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Social Cognitive Theory for Personal and Social Change by Enabling Media

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EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Albert Bandura is a leading proponent of social cognitive theory, and his work has directly influenced the development of the entertainment-education strategy. After receiving his doctoral degree from the University of Iowa in 1953, he joined the faculty at Stanford University where he has spent his entire career. His initial research centered on the prominent role of social modeling in human thought, affect, and action. The extraordinary advances in the technology of communications have made modeling a key vehicle in the diffusion of ideas, values, and styles of behavior. Another major focus of Bandura's work concerns the human capacity for self-directedness, which added to our understanding of how people exercise influence over their own motivation and behavior through self-regulative mechanisms. His most recent research is adding new insights on how

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people's beliefs in their efficacy to exercise control over events that affect their lives contribute importantly to their attainments, resilience in the face of adversity, and psychological well-being. These different lines of research address fundamental issues concerning the nature of human agency.

Social cognitive theory provides an agentic conceptual framework within which to analyze the determinants and psychosocial mechanisms through which symbolic communication promotes personal and social changes (Bandura, 1986, 2001a). To be an agent is to influence intentionally one's own functioning, and life circumstances. In this transactional view of self and society, people are producers as well as products of their social environment. By selecting and altering their social environment, they have a hand in shaping the course that their lives take.

Human adaptation and change are, of course, rooted in social systems. Therefore, personal agency operates within a broad network of sociostructural influences. Social structures embody rules, resources, and social sanctions designed to organize, guide, and regulate human affairs. These social systems are created, implemented, and altered by human activity. In this dynamic interplay, personal agency and social structure operate as interdependent determinants in an integrated causal structure rather than as a disembodied duality (Bandura, 1997; Giddens, 1984). The present chapter presents the core features of social cognitive theory for effecting personal and social change by mass communication.

Three major components in social cognitive theory promote psychosocial changes via symbolic communication (Bandura, 2001b). The first component is a theoretical model that specifies the determinants of psychosocial change and the mechanisms through which they produce their effects. This knowledge provides the guiding principles. The second component is a translational and implementational model that converts theoretical principles into an innovative operational model by specifying the content, strategies of change, and their mode of implementation. The third component is a social diffusion model on how to promote the adoption of psychosocial programs in diverse cultural milieus. Functional adaptations of the programs are made to different cultural circumstances that provide enabling guidance and enlist the necessary resources to achieve success.

**DUAL PATH OF INFLUENCE**

In fostering large-scale changes, communication systems operate through two pathways (Fig. 5.1). In the direct pathway, communication media promote changes by informing, enabling, motivating, and guiding audience individuals. In the socially-mediated pathway, media influences are used to link participants to social networks and community settings. These places provide
continued personalized guidance, as well as natural incentives and social supports for desired changes. The major share of behavioral and valuational changes are promoted within these social milieus. People are socially situated in interpersonal networks. For example, programs aimed at stemming a nation's burgeoning population growth link viewers to family planning services. Programs designed to raise the status of women link viewers to women's support groups. At a more informal level, media influences lead viewers to discuss and negotiate matters of import with others in their lives. In the informal mode of social mediation, the media set in motion transactional experiences that further shape the course of change. Socially mediated influences can have stronger impacts than direct media influence.

SOCIAL COGNITIVE THEORETICAL MODEL

The present section summarizes the tenets of social cognitive theory that provide guidelines for constructing effective media production. A comprehensive theory of human behavior must explain how people acquire attitudes, values, styles of behavior, and how they motivate and regulate their level of functioning.

There are two basic modes of learning. People learn through the direct experience of rewarding and punishing effects of actions, and through the power of social modeling. Trial-and-error learning is not only tedious but hazardous when errors produce costly or injurious consequences. This process
is short cut by learning from the successes and mistakes of others. Another major advantage of modeling through the media is that it can reach a vast population simultaneously in widely dispersed locales. Video systems feeding off telecommunications satellites have become a dominant vehicle for disseminating symbolic environments. New ideas, values, and styles of conduct are now being rapidly diffused worldwide in ways that foster a globally distributed consciousness (Bandura, 2002).

**Social Modeling**

Modeling influences serve diverse functions in promoting personal and social change (Bandura, 1986, 1997). They include instructive, motivational, social prompting, and social construction functions.

With regard to the instructive function, models serve as transmitters of knowledge, values, cognitive skills, and new styles of behavior. Observers also acquire emotional proclivities toward people, places, and objects through modeled emotional experiences. Observers learn to fear that which frightened or injured models, to dislike what repulsed them, and to like what gratified them. Self-debilitating fears and inhibitions can be eliminated by modeling that depicts effective coping strategies and instills a sense of coping efficacy.

