

Lauren B. Frank and Paul Falzone (Eds.), **Entertainment-Education Behind the Scenes: Case Studies for Theory and Practice**, London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021, 354 pp., \$54.99 (hardcover), \$39.99 (softcover).

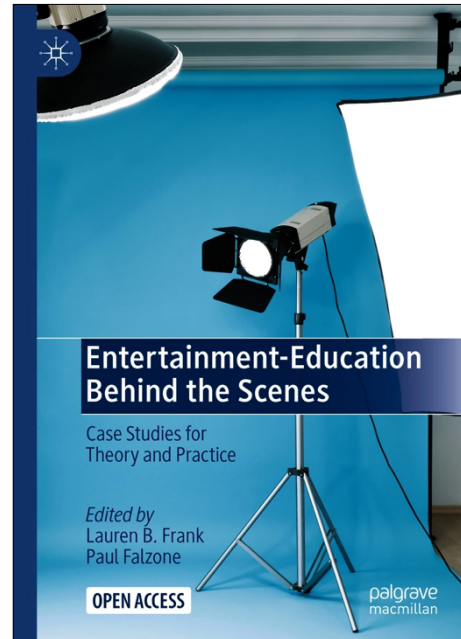
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Entertainment-Education Behind the Scenes: Case Studies for Theory and Practice, edited by Lauren B. Frank and Paul Falzone, provides a comprehensive review of the growing field of entertainment education and presents the history, theory, current trends, and future implications of the effects of entertainment programs in bringing about a desired social change.

Entertainment education, or EE, is a research-based strategy that incorporates persuasive educational messages in entertainment programs to motivate behavioral change. In his foreword, Michael J. Cody mentions that the field of entertainment-education has steadily grown since the first academic book by Singhal and Rogers (1999), *Entertainment Education: A Communication Strategy for Social Change*, and highlights the popularity of this research area as evidenced by the involvement of several government and nonprofits over the years. Cody specifically mentions two areas of progress, as espoused by this book: emotional flow and using multiple platforms. Cody, thus, provides a glimpse of what this new book has to offer: a potential to include new theoretical perspectives and to find innovative ways to implement EE strategies in our Web-based multiplatform-mediated environment.

Since its formative days, the mainstay of EE has been field experiments and its focus on real-world problem solving of complex social problems. EE, as scholars in various chapters rightly point out, has primarily involved producing prosocial content with the help of a government agency or a nonprofit that has been transmitted via mass media such as radio and TV. The book, thus, presents several case studies from different parts of the world that highlight how theory-based prosocial programs were conceptualized, designed, and evaluated in the field. This edited volume, useful for both scholars and practitioners, takes an interdisciplinary approach and includes 21 chapters divided into four main parts: (1) From Then to Now: Historical Perspectives, (2) From Theory to Practice, (3) From Research to Impact, and (4) From Concept to Implementation.

The four key areas of EE strategies—formative research, theory-based design, creative collaboration (relationship building), and evaluation—are highlighted in several case studies from different parts of the world. While EE programs traditionally have served radio and TV audiences, the book also



includes music programs such as *Africa Stop Ebola* (Carlos Chirinos-Espin's chapter, "Music and Culture in Entertainment-Education"). Chirinos-Espin argues that while most EE initiatives in different parts of the world follow Western concepts and ideas for programming, popular music still retains its cultural authenticity and is a viable medium for EE programming. Thus, the author asserts, "Music enables the creation of culture-centered narratives that can engage the public in dialogue and critical reflection" (p. 132). The book also addresses transmedia storytelling and Web-based programming and discusses challenges and opportunities faced by practitioners and researchers using EE strategies in this changed media environment. Notably, a call to study children's programs using the EE perspective is made by Sebastián Cole and Jessica Taylor Piotrowski. The authors argue that youth programs have often been studied using theories in media psychology when they certainly employ elements of EE strategies.

At the heart of the book, espoused by several eminent chapter contributors, is the idea that EE is not just any entertainment program with a social change message but is rather a research-based strategy where the outcome must be evaluated. A stalwart in the field, Miguel Sabido (in his chapter, "Miguel Sabido's Entertainment-Education") asserts,

To me, the essence of an EE effort should have a solid, viable hypothesis that can be quantitatively and qualitatively tested. Without this proof, and I say it affectionately and respectfully, EE efforts are just good intentions or wishful thinking. (p. 20)

Likewise, Hua Wang and Arvind Singhal, another stalwart, reiterate that

often scholars and practitioners loosely appropriate the term EE to refer to any entertainment program that happens to address a health or social issue. Despite the noble intentions of invention designers and media producers, such programs are not EE. They are not created with a deep understanding of the theoretical foundation of EE, nor do they employ theory-based principles to interweave educational messaging with the dramatic storytelling, the audience/user experience, and/or the program evaluation. (p. 227)

Hua Wang and Arvind Singhal also offer a new definition of EE from the lens of translational communication research in this edited volume. The media environment has changed dramatically over the last few years, which has necessitated the need for an updated EE definition, the authors state. Wang and Singhal define EE as a social and behavioral change communication strategy "applied and embraced by global, national, and local change makers to serve the interests of underserved communities" (p. 227). The authors stress that EE practices are derived from theories in human communication and other social science disciplines; EE will continue to widen and deepen and become more nuanced with time.

As the volume emphasizes the use of theory-driven prosocial messages in EE strategies, Part II, "From Theory to Practice," highlights existing theoretical frameworks and newer perspectives that can be incorporated into the EE research. Melanie C. Green, who, along with Timothy C. Brock, developed the narrative transportation theory, highlights (in this book) the applicability of measuring audience members' immersion, or transportation, into stories to understand the effect of EE messages. Likewise, the chapters

present case studies on other established concepts and theories in narrative persuasion and media psychology such as Social Norms Theory, the Elaboration Likelihood Model, and the Extended-Elaboration Likelihood Model and assert their usefulness in conceptualizing and measuring the outcomes in EE initiatives. Yotam Ophir, Angeline Sangalang, and Joseph N. Cappella make a compelling case for studying the spectrum of emotional responses generated by audience members while consuming a narrative message in their chapter, "The Emotional Flow Hypothesis in Entertainment-Education Narratives: Theory, Empirical Evidence, and Open Questions." The authors highlight that the emotional flow hypothesis can be a viable framework in EE research, albeit more evidence is needed.

As the reader reads through the applicability of media psychology theories and some successful and not-so-successful lab experiments, Wang and Singhal reiterate that the results of lab experiments—the mainstay of media psychology research—should not be conflated with the results in the field, and the ecological validity of the EE findings need to be maintained: "As EE converges with experimental research in narrative persuasion, translational scholars should fiercely guard against methodological partisanship that view textbook lab experiments and inferential statistics as the gold standard" (p. 228). Thus, the authors again distinguish EE from other media research, emphasizing the importance of fieldwork and evaluating real audiences (translational elements of EE research) to gauge the effect of the EE programs. As Martine Bouman points out, "It is good to invent new things and experiment with out-of-the-box EE concepts, but always within the reach of acceptability and adaptability" (p. 80).

Overall, the book is an excellent addition to the growing field of EE and could serve as a useful tool for both scholars and practitioners who are interested in employing various EE strategies to bring about behavioral change at the societal level. The book blends theoretical perspectives with practical, in-field experiences and highlights the translational nature of EE research that sets it apart from other similar fields. The strength of the book certainly lies in its overarching agenda of presenting a wholesome view of EE—its history, its theoretical foundations, and future challenges for researchers and practitioners.

References

- Singhal, A., & Rogers, E. M. (1999). *Entertainment-education: A communication strategy for social change*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.