). But Pan-Africanism involves more than the sharing of economic resources. It also involves the sharing of other resources such as human resources and information and technology to address the pressing problems affecting Global Africa (continental Africa and the African diaspora). And, although economic resources are at the core of most development needs, effective development efforts must be in place for money to produce long-lasting effects. Though some of these problems are unique to one country or another, many of them are common throughout Global Africa. For instance, problems like high teenage pregnancy rates and the rapid spread of AIDS are common to parts of the African-American community, the Caribbean, and Africa.

The sharing of technology and information in the area of mass communication is the focus of this study. Mass communication can play many important roles in promoting development, like supporting development projects, promoting pro-social ideas and teaching new skills and behavior. Wilbur Schramm (1964) called mass communication the "great multiplier" because of its ability to reach many people with the same message. And while many governments recognize the benefits of using mass communication for development purposes, a lack of infrastructure, equipment, human resources and money make this task difficult. One way to alleviate this problem could be through forming a mass communication alliance within Global Africa. Indigenous-produced television and radio programs, and films that deal with common development problems and social
issues could be shared. Additionally, programs and films could be co-produced trans-nationally or trans-continentially, bringing together money, talent, equipment, and ideas.

There already exist cooperative mass communication efforts, in the Caribbean with the Caribbean Broadcast Union and in Africa with the Radio Television Union of Africa, but these efforts are still very limited in resources and capabilities. Can a trans-continental network be established and can it work? Communication and development literature stresses the need for media messages to be research-driven and culture specific (Hedebro, 1982; Singhal and Rogers, 1989a). The question is, can development pro-social media materials developed for one culture or be effective in another culture? Indeed, Global Africans all share a common African heritage and a history of oppression due to colonialism or slavery, but with differences in culture, language and religion, can media products transfer from Great Britain to Botswana, from Brazil to the United States, from Haiti to Uganda and still be effective? Sidney Head (1985) holds that "all cultures share common traits that make for shareability of programs." He further argues that "total shareability does not exist, even between closely linked societies" who share a common language. This paper explores the question of the cultural shareability of development/pro-social mass media products, particularly edutainment programming, within Global Africa.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Edutainment

Development communication involves the use of mass media and interpersonal communication to further development aims (Hedebro, 1982). Working as an integral part of the larger structure of a communication campaign, development communication is most successful when it is theory based and research-driven. "Edutainment" is an approach in development communication that joins together entertainment and educational elements in mass media, however an important characteristic of edutainment is that the entertainment component is dominant. In other words, the educational message contextualized and carefully woven into the text of the edutainment piece. The five distinguishing elements
of effective edutainment are that it be popular, personal, pervasive, persuasive, and profitable (The enter-educate..., 1989).

Edutainment is popular. The forms that edutainment media take include television and radio soap operas, game shows and comedies, along with music videos and records. Effective edutainment efforts draw large audiences or sell many records.

Edutainment is personal. Since edutainment efforts are culture specific, they speak directly to the intended population. For instance, audience members become emotionally involved in soap operas and may develop para-social relationships with the characters. Similarly, people identify strongly with popular musicians.

Edutainment is pervasive. Repetition is an important factor in any development communication campaign. Therefore the daily radio drama, or frequent repetition of a popular song over the radio, can intensify the effects of the message. Edutainment's pervasiveness derives from it being one part of a larger communication campaign.

Edutainment is persuasive. Building on the first three elements, and persuasion and social learning theories, edutainment can be effective in promoting development by teaching new ideas, reinforcing knowledge, changing attitudes and ultimately changing behavior. I shall elaborate on this element shortly.

Edutainment is profitable. Due to the mass appeal of edutainment media, it has the capability of paying for itself. However, caution should be taken and research must not be compromised in an effort to crank out programs and records for profit only. Some of the most effective edutainment efforts, where attitude and behavior change were realized, took months and sometimes years to research, plan and implement.

