

# The role of “*Musekeweya*”, an entertainment-education radio soap opera in the promotion of reconciliation in Rwanda

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## Abstract

*In this article we investigate the impact of Musekeweya, a radio serial drama that has been broadcast by Radio Rwanda since May 2005 to date, whose main objective is to promote reconciliation, peaceful co-existence and find paths to trauma healing in post-genocide Rwanda. The investigation on effects of the media intervention is centered on evidence obtained from audience members' feedback expressed through listeners' unsolicited letters addressed to the program and media characters. Audience involvement is often used as an indicator of media effects. A qualitative content analysis of the letters was, therefore, carried out to discern evidence of audience involvement with the program as expressed through parasocial interaction, self efficacy and collective efficacy. We first present a summary of the development and implementation of the educational intervention, and then discuss the findings of effects as they are reflected through audience involvement.*

**Key words:** *Parasocial interactions, social change, self-efficacy, collective efficacy, radio drama*

## Introduction

Following the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, Rwandans were faced with a problem of post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation. The effects of violence on citizens were so immense that multiple approaches to reconciliation and coexistence were sought. The Rwanda Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) was established in 1999 with the mandate of coordinating and advancing reconciliation, unity and tolerance as essential prerequisites to justice, peace and development. The commission adopted a participatory approach to involve all Rwandans and stakeholders in reconciliation efforts (NURC Report, 2003). The Commission essentially provides a platform upon which Rwandans can freely express their views on what divided them in the past, and devises strategies of achieving unity and reconciliation. Since the inception of NURC, a number of initiatives by Government organs, Civil Society, grassroot organizations have been witnessed. Two notable initiatives that have won global acclaim are *Gacaca*<sup>3</sup> Justice System and *Ingando*<sup>4</sup>.

Drama as a tool of peace building has also been used by various independent theatre groups such as Mashirika and *Indamutsa* which have produced stage plays aimed at contributing to the reconciliation process in Rwanda. *Musekeweya* (New Dawn) serial radio drama, which is the focus of our study, has demonstrated consistency in the process of reconciliation and trauma healing. This study investigates the impact of the program on target audiences.

<sup>3</sup>Gacaca is Rwanda's traditional justice system that has been reinstated to handle third and fourth categories of genocide suspects to supplement local judicial courts and the International Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) to expedite Justice *Gacaca* Courts presided over by elected members of the community assisted by a qualified legal officer try suspects in localities where they allegedly committed crimes and members of the community are encouraged to openly testify. Suspects too are encouraged to speak the truth and ask for forgiveness from the community and families they wronged.

<sup>4</sup>Ingando, also known as solidarity camps, are Civic Education retreats that have facilitated the reintegration of former refugees, ex-combatants, the youth, pre-university students, women, local leaders, and teachers. In this forum Rwandans come to terms with their past, facing their history and forging a common vision for a united and reconciled Rwanda.

*Musekeweya* was established in May 2005 and broadcasts twice a week on Radio Rwanda, in Kinyarwanda language with the main objective of promoting reconciliation and trauma healing. The Kinyarwanda medium gives the program a broad catchment as it is understood by all Rwandans and millions of people in Burundi, parts of Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania and Uganda. The radio serial drama is a major component of a media campaign by a Dutch Nongovernmental organization (NGO) La Benevolencija –Rwanda whose declared objective is to inoculate the civilian population in the Great Lakes Region against manipulation and incitement to violence. The program provides knowledge about the psychology of how incitement works, supports societal healing process, provides knowledge on trauma, how to deal with it and supports justice (Great Lakes Reconciliation Radio report, 2006).

The serial radio drama adopted a mass communication approach called Entertainment-Education (EE) which utilizes a strategy of embedding educational or social messages in a media format so that as the audience gets entertained, they gain knowledge about an educational issue, create favorable attitudes, shift social norms, and change overt behavior at individual, collective or society levels (Singhal & Rogers, 1999). Like the diffusion theory, the strategy is concerned with influencing change through dissemination of information and innovations. The approach derives from Bandura's (1977) social learning theory which stipulates that "most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling; from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasion this coded information serves as a guide for action" (p. 22). The theory which informs most EE programs explains how new behaviors are learned vicariously through experiencing actions of other people.

