

An Agentic Perspective on Positive Psychology

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The present chapter addresses the field of positive psychology from the agentic perspective of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986; 2006a). To be an agent is to influence intentionally one's functioning and the course of environmental events. In this view, people are contributors to their life circumstances not just products of them. Among the mechanisms of agency none is more central or pervasive than beliefs of personal efficacy. This core belief is the foundation of human motivation, well-being, and accomplishments. 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.

It is exceedingly difficult to maintain hope and optimism if one is plagued by self-doubt in one's ability to influence events and convinced of the futility of effort. Indeed, empirical studies confirm that optimism, positive thinking about the future, hedonic balance with positive affect exceeding negative affect, and satisfaction with one's life are rooted in a sense of personal efficacy (Bandura, Caprara, Regalia, Scabini, & Barbaranelli, 2007; Benight & Bandura, 2004; Caprara & Steca, 2005, 2006a, b; Caprara, Steca, Gerbino, Paciello, & Vecchio, 2006). Some of the theorizing on the role of affect in human functioning is based on a direct-effects model. Positive affect does good things. Negative affect does bad things. Evidence that positive affect raises perceived self-efficacy and negative affect lowers it suggests that the impact of affect on psychosocial functioning works partly through beliefs of personal efficacy (Kavanagh & Bower, 1985). In everyday life, adaptive functioning requires regulation of affect. Perceived self-efficacy to regulate positive and negative affect also plays a role in the quality of psychosocial functioning (Bandura, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Gerbino, & Pastorelli, 2003).

Human well-being and attainments require an optimistic and resilient sense of efficacy. This is because the usual daily realities are strewn with difficulties. They are full of frustrations, conflicts, impediments, adversities, failures, setbacks, and inequities. To succeed, one cannot afford to be a realist. Realists forego the endeavor, are easily discouraged by failures should they try, or they become cynics about the prospect of effecting personal and social changes.

We are currently witnessing the pathologizing of optimism. A positive outlook is regarded as a "cognitive failing" requiring downward correction to match performance. The functional value of veridical self-appraisal of one's capabilities depends on the venture, however. In activities where the margins of error are narrow and missteps can produce costly or injurious consequences, personal well-being is best served by conservative efficacy appraisal. It is a different matter where difficult accomplishments can produce substantial personal or social benefits and the costs involve one's time, effort and resources. Individuals have to decide for themselves which abilities to cultivate, whether to invest their efforts and resources in ventures that are difficult to fulfill, and how much hardship they are willing to endure in pursuits strewn with obstacles and uncertainties.

Turning visions into realities is an arduous process with uncertain outcomes. Innovators and social reformers do not come from the ranks of realists. Societies enjoy the considerable benefits of the accomplishments in the sciences, technologies, arts, and social reforms of its persisters and risk

takers. The risks of overconfidence are studied extensively, but the self-limiting costs of underconfidence are largely ignored. This bias reflects the conservative orientation of our theorizing.

Virtually every innovation that has touched our lives was repeatedly rejected at the outset. In his delightful book titled, *Rejection*, John White (1992) reports that the prominent characteristic of people who achieve success in challenging pursuits is an unshakable sense of efficacy and a firm belief in the worth of what they are doing. Resilient self-efficacy provides the needed staying power to weather a lot of frustration and to override repeated early rejections. The functional belief system in difficult undertakings combines realism about tough odds but optimism that one can beat those odds through self-development and perseverant effort. To paraphrase George Bernard Shaw, reasonable people adapt to the world, unreasonable people try to change it; therefore, progress depends on the unreasonable ones. Those who are successful, innovative, nonanxious, nondespondent, and tenacious social reformers take an optimistic view of their efficacy to influence events that affect their lives.

When people are asked for their regrets in life, for the most part, they regret the actions not taken rather than the actions taken (Hattiangadi, Medved, & Gilovich, 1995). They regret the educational opportunities forsaken, the careers not chosen that would have provided satisfaction and fulfillment, the risks not taken, and the relationships not cultivated or short-changed. In the words of the late Senator Tsongas, “No one on their death bed ever expressed regret for not spending more time in the office”. The reach of worklife has undergone transformative changes with the advent of wireless technologies. People are now wired to their workplace. The mobile office increasingly intrudes on family, social, and recreational life. An ad by a mobile broadband network, emblazoned on the wall of an airport, urges travelers to work actively to strive to “make just about any place a work place”! These wireless technologies create new challenges to striking a balance between the competing priorities of life.

Sources and Diverse Effects of Perceived Self-Efficacy

People’s beliefs in their efficacy can be developed in four ways. The most effective way of building a strong sense of efficacy is through mastery experiences. Successes build a robust efficacy. Failures undermine it, especially in early phases of efficacy development when people feel insecure about their capabilities. 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. Success is achieved by learning from failed efforts. Hence, resilience is also built by training in how to manage failure so it is instructive rather than demoralizing.