As stated earlier, examples of edutainment media can be found in many forms, but two of the more popular forms are soap operas (on television and radio) and records with music videos. Use of the soap opera to promote development issues such as family planning, the status of women and literacy has proven effective in India, Mexico and Egypt to name a few. Records with
music videos have been used to promote abstinence and safe sex messages in Mexico and Nigeria (Singhal & Rogers, 1989).

The primary theory behind edutainment is Bandura's (1977) social learning theory which holds that people learn new behavior through four stages: attention, retention, reproduction and reinforcement. In the attention stage, Bandura established that the modeled behavior could just as well be observed from television or film as from real life. In the retention stage, the characteristic repetition of edutainment media aids in helping the person commit the behavior to memory. The nature of mass media, particularly the visual mediums of television and film, allows the viewer to vicariously practice the behavior through the characters, in a safe and non-threatening environment. Thus, the viewer can more readily reproduce the behavior with confidence. And finally, in edutainment forms such as soap operas and dramas the viewer's adopted behavior is reinforced by seeing behavior of good characters rewarded and the behavior of bad characters punished.

Maguire's (1989) Hierarchy of Effects theory states that for persuasion to take place audience members must go through a 12-step process from 1) exposure to the message, 2) attending to it, 3) liking it, 4) comprehending it, 5) learning it, 6) yielding to it, 7) memorizing it, 8) retrieving it, 9) deciding on a basis of retrieval, 10) doing the behavior, 11) being reinforced, and 12) post consolidating the behavior. It is not necessary that all stages be met for persuasion to take place but a person must go through many of them.

Edutainment in Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa

Latin America has provided a testing ground already for the cultural shareability of edutainment media. A Peruvian telenovela (soap opera) called Simplemente Maria provides the first example of program effectively transferring from culture to culture. Simplemente Maria, which originally aired in 1969, featured the story of a young domestic who aspired to better herself by taking sewing lessons and going into business. Many Peruvian women identified with this character and followed her vision by buying a Singer sewing machine, the kind Maria used, and taking up sewing. The sale of Singer sewing machines skyrocketed while this telenovela aired. Similar results were
experienced when the show aired in other Latin American countries (Singhal and Rogers, 1989).

"Quando Estamos Juntos," a music video by a popular Latin American teen singing duo promoting abstinence and warning about the dangers of premarital sex, provides a more recent example of an edutainment product that was effective in many different Latin American countries and in Hispanic-American communities (Singhal and Rogers, 1989). Originally released in Mexico in 1986, "Quando Estamos Juntos" was number one on the charts for weeks and family planning clinics throughout Mexico saw a dramatic increase in teen inquiries. The record was on the top of the charts in eleven other Latin American countries.

In the neighboring region of the Caribbean, the edutainment radio soap operas of Elaine Perkins are very popular in Jamaica, their country of origin. The trade of pirated copies of these soap operas to Great Britain demonstrates the demand for this programming with Caribbean migrant communities (Cambridge, 1992).

On the African continent, a Zimbabwean-produced edutainment film dealing with the subject of teen pregnancy, Consequences, has experienced its success in at least one African country. The production of Consequences was a collaborative effort, spearheaded by an American development agency, Development through Self-Reliance, but written and directed by Africans. Focus group discussions and key informant interviews conducted in four different African countries, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal and Zimbabwe, provided the research data that helped in developing the message and content of the film (Smith, 1992). Since the film's release in 1986, it has been show throughout Africa. It has been dubbed into French and four indigenous African languages, and there are plans to make it available in more indigenous languages (Wray, 1991).

Wray's recent study (1991) tested the film's impact as it is used in educational settings in Kenya. Guided by Bandura's Social Learning Theory, Wray concluded that the film was effective on Kenyan audience members. More specifically, there was a significant relationship found between viewer identification with positive film role models and the connected positive attitudes and sexual behavior.
However, with this example and with Latin American examples, the edutainment media exchange crossed national borders, not great cultural borders as would be the case with a transcontinental program exchange. One could argue that the common elements of the Latin culture, the Caribbean culture and the African culture, enable edutainment media to be shared, enjoyed, understood, and thus be effective in transmitting its message.