The motivational function operates through the depicted benefits and detriments of modeled courses of action. Seeing others gain desired outcomes by their actions can create outcome expectancies that serve as positive motivators. Observed punishing outcomes can create negative outcome expectancies that function as disincentives for similar courses of action. The behavior of others also serves as social prompts that activate, channel, and support modeled styles of behavior. The types of models who predominate in a social milieu determine which human qualities are promoted from among many possible alternatives.

Televised portrayals of human nature, social roles, power relations, and the norms and structure of society shape the public consciousness (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002). Media representations gain influence because people's social constructions of reality depend heavily on what they see, hear, and read rather than on what they experience directly.

It is one thing to learn new styles of behavior. It is another to put them into practice, especially in the face of impediments. Several motivators provide support for adopting new forms of behavior.

**Perceived Self-Efficacy**

Among the mechanisms of self-influence, none is more central or pervasive than beliefs in one's efficacy to exercise control over one's functioning and
events that affect one's life. This core belief system is the foundation of human motivation and accomplishments (Bandura, 1997). Whatever course one takes, there are always dissuading difficulties. Unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties. Whatever other factors serve as guides and motivators, they are rooted in the core belief that one has the power to effect changes by one's actions.

Human well-being and attainments require an optimistic and resilient sense of efficacy because usual daily realities are strewn with difficulties. They are full of frustrations, conflicts, impediments, inequities, adversities, failures, and setbacks. These are the price of progress. People must have a strong belief in their own efficacy in order to sustain the perseverant effort needed to succeed. The functional belief system combines realism about tough odds, but optimism that one can beat these odds through self-development and perseverant effort.

People's beliefs in their efficacy can be developed in four ways: (1) through mastery experiences, (2) social modeling, (3) social persuasion, and (4) construal of physical and emotional states. The most effective way of instilling a strong sense of efficacy is through mastery experiences. Successes build a robust efficacy. Failures undermine it, especially in early phases of efficacy development. If people experience only easy successes, they come to expect quick results and are easily discouraged by failure. Resilient efficacy requires experience in overcoming obstacles through perseverant effort. Resilience is also built by training in how to manage failure so it becomes informative rather than demoralizing.

The second way to develop a sense of efficacy is by social modeling. Models are a source of inspiration, competencies, and motivation. Seeing people similar to oneself succeed by perseverant effort raises observers' beliefs in their own abilities. The failures of others can instill self-doubts about one's own ability to master similar challenges.

Social persuasion is a third mode of influence. Realistic boosts in efficacy can lead people to exert greater effort, which increases their chances of success. But effective efficacy builders do more than convey positive appraisals. They structure situations for others in ways that bring success and avoid placing them prematurely in situations where they are likely to fail. They measure success by self-improvement rather than by triumphs over others. Pep talks without enabling guidance achieve little.

People also rely partly on their physical and emotional states in judging their efficacy. They read their emotional arousal and tension as signs of personal vulnerability. In activities involving strength and stamina, people interpret their fatigue, aches, and pains as indicators of low physical efficacy. Mood also affects how people judge their efficacy. Positive mood enhances a sense of efficacy, while despondent mood diminishes it. The fourth way
of modifying efficacy beliefs is to reduce people's stress and depression, build their physical strength, and change misinterpretations of their physical states.

Efficacy beliefs regulate human functioning through four major processes: cognitive, motivational, emotional, and decisional. Perceived self-efficacy occupies a pivotal role in causal structures of social cognitive theory because efficacy beliefs affect human functioning not only in their own right, but through their impact on other determinants (Bandura, 1997).

Such beliefs influence whether people think pessimistically or optimistically, or in a self-enhancing or self-hindering way. Efficacy beliefs play a central role in the self-regulation of motivation through goal challenges and outcome expectations. It is partly on the basis of efficacy beliefs that people choose what challenges to undertake, how much effort to expend in the endeavor, how long to persevere in the face of obstacles and failures, and whether failures are motivating or demoralizing. The likelihood that people will act on the outcomes that they expect prospective behaviors to produce depends on their beliefs about whether or not they can produce the required performances. In the affective domain, a strong sense of coping efficacy reduces vulnerability to stress and depression in taxing situations and strengthens resiliency to adversity.

Efficacy beliefs also play a key role in shaping the courses that lives take by influencing the types of activities and environments that people choose. Any factor that influences choice behavior can profoundly affect the direction of personal development. Social influences operating in chosen environments continue to promote certain competencies, values, and interests long after the decisional determinant has rendered its inaugurating effect. Thus, by choosing and shaping their environments, people can have a hand in what they become.

**Collective Efficacy**

Many of the challenges of life involve common problems that require people to work together with a collective voice to change their lives for the better. Social cognitive theory extends the conception of human agency to collective agency (Bandura, 2000). The strength of families, communities, school systems, business organizations, social institutions, and even nations lies partly in people's sense of collective efficacy that they can solve the problems they face and improve their lives through unified effort. People's shared belief in their collective power to realize the futures they seek is a key ingredient of collective agency.