Most entertainment-education media programmes, informed by social learning theory, have adopted three types of modelling identified by Bandura as: 1. *Prestige modeling*: Characters who exhibit culturally admired behaviours. 2. *Similarity modeling*: Various media characters who appeal to different audience segments and who portray the benefits of adopting prosocial behaviours. 3. *Transitional modeling*: Characters that exhibit positive behaviours, negative behaviours, or transitional behaviour, in which a negative role model adopts prosocial behaviours (Singhal and Rogers, 1999:148). E-E programmes disseminate certain desired lessons through role models who engage in dialogue over a period of time, prompting conversation and dialogue among audience members who may come together to take a collective decision and actions (Papa et al., 2000).

### **Entertainment–Education and Audience reception**

Mass media in general plays an increasingly vital role in modern society by providing information about the ever-changing environment, presenting plausible solutions to social problems and offering a medium for education and entertainment. However, while the role of the media in diffusion of information and innovation is acknowledged, it has limited direct effects but is mediated by other valuables notably the audience and media environments (Little John & Foss, 1996). Studies of effects of entertainment-education are thus located in the process of social change depicted through conversations and other modes of human communication sparked by the program. When audience members are spurred to debate, reflect, or act on the media program messages, a social learning environment is

created as individuals evaluate new ideas and patterns of behavior being promoted. The changes are usually reflected in audience involvement defined by Sood (2002) as the degree to which audience members engage in reflection upon, and parasocial interaction with certain media character resulting in overt behavior change. Audience involvement is key to the process of social change as it facilitates audience members to engage critically with messages being promoted, and may then integrate them in their own lives. Audience involvement manifests in parasocial interactions which have been used extensively as indicators of tangible and intermediate effects.

Parasocial interaction occurs when “an audience member forms a relationship with a performer that is perceived as analogous to the personal relationships of people in a primary, face-to face group” (Papa et al., 2000:34). When the relationship is established, the audience member values the character as a role model and might consider emulating the values and motives of the character thus, although one sided, provides the basis for role modeling and social learning. This type of relationship can be extremely influential for the media consumer (Singhal et al., 1998). Parasocial interaction appears in three dimensions; cognitive, attentive and behavioral (Papa et al., 2006) each of which reflects typical characteristics of bonding between an audience member and a media persona.

*Cognitive oriented parasocial interaction* refers to the degree to which individual audience members engage with media character's actions and reflect on how the educational themes present in media can help viewers (listeners) recognize behavioral alternatives in their lives (Papa et al., 2000:34). Reflecting on the media content and characters can help the audiences to evaluate the choices presented and consider a course of action towards socially desirable behaviors leading an individual to consider enacting a behavior change. Cognitive oriented interaction often leads to self-efficacy (ibid).

*Affectively oriented parasocial interaction* is the degree to which a member of the audience identifies with a particular character, and considers the character's interests similar or linked to his/hers, and the stronger the identification with a media character, the more likely the audience members will be influenced by the character's behaviour (ibid).

*Behavioural oriented parasocial interaction* is the degree to which individuals overtly react to media characters for example by talking to them or by talking to other members of the audience about these characters and rearranges his schedule to make time to attend to the programme ( Sood, 2002). Such conversations may influence critical consideration of messages and motivate the individual to consider behaviour change in a specific way.

The enactment of parasocial interaction may constitute audience members' exploration and development of new possibilities and various studies have revealed the centrality of parasocial interactions in the process of social and behaviour changes among audiences (Horton & Wohl, 2006; Singhal & Rogers, 2004; Papa et al.2000; Sood & Rogers, 2000), but it should be noted that the parasocial relationship is complementary to normal social milieu in which everyday assumptions and understandings of the primary group interaction and sociability are demonstrated and reaffirmed (Horton & Wohl, 2006).

Closely related to parasocial interaction are the concepts of self-efficacy and collective efficacy. Self-efficacy is an individual's perception of his or her capacity to deal effectively with a situation, and to control this situation (Bandura, 1995). Self-efficacy is a belief and behavioural experience that EE programmes aim to achieve. People with low level self-efficacy are less likely to adopt change, but can overcome the problem through social modeling.

Collective efficacy is defined 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, devise effective strategies and to execute them successfully, and to withstand forcible opposition and discouraging setbacks (Bandura, 1995:33). Collective efficacy is rooted in self-efficacy as it is concerned with people's beliefs in their joint capabilities in getting things done collectively in a united effort required to dislodge entrenched detrimental practices (Law & Singhal, 1999). In the context of post-genocide Rwanda, efficacy is critical in the healing and reconciliation process because as a result of violence people were disoriented and their self-esteem affected. Thus the concepts of role modeling, self-efficacy and parasocial interactions associated with the social learning theory are instrumental to the study as they illuminate the social learning process and social change.