A Ugandan production, It's Not Easy, is the most recent edutainment film project of the Development through Self-Reliance agency. Released in 1991, It's Not Easy tackles the AIDS issue in a drama. The research that informed the production of the film involved a literature review, focus group discussions and key informant interviews with individuals in Togo, Ghana and Zimbabwe (Smith, 1987). Like with Consequences the researchers wanted to get a trans-African perspective on AIDS. According to the film's producer, this film has proven to be an effective vehicle for transmitting the AIDS education and awareness message across Africa since its release last year (Smith, 1992).

The screening and testing of this film on an American audience provides me with the starting point for this study. In 1991, AIDSCOM conducted a study on an American audience made up of students from Howard University Divinity School, members from a Baptist church, boys from a group home and students from American University. The racial make-up, gender, age and SES of the sample was mixed. The study design consisted of a pre-test and a post-test which measured attitudes, knowledge and behavior concerning AIDS before and after viewing the film. The focus of the study was to test if a film targeted for audiences of a developing country could be equally effective in the United States. The major findings of the study were that 1) the film was effective in providing correct HIV/AIDS knowledge, 2) it had an impact on behavioral intention, which may have implications on prevention and 3) it was appropriate for all races (AIDSCOM, 1991).

AIDSCOM's findings indicate that the film is appropriate for all races, but I would like to explore that issue in more detail by looking specifically at the African-American audience and attempting to understand their experience with the film.
Research indicates that: "Blacks prefer to watch television programs which feature Black characters" (Poindexter and Stroman, 1981, p. 109). Matabane and Gandy (1989) attempted to explore the question of if the content were related to Africa would African-American viewers be more inclined to tune in and would they learn anything. They found that in comparison to whites, African-Americans watched slightly more episodes of the PBS series, *The Africans*. Additional research indicates that African-Americans have a greater interest than any other ethnic group in South Africa (Thornton and Taylor, 1988). Allen and Hatchett (1986) found that there was a positive relationship between Black group orientation (mainstream, non-mainstream and Black separatist) and exposure to Black-oriented television.

Outside of television, video and film distributors and film festival organizers indicate a rising interest of African-Americans in African-related films (Bowser, 1992; Chisolm, 1992).

An experiment launched by film distributor California Newsreel, with support from a National Endowment of the Arts grant, has supplied some public libraries and video stores with collections of African films. Moore (1992) reported that a Dallas video store in a predominately Black neighborhood has ordered a second set of African videos because of their popularity with his customers.

However, there exists little research to substantiate African-American reception of African media content. This may in part be because very little African-related media is available to African-Americans. Like all other Americans, African-Americans have been fed on the often times stereotypical or distorted images of Africa from Tarzan films or other such related media. Most educational pieces or documentaries on Africa, like National Geographic, focus on the wild life and the most traditional people, not the lifestyle of the majority of Africans (Kern-Foxworth, 1985).

African-American attitudes toward Africans have historically been mixed. Pre-twentieth century attitudes have varied from close affiliation to Africa, as with Pan-Africanist Bishop Turner of the AME Church, to utter aversion, as with Frederick Douglass (Williams, 1971). Today's attitudes run the same gamut but they lean more towards a positive association as illustrated by Thornton and Taylor's (1988) study which surveyed African-
Americans on how close they felt in their ideas and feelings about things to Black people in Africa. The findings of this national random sample of African-Americans indicated that the majority did feel close. A study by Cambridge et al. (1990) looked at the perceptions that Global African students had of each other. They found that those Africans and African-Americans who had direct or indirect contact (outside of the mass media) with the other group were more likely to have multi-dimensional perceptions of the other.

The question of the cultural shareability of an African edutainment film on an African-American audience can be broken down into two more specific research questions. First, how effective is the film as an edutainment piece with an African-American audience? Second, how does the intersection of two cultures impact on the effectiveness of the film?