Efforts at social change typically challenge power relations and entrenched societal practices. Successes do not come easy. To change their lives for the better, people have to struggle against dated traditions and normative constraints. For example, managing sexual and reproductive life requires
managing emotionally charged relationships embedded in power relations (Bandura, 1994). In societies with gendered power imbalances, women who want to reduce child bearing have difficulty talking to their husbands about contraceptive methods. The challenge is to enable women to discuss family planning and to provide them with the social support to do so. However, the major burden for contraception should not fall solely on women.

Efforts at change must address sociocultural norms and practices at the social system level. Because of the centrality of perceived efficacy in people's lives, media programs help to raise people's beliefs that they can have a hand in bringing about changes in their lives. For example, in applications of a radio drama in Tanzania, many women believed they had no control over family size. It was predetermined divinely, by fate, or by forces beyond their control. The radio drama raised their perceived efficacy to manage their reproductive life through family planning (Rogers, Vaughan, Swalehe, Rao, Svenkerud, & Sood, 1999).

People must be prepared for the obstacles they will encounter by modeling prototypic problem situations and effective ways of overcoming them. There are several ways of building resilience to impediments through social modeling. People are taught how to manage setbacks by modeling how to recover from failed attempts. They are shown how to enlist guidance and social support for personal change from self-help groups and other agencies in their localities. Seeing others similar to themselves succeed through perseverant efforts also boosts staying power in the face of obstacles.

**Goals and Aspirations**

People motivate themselves and guide their behavior by the goals, aspirations, and challenges that they set for themselves (Bandura, 1986; Locke & Latham, 1990). Long-term goals set the course of personal change but they are too far removed to overrule competing current influences on behavior. Short-term goals motivate and provide direction for one's efforts in the here and now for incremental change. Goals have little impact unless they are translated into explicit plans and strategies for realizing them. Media programs, therefore, model how to translate a vision of a desired future into a set of achievable subgoals.

**Outcome Expectations**

Human motivation and behavior are also affected by the outcomes that people expect their actions to produce. Outcome expectations can take three major forms. One set of outcomes includes the material, pleasurable, and aversive effects that the behavior produces. Behavior is also partly regulated by the social reactions it evokes. The social approval and disapproval that the
behavior produces is the second major class of outcomes. People adopt personal standards and regulate their behavior by their self-evaluative reactions. They take actions that give them self-satisfaction and self-worth, and refrain from behaving in ways that breed self-dissatisfaction.

Perceived Facilitators and Impediments

Personal and social change would be easy if there were no impediments to surmount. The facilitators and obstacles that people see to changing their behavior are another influential determinant. Some of the impediments are personal ones that undermine efforts at change, such as profound self-doubts that one’s efforts would make a difference. Other impediments are situational and structural. Beliefs of personal efficacy affect how formidable these impediments appear.

People who have a resilient sense of efficacy identify ways to overcome obstacles to change. Those who distrust their efficacy view impediments as insurmountable and are easily convinced of the futility of effort. They quickly abort their efforts when they run into difficulties, should they try. Efforts at socially oriented changes are designed to enhance the enabling aspects of social systems and to reduce the impeding aspects.

TRANSLATIONAL AND IMPLEMENTATIONAL MODEL

The sociocognitive model for promoting society-wide changes, which has now been adopted worldwide, was pioneered by Miguel Sabido (1981) (Photo 5.1). This model uses long-running entertainment-education serial dramas with concurrent plots as the principal vehicle of change. The episodes depict in captivating drama the daily lives of people, some of whom are on adverse life-course trajectories, while others model resiliently effective ways to improve their quality of life. Hundreds of episodes get viewers deeply emotionally engaged in, and identified with, the modeled characterizations that provide enabling guides and incentives for personal and social change. The construction of the dramatic serials draws on the basic principles of social cognitive theory presented earlier.

Differential Modeling

Three types of modeling influences are used in the entertainment-education approach: Positive, negative, and transitional. To take advantage of the attractive and aspirational value of prestigious modeling, culturally admired
television models are selected to exhibit the beneficial styles of behavior. Social attraction increases the impact of modeling influences.

Characters representing relevant segments of the viewing population are shown adopting the beneficial attitudes and behavior patterns. Seeing people similar to themselves change their lives for the better not only conveys strategies for how to do it, but raises television viewers' sense of efficacy that they too can succeed. Viewers come to admire, and are inspired by, characters in their likenesses who struggle with difficult obstacles and eventually overcome them.

The episodes include positive models portraying beneficial lifestyles. Other characters personify negative models exhibiting detrimental views and lifestyles. Transitional models are shown transforming their lives by moving from uncertainty or discarding adverse styles of behavior in favor of beneficial ones. Differential modeling contrasts the personal and social effects of different lifestyles. Viewers are especially prone to draw inspiration from, and identify with, transforming models by seeing them surmount similar adverse life circumstances.
Vicarious Motivators

Another feature of the dramatic productions enlists vicarious motivators for change. The personal and social benefits of the favorable practices, and the costs of the detrimental ones, are vividly portrayed. Depicted beneficial outcomes instill outcome expectations that serve as positive incentives for change.