### *Programme Design*

The radio drama is based on theories of two American psychologists Professor Ervin Staub, from the University of Massachusetts, a genocide and reconciliation specialist and Dr. Laurie Anne Pearlman, a trauma healing expert, who developed an approach tailored to the Rwandan situation based on five principles. The approach underscored the notion that educating target audiences about the root causes and evolution of conflict and its effect is key to reconciliation and prevention of future violence. The principles were validated in a design workshop and complimented by formative research (Fisher, 2004). The principles are:

**Understanding Genocide:** People often consider genocide an incomprehensible evil and victims of extreme violence and genocide consider their suffering painfully unique. When they learn about similar experiences elsewhere and find commonality in the roots of violence, it can help them to see their common humanity with others and reconsider these negative attitudes towards themselves. The psychologists suggest that the starting points of genocide could be difficult life conditions (economic, political, social change, war) and conflict between groups. The consequences of the above conditions are frustration of basic psychological needs, turning to a group for identity and support, scapegoating and destructive ideologies. When survivors of violence come to understand the influences that led to perpetrators' actions, however horrible those actions, and to critically assess the bystanders' passivity, it can lead survivors of violence to be more open to reconciliation with the perpetrator group.

***Understanding the Effects of Trauma and Victimization and Paths to Healing:*** Understanding trauma, its manifestation and effect on oneself, can contribute to healing. When victims learn that the changes they experience are normal consequences of such experiences, it can ease distress and promote healing. The psychologists suggest and provide a framework for recovery based on concepts of respect, information and hope as essential elements of healing. According to Staub et al.; (2005), the approach provides the context for healing people's traumatic

experiences that include the difficulties they face psychologically, spiritually, interpersonally, socially and so forth by attempting “to normalize the experience of traumatic stress, to depathologize the many problems people face in recovery, and to empower survivors to become active agents in their own process” (ibid, 305). The approach also envisages interpersonal support through cognitive and affective engagement.

**Understanding Basic Psychological Needs:** The fulfillment of the basic human needs such as security, trust, esteem, positive identity, feelings of effectiveness and control, positive connections to other people, a comprehension of reality and of one’s own place in the world, and transcendence or spiritual needs is a crucial condition for the healing process.

**Sharing Painful Experience in an Empathic Context:** This is a process which includes elements of exposure and disclosure that involves training in empathetic responding focused on healing through creative activities such as writing, drawing, or thinking about one’s experiences during the genocide, followed by sharing these experiences in small groups with group members responding emphatically to the other’s story.

**Vicarious Traumatization:** Trauma workers may experience negative effects arising from working with trauma survivors; the principle provides a framework for understanding their own experience as helpers and encourages mutual support and self-care.

These principles formed a basis for developing a radio drama that reflects everyday reality of Rwandans and communicates messages of reconciliation and trauma healing. Twelve core messages derived from the five principles and the formative research which, was carried out to target audiences about the project, are woven in the storyline. These are:

1. To inform the audiences that life problems in a society frustrate basic psychological needs and can lead to scapegoating and destructive ideologies;
2. To show the audience that genocide evolves as individuals and groups change as a result of their actions;
3. To demonstrate to the audience that devaluation increases the likelihood of violence while humanization decreases it;
4. To inform the audience that the healing of psychological wounds helps people live more satisfying lives and make unnecessary defensive violence less likely;
5. To demonstrate to the audience that passivity facilitates the evolution of harm doing whereas actions by people inhibit it;
6. To inform the audience that varied perspectives, open communication and respect for authority in society make the evolution of violence less likely;
7. To inform the audience that justice is important for healing and reconciliation;
8. To show the audience that significant connection, deep engagement between people belonging to different groups helps people overcome devaluation and hostility and promotes positive relations;
9. To inform the audience that trauma can be understood;
10. To inform the listeners that it is important to tell one’s trauma story and there is a way to say it that is emotionally safe and constructive and to encourage them to tell their story;

11. To advise people that they can help their neighbors heal and help them tell their stories as part of the healing process and to encourage everyone to participate and contribute to the healing process;
12. To inform the audience that healing is a slow process.