Understanding that the goal of edutainment is to teach and persuade through entertainment, I drew upon a merger of Maguire's Hierarchy of Effects and Bandura's Social Learning Theory to provide the framework in which to explore the effectiveness of the film as an edutainment piece. The key variables are: 1) attendance (defined as emotional involvement) to the film, 2) positive response to the film/enjoyment, 3) understanding the intended message, 4) learning new behavior, 5) prior knowledge reinforcement and 6) intending to adopt new behavior. Since the participants in the study agreed to watch the film, the variable exposure and the variable attendance (defined simply as paying attention to media) is assumed. Furthermore, the use of a film (a one-time exposure) limits the ability to measure behavior change, and only the intention of behavior change can be explored.

The variable "attention to the film" was measured by attempting to determine the audience's emotional involvement in the film and in with its characters. Could they relate to the characters and did they find them realistic? Could they understand the foreign accent?

The variable "positive response to the film" was measured by asking the respondents whether they liked the film, would they recommend it to someone, would they go out to see the film and would they pay to see the film.
The variable "understanding the intended message" was measured as a factor of what the respondents named as the main message of the film and which characters they named as those they most identified with and those they least identified with. The assumption with these questions is that their correct identification of the intended messages and the good and bad characters would indicate their understanding of the film (Singhal and Rogers, 1989).

The variables "learning new behavior", "prior knowledge reinforcement" and "intending to adopt new behavior" were all measured by directly asking the related questions. In looking at the culture question, two variables emerged from the literature (Thornton and Taylor, 1988; Kern-Foxworth, 1985; Allen and Hatchett, 1986), 1) exposure to Africa and 2) orientation toward Africa. The variable of "exposure to Africa" was measured by looking at the two factors of, whether the respondents had African friends and whether the respondents had seen African films before. The variable of "orientation toward Africa" was measured by examining two factors, how close in ideas and feelings the respondents felt to Africans and how similar they felt African-Americans were in culture to Africans.

METHOD

The method used in this study was a simple treatment-test (XA) experiment design. I first gave the 33 respondents an introduction to the film, where I told them that the film was a Ugandan-produced drama on AIDS. I provided this brief introduction so that all of the participants would begin their viewing experience with the same basic knowledge of what they were about to see. Additionally, in case the respondents came expecting to see a pure entertainment film, I did not want them to feel they were getting an AIDS message forced on them. Next, the respondents viewed the film. After viewing the film, they each filled out a survey on the spot.

I conducted the study on two different days with two different convenience samples of African-Americans from a university in the midwest. My first day's audience of eleven participants was comprised of graduates students, a college administrator and a business consultant. They ranged in age from
24 to 35. More than half were involved in the field of communications or film. The second day's audience consisted of 22 undergraduate students who ranged in age from 18 to 23. This group represented a wide range of academic majors.

For my survey design, I drew upon the studies of Wray (1991), AIDSCOM (1991), Kern-Foxworth (1985) and Thornton and Taylor (1988). The survey was made-up of Likert-scale, yes-no and short answer questions. The five-point Likert-scale questions asked the respondent to indicate his or her level of agreement with a list of statements. The statements were related to the variables measuring "attention to the film," "learning new information" and "prior knowledge reinforcement" "intention to adopt new behavior" and "orientation toward Africa". Sample statements were as follows:

-I could relate to the characters in the film.
-The film taught me new things about AIDS.
-The film reinforced my past knowledge about AIDS.
-The film persuaded me to change some of my behaviors in regards to AIDS contraction.
-I feel close in my ideas and feelings in relation to Black in Africa.
-Blacks in America and Blacks in Africa are similar in culture.

The yes-no and short answer questions allowed for probing and provided evaluative information. These questions dealt with the variables "positive response to the film," "understanding the intended messages," "attention to the film," "exposure to Africa". Sample questions were as follows:

-Did you like the film? Why or why not?
-What did you like most (least) about the film? Explain.
-What character did you most (least) identify with? Why?
-What was the main message of the film?
-Have you ever seen an African film made by Africans?
-Do you have any African friends?