Showing models discarding subservient roles and challenging inequitable, dated norms requires depiction of some negative reactions to reflect the social reality. These discordant episodes serve to model effective strategies for managing such events successfully, so that viewers come to believe that they can improve the quality of their lives by similar means used perseverantly. Many efficacy-enhancing elements are incorporated in the transactional episodes. For example, in reducing gender inequities, occasional references to accomplished women worldwide working to raise the status of women provide a source of inspiration and support.

In cultures where women are massively subjugated, changing entrenched cultural norms is a slow, gradual process. When large power differentials exist in gender relations, the modeled strategies must be judicious rather than blatantly confrontational which, in real life, can be risky. Male models personifying understanding and support of equitable normative practices can help to mitigate antagonistic social counteractions.

Attentional Involvement

Melodramatic embellishments and emotive music give dramatic intensity to episodes to ensure the viewers' attentional involvement and a high level of viewing. Continued engrossment in a broadcast enhances its impacts.

Symbolic Coding Aids

Still another feature is designed to increase the memorability of the modeled values and social practices. Epilogues summarizing the modeled messages are added to aid the symbolic coding of information for memory representation (see the chapter by Miguel Sabido in this volume).

Environmental Support

It is of limited value to motivate people to change if they are not provided with appropriate resources and environmental supports to realize those changes. Enlisting and creating environmental support is an additional and especially helpful feature for promoting the social changes encouraged by the dramas.
In the monitoring feature of entertainment-education methodology, once a media program is aired, its producers monitor how audience individuals perceive the characters and the dramatized options and consequences. Corrective changes are made, if necessary, in the intervention. Negative modeling must be structured with special care because some audience individuals who subscribe to cultural stereotypes may side with the negative stereotype being modeled (Brown & Cody, 1991). Such unintended effects can be minimized by accenting the adverse consequences of the detrimental life style, and by having the negative models begin to express self-doubt about their life view and behavior.

**SOCIAL DIFFUSION MODEL**

Effective psychosocial models of change usually have limited social impacts because of inadequate systems for their social diffusion. As a result, society does not profit from successful interventions for social change. Lack of expertise and resources in host countries further undermine perceived efficacy to produce long-running serials that can capture and hold public attention, and change behavior.

Population Communications International (PCI) and the Population Media Center (PMC) remove this impediment by serving as the mechanisms for diffusing globally the use of televised dramas to enhance the quality of family life, to promote gender equality, HIV prevention, and family planning (Ryerson, 1994, 1999). These two nonprofit organizations raise funds from various sources to cover production costs. Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), communication theory (Rogers, 1995; Singhal & Rogers, 1999), and dramatic theory (Sabido, 2002) provide the generic principles of change. But their implementation in serial dramas requires functional adaptations to different cultural milieus.

These dramatic serials are created only on invitation by countries seeking help with intractable social problems. The Centers provide a nation's scriptwriters, producers, and actors with the technical assistance to construct dramas tailored to the societal problems, aspirations, and normative practices of the host country. This creative process involves a close collaborative partnership with local production teams aimed at enabling people to improve their life circumstances. To ensure sustainability of these productions, PCI or PMC workshops equip local partners with the skills to produce engrossing broadcasts for social change on their own.

These socially enabling dramas are not soap operas in which a wide array of characters are endlessly entangled in social conflicts and moral predicaments laced with interpersonal treachery. Nor are they superficial media campaigns marketing quick fixes to intractable social problems. Rather, the
sociocognitive genre dramatizes the everyday social problems with which people struggle, models suitable solutions, and provides people with incentives, support, and strategies for bettering their lives. In audience surveys, viewers report the many ways in which the characters in the dramas touch their personal lives. Functional relevance makes these serials immensely popular.

Long-running plot development fosters growing valuation of beneficial styles of behavior and devaluation of detrimental ones. In short, both genres involve storytelling, but they tell entirely different types of stories, serving markedly different purposes. To misconstrue the proactive enabling genre as an ordinary soap opera trivializes its markedly different structure and function.

The sociocognitive dramatizations using Sabido's approach are not aimed at simply changing attitudes, which often bear a weak relationship to behavior. When self-interest conflicts with personal attitudes, people readily find reasons to act in ways that belie their professed attitudes or to justify exemptions to them. As previously noted, the enabling dramatizations serve more powerful functions. They inform, enable, guide, and motivate people to effect changes in their lives. The dramatizations further assist people in their efforts at personal and social change by linking them to enabling and supportive sub-communities and beneficial human services.