### *The storyline*

The drama is set in two neighboring fictional communities in Rwanda, Muhumuro and Bumanzi, whose residents are experiencing tension and conflict. The conflict is sparked by shortage of farming land with the residents of Muhumuro accusing their neighbors of trying to starve them by monopolizing the fertile marshland, which was traditionally communally shared before government demarcated it. Some selfish Muhumuro residents led by their local chief Rutaganira incite their community to attack and destroy the other village. The Mayor who is the top government official instead of mediating in the conflict and finding a peaceful solution takes sides in support of the aggressor. The attack leaves several people injured, houses destroyed, property looted, and some perpetrators imprisoned or going into exile. It is a story of violence, injustice, revenge, forgiveness spiced with some humour. *Musekweya* is inspired by conflict and the 1994 genocide that devastated the country. Owing to restrictions on open reference to ethnicity, the two communities serve as metaphors for the history of cohabitation, divisionism and conflict that has characterized Rwanda for decades.

A major sub-plot is the storyline of two crossed-star lovers from the antagonistic communities. The young lady, Batamuriza, is from Muhumuro and the young man, Shema, is from Bumanzi. In a Romeo and Juliet fashion, the lovers face enormous obstacles as their families, especially her brother Rutaganira and her mother Zaninka, who are portrayed perpetrators of conflict, as well as Shema's father. The lovers resist family and community pressure to stop their relationship.

Another sub-plot revolves around two wise elders, Samvura and Muzatsinda from the antagonistic communities, who resist group or community pressure, maintain their friendship and attempt to diffuse the tension in the two communities, which formally viewed themselves as one people before divisions were created. Attacks and counter attacks are planned by perpetrators of violence while positive characters proclaim peace and attempt to resolve the conflict through dialogue while passive bystanders look on without taking sides.

When local courts convene to try perpetrators of violence, to the shock of residents, Rutaganira is set free ostensibly for lack of sufficient evidence, but his brother Gasore and his accomplice Bahizi are found guilty and sentenced to ten years in prison each. Another character Gakwaya, who had confessed and asked for mercy, was handed a suspended sentence but ordered by court to apologize to victims and compensate them. Many residents of the victimized community view the court verdicts as mockery to justice, especially in the case of Rutaganira. This culminates in varied reactions towards the situation. Plans of revenge attacks intensify in Bumanzi and cases of trauma increase.

The concept of trauma healing/management through Mukahirwa, a trauma counselor is introduced when she returns from the city where she received training as a counselor and starts to teach people about traumatism and

trauma management. Mukahirwa counsels Yuliana, a victim of the attack, and Kananga, one of the perpetrators who exhibit trauma symptoms after listening to their stories. Her sessions with Yuliana and Kananga teach the audience about the traumatism. The sessions stress that both victims and perpetrators can be negatively affected by violence. The climax of the tension is the night attack in which Muhumuro homes are burnt, Rutaganira and Zaninka are beaten severely and property stolen. This revenge attack demonstrates that violence leads to further violence and the circle of violence is likely to continue if there is no dispensation of justice and collective will to settle disputes.

The entire community of Muhumuro is so terrified that they flee to a refugee camp where they are joined by a few Bumanzi residents who had opposed the attack and attempted to save the victims. Camp life is difficult, and through the experience of displacement both communities learn the futility of violence and efforts of reconciliation preoccupy majority of people.

Despite such cases of extremism, some people like Batamuriza, Muzatsinda, Shema and Gihana continue the efforts to resolve the conflicts peacefully and work hard to facilitate the return of refugees to their homes. The discussions and social activities that precede the return of refugees to their homes, changes hearts of many including die-hards like Rutaganira, who realized the folly of selfishness, envy and violence. This marks a significant step towards conflict resolution but few people like Zaninka, Kananga, Mugenga and Mbarubukeye continue to harbor grudges and ill intentions. It is a story of enmity, hate, revenge, forgiveness and humor.

The story is an allegorical representation of Rwanda. It simulates a situation almost similar to Rwanda's experience of genocide and its aftermath and provides avenues for listeners to engage with those realities in the context of reconciliation, prevention of future violence and trauma healing. The learning process is facilitated by fictional characters who endorse the core messages of the media intervention which are repeated out through the serial drama. The drama characters explain the educational messages during community meetings and peer conversations and as they engage in dialogue as a process of solving problems, a framework for peaceful resolution of conflict is provided for listeners to emulate or model.