There were additional questions in the survey that provided important information on past perceptions of Africa, appropriateness of the film for African-Americans and an evaluation of the edutainment balance in the film. Sample
questions were:

Likert-Scale Statements
- According to my knowledge of Africa, this film presented an accurate portrayal of an African community.
- This film would encourage AIDS preventative measures among African-Americans.

Yes/No and Short Answer Questions
- Were you surprised by any of the images of Africa as portrayed in this film? If so, which ones?
- Explain whether you feel this film would be good for African-American audiences.

Finally, there were questions that asked for the demographic information of age, education and sex.

**OBSERVATIONS**

During the viewings of the film, I made general observations of the audiences' involvement in the film by noting their reaction to key scenes. For example, in a scene where it is revealed that Suna, the main character, is cheating on his wife, there were discernable murmurs in the room. Later in the film, when Suna learns that his wife, Serra, and baby, Sammy, have AIDS, some audience members expressed disgust with Suna. In a somewhat humorous scene where Magezi, Suna's friend, pulls out a condom to give Suna a demonstration, the audiences laughed. In another scene where Suna confesses to his lover, Vicki, that he is HIV-positive and she then slaps him, the audiences' reacted loudly in support of Vicki.

After the film screenings, pockets of 3 to 4 people gathered briefly and talked about the film and AIDS. At the undergraduate screening, two male students and two female students discussed the experience of getting an AIDS test and hypothesized about what they would do if they found they were HIV-positive.

**RESULTS**

In the first research question, I set out to explore whether
It's Not Easy, an African edutainment film, would be effective on an African-American audience. My findings indicated that the film was effective. In the area of attention to the film, a majority (64%) found the characters realistic; however, only 47 percent felt they could relate to the characters. The characters most identified with were Magezi and Serra, two positive characters. This finding demonstrated the audience's emotional involvement with the characters, as several respondents expressed that they saw themselves as just like Magezi, because they tried to promote AIDS awareness or because they would be supportive, like Magezi, if their friend had AIDS. On the other hand, Suna was by far the character least identified with. Most respondents (51%) named his irresponsibility as a reason for not identifying with him. One respondent said that he had been just like Suna, but had changed his ways. Another respondent said that she had dated a "womanizer" just like Suna.

All but one person indicated that they liked the film, supporting the positive response variable. The degree of enjoyment, however, varied with 64 percent indicating that they were entertained by the film. The foreign accent was not a problem, as 79 percent said they could understand the accents. Just more than half of the sample said they would go out to see this film in their community, while 82 percent indicated that they would recommend the film to a friend. Less than a quarter of the sample (22%) indicated that they would pay to see the film.

A great majority of the respondents identified at least one of the major AIDS messages of the film, indicating that they understood the film's message. The respondents demonstrated a considerable amount of involvement with the characters, as explicated above, and they correctly identified the good and bad characters, further supporting their comprehension.

The audiences' reaction to the educational elements of the film was significant. Ninety-one percent expressed that the film had reinforced past knowledge and 41 percent indicated that they had learned new information. These findings supported the literature which states that edutainment media works best at teaching new information and reinforcing previous knowledge (Singhal and Rogers, 1989). The literature further states that exposure to edutainment media rarely promotes significant
behavior change (Singhal and Rogers, 1989). However, one third of my sample said the film persuaded them to change their behavior in relation to AIDS.

In a question asking for an evaluation of the overall balance of education and entertainment elements in the film, more than one half said that they were balanced.

The second research question exploring how the intersection of two cultures impacted on the effectiveness of the film was approached in two parts. T-tests were performed to determine whether positive relationships existed between the two variables "exposure to Africa" and "orientation toward Africa" and the variables measuring the effectiveness of the film.

Looking first at "exposure to Africa," it was found that those who indicated that they had seen African films were more likely to indicate that they could understand the accents in the film. This group also indicated that they would be more likely to go out to see this film if it were showing in their community, than the group that had never seen an African film. These findings might indicate that exposure can make subsequent exposures more readily acceptable and desirable.