These serial dramas are also not "family planning" interventions foisted on the women of poor nations by powerful outsiders. The dramatic productions address the problem of mounting population growth and possible solutions in broader human terms. In many societies women are treated more like property than as persons, denied equitable access to education, forced into prearranged marriages, and granted little say in their reproductive lives. Therefore, one of the central themes in the dramatizations is aimed at raising the status of women so they have equitable access to educational and social opportunities, have a voice in family decisions about child bearing, and serve as active partners in their familial and social lives. This theme involves raising men's understanding of the legitimacy of women making decisions regarding their reproductive health and family life. Moreover, the engrossing programs serve as an excellent vehicle for modeling a variety of functional life skills woven into familial and social transactions.

PCI and PMC serve as the vehicle for social diffusion and also promote cooperation and collaboration among nongovernmental organizations worldwide that are concerned with population growth, environmental and health problems, and human rights. Such alliances increase the chances of success by mobilizing and focusing people's efforts to improve the quality of life for themselves and their children. In addition, PCI and PMC work with professionals in the entertainment industry to heighten their sensitivity to ethnic stereotyping, human rights, health, population growth and environmental degradation in their media productions and to include themes related to these issues in the
story lines they create for various types of fictional dramas (see the chapters by David Poindexter and by William Ryerson and Negussie Tefera in this volume).

**Cultural and Value Analyses**

As is true of any intervention, the use of communication to foster personal and social change raises ethical issues. Ethical evaluations will depend on who selects the types of changes to be promoted, the agents of change, the means used, and the choice and voluntariness of exposure to the influence. Extensive cultural and value analyses are conducted before dramas are developed and implemented. In this formative phase, focus groups, representing various constituencies in the society, identify problems of major concern to them and the obstacles they face. These data provide the culturally relevant information for developing realistic characters and engrossing functional plot lines. The host country production team, drawing on a wide variety of sources, including public health, religious organizations, women’s groups, and other constituencies, identity unique cultural values and itemize the types of changes the dramatizations should encourage. Once a program is aired, producers monitor how viewers perceive the characters, with whom they are identifying, and the dramatized options for corrective changes if necessary.

Value disputes are often fueled by wrangling over stereotypes infused with emotive surplus meanings rather than deliberating about changes in real-life terms. The value issues are, therefore, cast in concrete terms of detriments and benefits of particular lifestyles. For example, initial religious and political opposition in Mexico to Miguel Sabido’s serials promoting “family planning” turned to support when the nature of the social changes were presented concretely in a value matrix. The tangible values embody respect for human dignity and equitable familial, social, health, and educational opportunities that support common human aspirations. These dramatizations are thus grounded in the internationally endorsed human values codified in United Nations covenants and resolutions. The dramatized options and consequences enable people to make informed choices to improve their lives.

**GLOBAL APPLICATIONS OF THE SOCIOCOGNITIVE MODEL**

The present chapter thus far has centered on the basic tenets of social cognitive theory and their social applications via translational and social diffusion models. The sections that follow illustrate concretely how these guiding principles have been applied world-wide to alleviate some of the most urgent
Different indicators are used to gauge the effectiveness of this model. In applications designed to bring down the population growth rate (Rogers et al., 1999), the indices include changes in family size preferences, prevalence of contraceptive use, and reduction in fertility rates. The direct impact of televised influences is affected by level of self-exposure to the modeled values and social practices. Viewership surveys, therefore, assess the reach of the programs, how often people are exposed to them, and how these programs affect viewers at a personal level. The socially mediated impact is measured in terms of the frequency with which people talk about the educational content modeled in the media dramatizations. These types of data permit more refined analyses of impacts as a function of level of self-exposure and social transactions that help to promote desired personal and social change.

As previously noted, serial dramas try to improve people's lives in a variety of ways. These broader social indices of impact include changes in people's sense of efficacy to manage and improve their lives, support of gender equality in opportunities for social and education growth, spousal abuse, health promotion, protection against HIV/AIDS infection, and environmental conservation practices. Some of the themes are unique to a given society, such as attacking the practice of dowry and arranged marriages in which women have no say in their choice of husband.

The outcomes selected for assessment represent the different spheres in which people seek to improve their lives. These socially important assessments need to be supplemented with measurements of the key psychosocial factors through which media influences affect personal and social change. As shown earlier, these sociocognitive factors include people's efficacy beliefs that they can effect changes in their lives by individual and collective action; the goals and aspirations they set for themselves; the material, social, and self-evaluative outcomes they expect their efforts to produce; and the social facilitators and impediments they see to improving the quality of their lives and shaping the social future. Assessment of these key determinants provides guides for the needed adjustments in the dramatizations to enhance their impact.

**Promoting National Literacy**

Miguel Sabido (1981) first devised the essential elements and structure of the sociocognitive model in a television serial designed to promote enrollment in a national literacy program in Mexico. Literacy is, of course, a key element in personal and national development. He faced the challenge of using commercial television in the public interest without forfeiting viewership.