The second way of developing self-efficacy is by social modeling. Models are sources of aspiration, competencies and motivation. Seeing people similar to oneself succeed by perseverant effort, raises observers' beliefs in their own abilities. In contemporary society, ideas, values, belief systems, and lifestyles are socially transmitted via the extensive modeling in the symbolic environment of the electronic media. This enables people to transcend the confines of their lived environment. Social persuasion is the third mode of influence. If people are persuaded to believe in themselves they will exert more effort. This increases their chances of success. Credible persuaders must be knowledgeable and practice what they preach. Effective efficacy builders do more than convey faith in others. They arrange situations for others in ways that bring success and avoid placing them prematurely in situations where they are likely to fail. They encourage judgment of 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 tension, anxiety, and weariness as signs of personal deficiencies. Mood also affects how people judge their efficacy. Positive mood enhances a sense of efficacy, depressed mood diminishes it. Efficacy beliefs are strengthened by reducing anxiety and depression, building physical strength and stamina, and changing negative misinterpretations of physical and affective states.

Efficacy beliefs regulate human functioning through four major processes: cognitive, motivational, emotional, and decisional processes. Such beliefs influence whether people think pessimistically or optimistically, in self-enhancing or self-debilitating ways. Efficacy beliefs also shape people's outcome expectations - - whether they expect their efforts to produce favorable outcomes or adverse ones. In addition, efficacy beliefs determine how opportunities and impediments are viewed. People of low efficacy are easily convinced of the futility of effort in the face of difficulties. They quickly give up trying. Those of high efficacy view impediments as surmountable by development of requisite competencies and perseverant effort. They stay the course in the face of difficulties and remain resilient to adversity. Moreover, efficacy beliefs affect the quality of emotional life and vulnerability to stress and depression. It is natural to feel despondent following setbacks and failures on matters of import. It is the bounce-back capacity that is important. Belief in one's recovery efficacy supports the effort needed to restore one's well-being. Last, but not least, efficacy beliefs determine the choices people make at important decisional points. By choosing their environments they can have a hand in what they become. Beliefs of personal efficacy can, therefore, play a key role in shaping the courses lives take by influencing the types of activities and environments people choose to get into. In self-development through choice processes, personal destinies are shaped by selection of environments conducive to the cultivation of valued potentialities and lifestyles.

Modes of Agency

Social cognitive theory distinguishes among three modes of agency. They include individual, proxy, and collective agency, each of which is founded on belief in the capacity to effect change. In personal agency exercised individually, people bring their influence to bear on their own functioning and on environmental events. In many spheres of functioning, people do not have direct control over conditions that affect their lives. They exercise socially-mediated or proxy agency. They do so by influencing others who have the resources, knowledge, and means to act on their behalf to secure the outcomes they desire. People do not live their lives in individual autonomy. Many of the things they seek are achievable only by working together through interdependent effort. In the exercise of collective agency, they pool their knowledge, skills, and resources, and act in concert to shape their future. People's shared belief in their collective efficacy to achieve desired results is a key ingredient of collective agency. People's shared beliefs in their collective efficacy influence the type of futures they seek to achieve by working together; how well they use their resources; how much effort they put into their group endeavor; their staying power when their efforts fail to produce quick results or meet forcible opposition; their vulnerability to the discouragement that can beset those taking on tough social problems; and what they accomplish by their collective efforts (Bandura, 1999).

The strength of families, communities, education systems, 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 (Bandura, 1997). The distinctive blend of individual, proxy, and collective agency varies cross-culturally. But everyday functioning relies on all three forms of agency to make it through the day, wherever one lives.

Misconstrual of Self-Efficacy

Because efficacy beliefs involve self-referent processes, self-efficacy is often misconstrued as self-centered individualism with aggrandizement of the self. Self-efficacy does not come with a built-in singular value system. People's goals, values, and aspirations shape the purposes their efficacy serves. In point of fact, personal efficacy can serve diverse purposes, many of which subordinate self-interest to the benefit of others. Gandhi provides a notable example of self-sacrifice in the exercise of unwavering self-efficacy for social change under powerful opposition. He lived ascetically, not self-indulgently. Without a resilient sense of efficacy, people are easily overwhelmed by adversities in their efforts to improve their lives and that of others.

Personal efficacy is valued, not because of reverence for individualism, but because a resilient sense of efficacy has generalized functional value regardless of whether activities are pursued individually or by people working together for common cause. Research testifies to the cross-cultural generalizability of self-efficacy theory. The factor structure of efficacy beliefs, their determinants, their functional value, and even the mechanisms through which they operate are much the same, regardless of whether the cultures are oriented around an individualistic or collectivistic ethic (Bandura, 2002). These cross-cultural findings debunk the misconception that belief in one's efficacy is an egocentric orientation wedded to Western individualism.