### Data collection and analysis

Past studies of effects of entertainment–education using listeners/viewers letters to determine audience involvement (Sood et al., 2000, 1997; Singhal et al., 1998 and others) have shown that letters from audiences are useful sources of information about audience reception. They indicate high involvement by the writers which guarantee sincere, well thought responses especially when unsolicited, like in the present study. Law and Singhal (1999) correctly describe the letters as feedback communicated from audiences in response to questions raised or a reaction to the program which helps to understand how audience members know what they hear and with what consequences.

An average of 40 listeners' letters in reaction to *Musekeweya* are received every week. We obtained a sample of 700 letters received over a period of five years from *Musekeweya/La Benevolencija Rwanda*, and 216 letters were randomly selected from the sample and content analyzed in August 2011 (Tanganika, 2012). A simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample because the technique is appropriate as it eliminates bias

and ensures that each letter has an equal opportunity of being included in the sample. The letters were content analyzed to determine evidence of dimensions of parasocial dimensions, self-efficacy and collective efficacy.

A 10-item parasocial interaction scale was adapted from Sood & Rogers, 2000; Levy 1979, Rubin & Purse, 1987) and used to measure the various dimensions in which a set of criteria was developed to identify each dimension of parasocial interaction (see Table 1) and coded accordingly. *Cognitive parasocial interaction* was identified by considering whether the letter writer conveys his/her reflection on *Musekeweya* educational themes and/or thinks about a particular character's behaviour and actions. For affective parasocial interaction, we were guided by the writers' identification with a media character and for behavioral parasocial interaction we considered whether and how the writer overtly reacts to media characters.

The content analysis of the 216 letters indicated high levels of letter writers' involvement with the characters and the program, exhibiting evidence of parasocial interaction and efficacy. In some cases, however, letters exhibited characteristics of more than one dimension as illustrated in a letter by Kamaburu, a Rwandan listener from the North Eastern Province of Tanzania wrote:

*"Thank you for the informative drama you avail us. I love it very much and I always follow it. It teaches us about culture, and instructs Rwandans to desist from endless wars because when you commit a crime you are bound to face the consequences. I wish to add that if the strained love relationship between Batamuriza and Shema is not restored it will cause me grief. It is my wish that every Rwandan has a good heart like Batamuriza".*

The letter demonstrates characteristics of both cognitive and affective parasocial interactions but displays cognitive interaction more strongly. Although it indicates identification with the protagonists Batamuriza and Shema, it expresses pity and concern for their strained relationship between the lovers which suggests affectively oriented interaction. The main thrust of the letter is, however, the educational message of peace building manifesting the writer's reflection on the content of the intervention and ability to view the positive qualities of his favorite character, Batamuriza, as an asset to the overall objective of peaceful co-existence among Rwandans. By saying that he listens to the drama regularly and adjusts his schedule to listen indicates affective parasocial interactions. The majority of the letters analyzed indicated affective oriented interaction with 94 out of 216, followed by cognitive interaction with 78 while 44 strongly indicated behavioral oriented interaction. This high level of audience involvement indicates that the radio drama had a significant impact on audiences as detailed below:

***Affective parasocial interaction:*** In this category letters identify with media characters, express pity and feel sorry for the character's misfortunes, look forward to the next episode, and consider their favorite characters as realistic. Forty seven letters out of 94 coded identified with particular media personae, especially Batamuriza and Shema, the cross-star lovers who are portrayed as positive role models. Batamuriza in particular is cited by most letter writers as their favorite character indicating their appreciation of the values she promotes. Sayidi from Kigali wrote:

*"I have been waiting for medicine to the dilemma of young men and women whose marriages are opposed by their parents on grounds of regional or ethnic differences and hope that the Batamuriza and Shema love relationship will provide medicine (solution) to the backwardness of those individuals still clung to*

*discrimination of all sorts, because nothing good but evil results from such divisionism. I am also very much impressed by all who struggle for peace wherever they are”.*

The writer appreciates the values promoted by the protagonists and indicates their role in promoting peace by fighting all forms of divisionism. He considers social interaction between different groups through intermarriage and other forms of socialization key to the reconciliation process and regards the characters as counselors whose example should be emulated. Byiringiro David in a long letter gives the following advice to *Musekeweya* listeners:

- Be like Batamuriza, so that your heart does not accept negative influence or advice, whether from family, relatives or parents, instead have a heart that helps others and condemns all evil.
- Be like Hirwa and Kigingi, and have a heart that loves others even when your parents are adversaries.
- Be like Maritini so that you have a heart to alert others of impending danger.
- Be like Samvura so that your heart hates all evil.
- When these ideas are achieved, we shall have peace, understanding, cooperation, development and many more good things.