To reduce widespread illiteracy, the Mexican government launched a national self-instruction program. People who were skilled at reading were urged to organize small self-study groups in which they would teach others how to
read with instructional materials (a literacy manual) specifically developed for this purpose. The national appeal produced a disappointing social response, however. So Sabido created a year-long television serial with daily episodes to reach, enable, and motivate people with problems of illiteracy. The main story line in the dramatic series centered on the engaging and informative experiences of one self-instruction group. The implementation model involved creative translation of social cognitive theory into practice. The most popular soap opera performer was cast in the role of the literate model, to take advantage of prestigeful modeling. To enhance the impact of modeling through perceived similarity, she recruits a cast of characters who represent the different segments of the population with problems of illiteracy. Showing people similar to themselves mastering linguistic skills helped persuade viewers that they too possess the capabilities to master the skills that were being modeled. The name of the telenovela, *Ven Conmigo* (Come With Me) portrayed collective mastery of competencies and the accompanying benefits.

A prior interview survey revealed several personal demotivating barriers that dissuaded people from enrolling in the national program for adult literacy. Many believed that they lacked the capabilities to master such a complex skill. Others believed that reading skills could be acquired only when one is young. Still others felt that they were unworthy of having an educated person devote their time to help them. These self-handicapping misbeliefs were modeled by the actors and corrected by the television instructor as she persuaded them that they possessed the capabilities to succeed. The Mexican telenovela included humor, conflict, and engrossing discussions of the subjects being read. The episodes showed the models struggling in the initial phases of learning, and then gaining progressive mastery and self-pride in their accomplishments.

To provide vicarious motivators to pursue the self-education program, the dramatic series depicted the substantial benefits of literacy both for personal development and for national efficacy and pride. Melodramatic embellishments and emotive music gave dramatic intensity to the television episodes to ensure high involvement of the viewers.

Epilogues were used to increase memorability of the modeled messages. To facilitate media-promoted changes, all the instructional material (the manual) was provided by the governmental educational agency. In addition, the series often used real-life settings showing the actors obtaining the instructional material from an actual distribution center, and eventually graduating in a ceremony for actual enrollees in the adult literacy classes. Epilogues also informed the viewers of the national self-instruction program and encouraged them to take advantage of it. What a powerful motivator it turned out to be! On the day after an epilogue urged viewers to enroll in the literacy program, about 25,000 people descended on the distribution center in downtown Mexico.
City to obtain their reading materials! The resulting traffic jam tied up vehicles for many hours.

Millions of viewers watched this serial drama faithfully. Compared to non-viewers, viewers of the dramatic series were much more informed about the national literacy program and expressed more positive attitudes about helping one another to learn. The rate of enrollment in the program was 99,000 in the year before the televised series, but shot up abruptly to 900,000 during the year of the broadcasts.

As people develop a sense of efficacy and competencies that enable them to exercise more control over their lives, they serve as models, inspiration, and even as tutors for others in the circles in which they move. This concomitant socially mediated influence can vastly multiply the impact of televised modeling. In the year following Ven Conmigo, another 400,000 people enrolled in the self-study literacy program. Through the socially mediated path of influence, televised modeling can set in motion an ever-widening, reverberating process of social change.

Environmental Sustainability by Stemming Population Growth

Soaring population growth is destroying the ecosystems that sustain life, degrading the quality of life, and draining resources needed for national development. Underdeveloped nations are doubling their populations at an accelerating rate. Through a global effort, numerous socially enabling dramas are now being widely used in Africa, Asia, and Latin America to stem the tide of population growth. The host countries that sought help are struggling with widespread poverty and are on a trajectory of doubling their populations over a relatively short period. Burgeoning demographic forces overwhelm efforts at social and economic development.

Unless people see family planning methods as improving their welfare, they have little incentive to adopt them. Sabido developed a series of dramas to reduce the population growth rate in Mexico (Sabido, 1981). Through modeling with accompanying outcomes, the dramas portrayed the process as well as the personal, social, and economic benefits of family planning. The positive family life of a smaller-sized family, whose wife worked in a family planning clinic, was contrasted with that of a married sister overburdened with a huge family and accompanying impoverishment and misery.

Much of the drama of Acompama (Accompany Me) focused on the married daughter from the large family, who was beginning to experience severe marital conflicts and distress over her rapidly expanding family. She served as the transitional model, living in her parents’ home, a desparingly crowded and impoverished environment. In dramatic scenes she expresses
emotionally her desire for a voice in her family life, to cease having unwanted babies, and to break the cycle of poverty that condemned her family to an inner-city slum with inability to care adequately for her children. She turns to her aunt for help, which serves as the vehicle for modeling a great deal of information about how to manage marital discord and machismo behavior, how to deal with male resistance to contraception and family planning, how to communicate openly in the family, and how to escape the many problems caused by a family overburdened with children.

As the drama unfolds, the young couple is shown gaining control over their family life and enjoying the accruing benefits with the help of a family planning clinic. A priest occasionally appeared in the drama, emphasizing the need for responsible family planning by limiting the number of offspring to those the family can afford to raise adequately. At the end of episodes, viewers were informed in epilogues about existing family planning services to facilitate media-promoted behavior changes.