The group that said they had African friends was more likely than the group that did not have any African friends to indicate that they would go out to see the film in their community. This group felt that the film presented an accurate portrayal of an African community, according to their knowledge of Africa. These findings suggest two things, one being that while previous exposure to Africa was not an indicator of how effective the film would be, it did indicate that those with personal contacts with Africans were more accepting of African film and that this group had more accurate knowledge about Africa.

The relationship between the second variable, "orientation toward Africa," and the effectiveness of the film as an edutainment piece, was found to be insignificant. A T-test revealed that those who felt close in their ideas and feelings to Blacks in Africa were more likely to find the film's portrayal of an African community inaccurate. Two respondents from this group remarked that the portrayal was too Western and
"yuppy-ish." This finding could mean that this group is more ideologically linked with Africa, but does not necessarily have the knowledge base of Africa.

There were no significant relationships found between the second indicator of orientation, feeling that Blacks in America and Blacks in Africa are similar in culture, and the variables measuring the effectiveness of the film. This group did express a higher degree of being able to relate to the characters in the film than the "feel non-similar in culture" group, however the significance level was still slightly over 0.05.

The indicator of having African friends was positively linked to the variables "years of education" and "age". This was not surprising, since most African students at this university are graduate students, and their friends and classmates are usually other graduate students. The indicator of "feeling similarity in culture" also was positively linked to "years of education".

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study support the findings of the AIDSCOM study that this film is effective in transmitting its intended message to a non-African, specifically American audience. The sample population of my study overwhelmingly expressed their enjoyment of the film. Additionally, a great number indicated that the film was an effective reinforcer of prior AIDS knowledge. In discussing what they disliked about the film, many respondents named poor acting and poor production value, suggesting that African-Americans acceptance of mass media is a factor of media standards and not necessarily a factor of culture.

The lack of any real relationship between those "oriented toward Africa" and the effectiveness of the film, and the slight relationship between those "exposed to Africa" and the effectiveness of the film suggests that a knowledge base of Africa is perhaps more influential in how one responds to the mass media than a philosophical connection of "feeling close in ideas and feelings". Those expressing closeness to Africa may be doing so on an ideological level only, while those who
have had personal contact with Africans or have seen the African experience on film may be responding more from fact.

CONCLUSION

In this study, I set out to explore the response of an African-American audience to an African AIDS edutainment film. Drawing on theory for the edutainment strategy, I attempted to determine whether the film was effective in meeting its goal of educating audiences about AIDS while entertaining them. I predicted that an African-American audience would be attentive to the film because it featured Black people and African-Americans prefer Black-oriented media and I also predicted that they would learn from the film. As African-Americans are not a homogeneous group, I further predicted that the film's impact would be greater on African-Americans previously exposed to Africa and those oriented towards Africa. I found that the film was effective as an edutainment piece for all African-Americans. Furthermore, "exposure to Africa" was an indicator of how effective the film would be, but "orientation toward Africa" was not.

This small exploratory study, supported by the AIDSCOM (1991) study where the majority (65%) of the respondents were African-American illustrated that edutainment media can be shared within Global Africa. When asked whether the film would be good for African-Americans, 76 percent of the respondents from my study and 82 percent of the respondents from the AIDSCOM study agreed that the film would be good for African-Americans. In my study, 76 percent of the sample said they felt the film would be an effective tool for AIDS education for African-Americans.

I would like to repeat this study with a larger, randomly selected cross-section of African-Americans. I would also like to see the same study done in the Caribbean, of course with a few modifications in the survey.

It is known that one exposure is not sufficient for development communication to be effective, but this film can test for the learning of new information and the reinforcement of old knowledge. Additionally, this film, or other edutainment productions like it, may have the secondary positive effect of
educating African-Americans about Africa, thus dispelling myths and negative stereotypes. This same scenario may also work with African-American media in Africa or African media in the Caribbean.

The edutainment film used for this test may have the ability to transcend any culture, as many telenovelas now do, because of its melodramatic genre (Gonzalez-Pinto, 1992). How effective would a comedy or a music video be, since the aesthetics of these genres are more culture specific? This question and others are factors to be considered in future research.

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