Byiringiro is evidently highly involved and recommends prosocial behavior to be emulated by fellow listeners.

The narrative presents a case of audience member's involvement, which acts as a moderator of central processing that entails attention to messages, arguments and potential for lasting attitude change (Slater & Rouner, 2002). The listener's reaction indicates implication of elaboration likelihood model which suggests absorption of the program content and response to characters leading to enhancement of the persuasive effects and suppression of counter arguing if the implicit persuasive content is counter attitudinal (ibid). Byiringiro's advice to listeners points out the demerits of perceived negative attitudes in society and advances arguments that enhance positive values. In an entertainment-education, these attitudinal effects, according to Slater and Rounder (2002), "appear to be substantially larger than the often impressive behavioral effects and presumably, for audience members, precede behavioral effects" (p. 173).

N	Frequency
<b>Indicators of parasocial dimensions</b>	
<b>A. Cognitive oriented parasocial interaction</b>	
1. Specific reference to educational themes/messages raised in the program.	12
2. Comparison of ideas of the character with own ideas and how ideas are used in decision making	18
3. Perception of media character qualities which indicate program content	32
4. How the program prompts the writer to debate and express opinions on issues raised in the drama	16
<b>B. Affectively oriented parasocial interaction.</b>	
5. Identification with a particular character and looks forward to the next episode	47
6. Feels sorry for the character's misfortune, adjusts his/her schedule to listen to the with friends	13
7. The writer likes the story and situation in the story and considers his/her favorite character	34
<b>C. Behavioral oriented parasocial interaction.</b>	
8. Letters which exhibit evidence of post viewing discussions and confront real issues of reconciliation	34

9. Concern for what might happen in future episodes and seeks answers to questions related	08
10. Seeking contact with organizations which might assist in dealing with problems related to issues raised	02
<b>Total</b>	<b>216</b>
Percentage of letter-writers' indicators of parasocial interactions	
Cognitive interaction.....	36%
Affective interaction .....	44%
Behavioral interaction.....	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Cognitively oriented parasocial interaction:* 36% of the 216 letters content analyzed indicates cognitive interaction. In general the letters show that listeners understand the educational messages and acknowledge the relevance of the media intervention to the Rwanda context where issues of reconciliation, prevention of future violence, and post-genocide trauma are major national concerns. Of the 78 letters which indicate cognitive interaction, 32 showed that the letter-writers relate media characters' qualities to educational messages implying understanding of content and the possibility of behavior modeling. Godance from the Southern Province relates characters to reconciliation messages and argues strongly against destructive ideologies.

Considering our past, *Musekeweya* prepares the youth for a better future, we should learn from the youth of both communities in conflict especially the children (Hirwa and Kigingi) because there is no reason of being imprisoned by the past and continuing to be misled by those negative leaders as we Rwandans have more in common than differences. Batamuriza should continue to be brave, overcome falsehoods fed to her and continue to be exemplary.

*Behavioral oriented parasocial interaction:* 20% of the letters analyzed were in this category and most indicated evidence of post-listening discussions. A teacher who did not mention his name wrote thus:

*"When pupils in school get into conflicts, I use the examples of Hirwa and Kigingi who provide a lesson for resolving conflict. In my family sometimes misunderstandings arise and the example of Batamuriza and Shema provide a model for reconciliation. I really look forward to their marriage and as for Josiyane, do not chase what has eluded you, you caused it so embrace the consequences and give those genuine lovers a chance; you will perhaps get your own true love. I appeal to Rutaganira to support Gasore in his quest for peace. As for Mugenga and Mbarubukeye – fighting is not a solution; you should pursue a peaceful path to resolve problems".*

The writer claims to use the example of *Musekeweya* characters when resolving conflict or misunderstanding in his school and family implying post-listening discussion. By talking to other people about the themes and characters, the ensuing discussions may influence and motivate audience members to change behavior in a particular way. Post-viewing/listening dialogue in all forms is important in E-E programs because such dialogue may reinforce social stability (Papa & Singhal, 2009).