Compared to nonviewers, heavy viewers of the dramatic serial in Mexico were more likely to link lower childbearing with social, economic, and psychological benefits. They also developed a more positive attitude towards helping others plan their family (Sabido, 1981). Records of family planning clinics revealed a 32% increase in the number of new contraceptive users over the number for the previous year before the series was televised. People reported that the television portrayal served as the impetus for consulting the health clinics. National sales of contraceptives rose from 4% and 7% in the preceding two baseline years, to 23% in the year the television program was broadcast.

Generalization Through Functional Adaptations

Applications of the generic model in India and Kenya illustrate its generalizability through functional tailoring to diverse cultural practices. Efforts to bring down the rate of population growth must address not only the strategies and benefits of family planning, but also the role and status of women in societies in which they are treated as subservient. In some societies, the equity problems stem from machismo dominance; in others, from marriage and pregnancy at the onset of puberty with no say in the choice of husband or the number and spacing of children; and in still others from dispossession by polygamous marriages. In some societies, women are subjugated to the point where they are repeatedly beaten and are not even allowed to turn on a family radio.

The television program in India, *Hum Log* (We People), was designed to raise the status of women, as well as to promote a smaller family norm. It addressed a variety of themes about family life in the context of broader social
norms and practices (Singhal & Rogers, 1999). Subthemes devoted particular attention to family harmony amidst differences among family members, elevation of the status of women in family social and economic life, educational opportunities and career options for women, son preference and gender bias in child rearing, the detriments of dowry, choice in spouse selection, teenage marriage and parenthood, spousal abuse, family planning to limit family size, youth delinquency, and community development. Some of the characters personified positive role models for gender equality; others were proponents of the traditional subservient role for women. Still others were transitional models. A famous Indian film actor reinforced the modeled messages in epilogues.

The melodramatic series was immensely popular in India, enjoying top viewership on television, and a massive outpouring of letters in the hundreds of thousands from viewers offering advice and support to the characters. A random sample of 1,100 viewers reported that they had learned from the television program that women should have equal opportunities and a say in decisions that affect their lives, that programs advancing the welfare of women should be encouraged, that cultural diversity should be respected, and that family size should be limited. The more aware viewers were of the messages being modeled, the greater was their support of women’s freedom of choice in matters that affected them and of planning for small families (Brown & Cody, 1991; Singhal & Rogers, 1999).

Intensive interviews with village inhabitants revealed that the dramatizations spark serious public discussions about the broadcast themes concerning child marriages, dowry, education of girls, benefits of small families, and other social issues (Papa, et al., 2000). These social transactions went beyond talk to collective community action aimed at changing inequitable normative practices and improving the future. Indeed, one village sent to the broadcaster a large poster letter signed by its inhabitants stating that they would work to eradicate the practice of dowry and child marriages (both illegal in India, but widespread). The enrollment of girls in elementary schools rose from 10% to 38% in one year of the broadcasts.

Many impediments exist to sociocultural change, but their force weakens over time as new ideas gain support and collective benefits outweigh the social costs of dated institutional arrangements. In another Indian village young boys and girls created a self-help action group to promote the changes modeled in the serial drama (Law & Singhal, 1999). These system-level effects illustrate how dramas that address the social problems that people face in enabling ways can spawn the development of collective efficacy.

A story line in a Kenya radio drama revolved around the inheritance of land and the impoverishing effect of large families. The serial drama, broadcast via radio in order to reach rural people, was the most popular program on the air. Contraceptive use increased by 58% and desired family size declined by 24%.
Quantitative analyses, including multiple controls for possible determinants, revealed that the mass media were a major contributor to Kenya's declining birthrate per woman and the reduction in the rate of population growth (Westoff & Rodriguez, 1995).

China, the most populous nation in the world, faces a projected doubling of its current population to the two billion mark in about 70 years. This enormous population growth will have devastating effects on ecological systems. The Chinese one-child policy heightens the traditional cultural preferences for sons. The drama, *Baixing* (Ordinary People), addresses the discriminatory gender bias in Chinese society and fosters psychosocial changes to supplant coercive institutional controls on fertility with voluntary adoption of contraceptive practices and a preference for small families. The television drama graphically portrays the tragedy and injustice of social practices that force women into arranged marriages they do not want and into bearing baby girls that spouses do not want. Viewers are inspired and strengthened by the determination and courage of female characters who challenge the subordinate status of women, and who strive to change detrimental cultural practices. The gender inequity themes seek to raise the valuation of women and expand enabling opportunities for them to become active participants in the social and economic life of Chinese society.

The diverse applications of the sociocognitive model have yielded uniform research findings. The dramatic serials are an extraordinarily effective vehicle for reaching vast numbers of people over a prolonged period. Viewers get deeply involved in the lives of the televised characters. Airing of the televised serials is followed by preference for smaller families and adoption of contraceptive methods. The strength of the social impact increases as a function of level of exposure to the broadcasts (the dose effects). The more that people watch the media program, the more they talk about the educational issues that are aired, the more supportive they are of gender equality, the higher their perceived efficacy to regulate their reproductive behavior, and the more likely they are to adopt contraceptive methods.

**Control on Other Independent Variables**

Research by Westoff and Rodriguez (1995) shows that the conditional relationship is not an artifact due to more advantaged and efficacious individuals being heavier television viewers. The impact of media exposure on adoption and consistent use of new methods of contraception remained after controlling for life-cycle status, number of wives and children, and a host of socioeconomic factors such as ethnicity, religion, education, occupation, and urban-rural residence. Internal analyses of survey data revealed that the media influence was a major factor in raising motivation to limit fertility and to adopt contraception practices.
In Tanzania, containing seven regions with separate broadcasting transmitters, the radio drama was aired in six regions with the other major region serving as a control. Compared to the control region, the radio dramatizations raised viewers' perceived efficacy to determine their family size, decreased their desired number of children, increased the ideal age of marriage for women, increased approval of family planning methods, stimulated spousal communication about family size, and increased use of family planning services and adoption of contraceptive methods (Rogers et al., 1999). The impact on family planning was replicated (after 1995) when the serial was later broadcast in the control region. As in the Kenya research, the more often people listened to the radio broadcasts, the more that married women talked to their spouses about family planning and the higher their rate of adoption of contraceptive methods. These diverse effects remained after multiple controls for a host of other potential determinants. The fertility rate declined more in the 2-year period of the serial dramas than in the previous 30 years without any change in socioeconomic conditions and little change in death rate (Vaughan, 2003).

Some of the radio episodes targeted sexual practices that risk infection with the AIDS virus. Compared to residents in the control region, those in the broadcast regions increased belief in their personal risk of HIV infection through unprotected sexual behavior, talked more about HIV infection, reduced their number of sexual partners, and increased condom use (Vaughan, Rogers, & Swalehe, 1995; Vaughan, Rogers, Singhal, & Swalehe, 2000). The number of condoms distributed annually by the National AIDS Control Program in Tanzania remained low in the control region, increased substantially in the broadcast regions, and increased significantly in the control region after exposure to the radio broadcasts. Perceived self-efficacy emerged as a significant predictor of reproductive behavior and risky sexual practices.

**SUSTAINABILITY BY MODIFICATION OF CONSUMMATORY LIFESTYLES**

The present chapter focused on environmental conservation and sustainability through population stabilization. The fundings from many cross-cultural applications attest to the generalizability of the generic model with appropriate functional adaptations. It lends itself readily to other types of lifestyle changes, such as environmental conservation and consummatory practices to promote environmental sustainability. For example, an Indian serial centered on preserving the environment motivated villagers to take collective action to improve sanitation, reduce potential health hazards, adopt fuel conservation practices to reduce pollution, and to launch a tree-planting campaign (Papa et al., 2000). Moreover, villagers persuaded other villages to institute similar environmental practices.
If people are to make decisions supportive of sustained development, they need to be informed of the ecological costs of their consummatory practices and enabled and motivated to turn enlightened concern into constructive courses of action. This change is best achieved through multiple modes of communication (Singhal & Rogers, 1999). Many lifelong consummatory habits are formed during childhood years. It is easier to prevent wasteful practices than to try to change them after they have become deeply entrenched as part of a lifestyle.

To address the environmental problems created by over-consumption, PCI produced a video, *The Cost of Cool*, for distribution to schools that focused on the buying habits of teenagers (PCI, 2000). It tracks the ecological costs of the manufacture of everyday items such as T-shirts and sneakers. Providing teenagers with sound information helped them make informed choices in their buying habits. As one viewer put it, "I'll never look at a T-shirt in the same way." Popular entertainment, using formats such as music concerts, recordings, and videos, provide another vehicle for reaching youth populations, with themes addressing critical social issues, substance abuse, violence, teen sexuality, and gender equality. The impact of these complimentary approaches requires systematic evaluation. The increasing magnitude of the environmental problem calls for multifaceted efforts to alter behavioral practices that degrade the ecological supports of life.

In sum, the research cited here provides convergent evidence from diverse methodologies, multiple controls for a host of other potential determinants, multifaceted forms of assessments, diverse cultural milieus, adaptational themes, and domains of functioning. The findings attest to the social utility of the sociocognitive communication model for effecting personal and social change grounded in internationally endorsed human values with sensitive adaptations to cultural diversity. People enjoy the benefits left by those before them who collectively fought for social reforms that improved their lives. Their own collective efficacy will shape how future generations live their lives. The times call for social initiatives that enable people to play a part through their collective voice in bettering the human condition.

**REFERENCES**