The content analysis indicated evidence of the three dimensions of parasocial interaction suggesting that the exposure to the serial drama presented an environment for social change. They show that *Musekeweya* listeners pay attention to the content and characters, reflect on the messages, get involved in peer communication and

recognize pro-social behavior to adopt or model. As a result of the social change process spurred by the intervention as reflected in the parasocial involvement, some letters report enactment of both self-efficacy and collective efficacy.

### *Efficacy in letters to Musekeweya*

The content analysis revealed evidence of efficacy. We found out that 16 letter writers explicitly indicated efficacy dimensions. Twelve expressed self-efficacy belief and behavioral dimensions while four were identified as possessing collective efficacy dimensions. However, even in the letters coded as displaying dimensions of parasocial interaction exhibit efficacious behavior such as by a school boy, Nsababera Theogene who says that listening to the drama led him to live peacefully with his schoolmates. This is significant evidence that the radio drama empowers listeners to adopt prosocial behavior.

*Self-efficacy:* The letter writers reveal self-efficacy in which the sense of empowerment and perceived capability to deal with situations in their lives are expressed. One wrote:

*"I wish to tell you how far Musekeweya has transformed me. From a very early age I had been under strong influence of tribalism. I grew up indoctrinated not to interact with people perceived to be enemies, but now as a young man I have learnt the truth about people inhabiting our country Rwanda from Musekeweya. I have benefited from it tremendously because now I confidently participate in reconciliation programs of my country which experienced bad governance; I try to educate those who have not learnt the truth about the reality of our country today. We are all brothers".*

*Collective efficacy:* Like self-efficacy, is both a belief and behavioral experience and as already suggested efficacy beliefs are characterized by altruistic act at individual level (Law & Singhal, 1999). Our content analysis did not find a letter written by groups expressing collective action. However, cases of collective efficacy were evident from narratives of individual letter writers such as Habiya mbere Aphrodice from Bugesera in Eastern Province who starts his letter with a common proverb about modesty, to show the impact of the serial drama:

*"Uwambaye ikirezi ntamenya ko cyera (He who wears a beautiful robe does not realize that it glitters), because there are some people who still do not realize the importance of the lessons from Musekeweya, but in my case, you have been like parents as you inculcated noble behaviour in me. If I said my whole sector has changed I would not be telling lies because of the lessons expressed through Batamura riza and Shema who resist pressure to separate them. May God bless you!"*

Another letter says:

*"Thank you for the good job you are doing. Musekeweya has been useful in changing the hearts of many that harbored hatred and malice. Please, continue because there are some few negative people like Mbarubukeye, Zaninka and Kananga whose beliefs and attitudes are still based on ideologies of ethnicity and regionalism".*

## **Conclusion**

This study indicates that the program achieved its objectives as the radio serial drama has had significant impact on target audiences at knowledge, attitude and behavior levels. High levels of parasocial interactions and evidence of efficacy demonstrate audience involvement with the program, the complex process through which changes occur in a social system (Singhal, 2005). In general, audience members understand the messages of reconciliation, trauma healing and peace building and are positively influenced by the drama.

From the listeners' feedback, it is apparent that they share a feeling of being members of the same social group, and openly express opinions about issues of group interactions such as intermarriage, peaceful co-existence, forgiveness, truth and socialization as desirable for reconciliation and trauma healing. The feedback concurs with the requirements of Ervin Staub's (2006) theory that reconciliation depends on a social vision where the rule of law is observed and all social groups respected and encouraged to participate in the community.

This study confirms Paluck's (2007) research findings that *Musekeweya* influenced listeners' social norms and behaviors to contribute to inter-group tolerance and reconciliation, but contrary to her conclusion that the intervention did not change people's beliefs and prejudice, our study indicates change in beliefs and reduction of prejudice. This claim is backed by respondents' reports about discarding beliefs that the other group was inherently evil, to be avoided and regarding all Rwandans as compatriots. Evidence of self-efficacy and collective efficacy among listeners also affirm shift in beliefs system and reduction of inter-group prejudices. The disparity between the two studies may be attributed to time. Paluck carried out the study after one year of broadcast, which was not sufficient to influence beliefs and values because audiences need time to experience transformation of the story/plot and characters to model prosocial behaviours, adopt desired attitudes and beliefs. Future research could address the variable of time in communication for social change in respect to *Musekeweya*. Another area of research interest is the relationship between interactive activities adopted by La Benevolencija - Rwanda and the radio drama focusing on audience reception.

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