People cannot be all things. The specialized complexities of contemporary societies require diversity in efficacy to enable people to manage and gain satisfaction in different types of pursuits. Some become chefs, others develop their efficacy to fly airplanes, play the tuba, service automobiles, provide medical services, educate students, perform religious services, or cultivate the land. Within these diverse pursuits, some members aim for the top and labor arduously to get there. Most are content with a sufficing self-efficacy. They are overjoyed at breaking a golf score of 100 rather than strive for the professional ranks. Self-efficacy theory embraces the French dictum: *Viva la différence*. Interpersonal diversity in self-efficacy complements and enriches our lives.

Our psychological discipline is infected with a negativity bias that manifests itself in diverse forms across virtually every sphere of human functioning. The sections that follow contrast, both conceptually and empirically, the negativity orientation toward human functioning with the more positive orientation within an agentic view of humanity.

Overprediction of Psychopathology

Our theories grossly overpredict psychopathology. Consider familial examples. Families in our inner cities are living under dismal conditions of high poverty, physical decay, social disorganization, and inadequate human services. These environments provide few prosocial opportunities, but many antisocial ones. Our theories would lead one to expect that most of the children living in these impoverished, risky environments would be heavily involved in crime, addicted to drugs, or too psychically impaired for a normal life. In fact, most of the children make it through the many developmental hazards. In adulthood, most support themselves through legitimate jobs, form a household partnership, and stay clear of criminal activities.

Families achieve these results through perseverant effort and considerable self-sacrifice. They seek enabling social environments that help to promote their children's positive development (Furstenberg, Cook, Eccles, Elder & Sameroff, 1999). They monitor and guide their children's activities outside the home to protect them from dangerous activities that can set a detrimental life course. They carve out functional subcommunities through active involvement in supportive and enabling social systems. These affiliations link their children to positive models, constructive activities, supportive social networks, and values and social norms that parents hold

dear. These social ties compensate for meager neighborhood resources and protect against a neighborhood's hazardous aspects. In short, by exercising their sense of efficacy, the parents don't let their dismal environment defeat them.

Resilience: Reactive Risk Models vs. Proactive Mastery Models

Our discipline is more heavily invested in theories of failure than in theories of success. Risk factors command our attention. Enablement factors, that equip people with the skills and resilient self-beliefs to manage their lives, receive less notice. When enabling factors are considered, as in resilience, they are depicted in static, epidemiological terms as protective factors. Protectiveness shields individuals from harsh realities, or weakens their negative impact. In contrast, enablement equips people with the personal resources to select and construct their environments in ways that set a successful course for their lives.

Consider the power of enabling factors in a family life replete with grim risk factors (Chernow, 2004). Born out of wedlock on a tiny island in the Caribbean. His mother was imprisoned by her husband for adultery. Father deserts the family. Mother dies. Guardian commits suicide. Left destitute in childhood with the death of his aunt, uncle, and grandfather. His meager belongings are sold off, leaving him penniless. A key enablement factor overrides this grim catalogue of risk factors. A clergyman raised funds from local merchants to educate him at King's College, now Columbia University. Alexander Hamilton thrived in this new environment. He became a founding father of our nation and left a staggering legacy of achievements that shaped our federal governmental systems.

A number of studies have examined the developmental trajectories of children burdened with extremely disordered home lives (Masten, Best, Garmezy, 1990; Werner, 1992). These children grow up in families plagued with chronic poverty, discord, physical abuse, divorce, parental alcoholism, criminality, or serious mental disorders. Remarkably, a good number of the children surmount such enormous hardships and develop into efficacious, caring, and productive adults. Their personal triumphs have given us a better sense of some of the determinants of extraordinary resilience (Werner & Smith, 1992).

A key factor is the development of a stable social bond to a competent and caring adult. Such caregivers offer emotional support, guidance, and promote meaningful values and standards. They model constructive styles of coping and create opportunities for mastery experiences. Enabling caretaking builds trust, competencies, and a sense of personal efficacy. Physical attractiveness and a sociable temperament help to draw nurturing caretaking. As children develop positive attributes they become more engaging to others and attract support from them. Supportive teachers are often important enabling influences in the lives of children who surmount severe adversities. Social connectedness to a variety of other caring persons outside the family provides continuing guidance and opportunities for self-development. The children cultivate interests that bring satisfactions and save them from becoming engulfed by the turbulent home life. Intellectual competencies, which are essential for managing the demands of everyday life, are also uniformly strong predictors of successful development under adversity.

The children's heroic life stories support an agentic, rather than a protective view of resilience. The children play a proactive role in shaping their life courses. They become highly resourceful in finding and creating environments conducive to their development. They take upon themselves the responsibilities of managing the household and care of younger siblings when their parents are unable to do so, which is often the case. For example, a daughter comes home from

school to find her mother drunk on the floor in this disordered household. She takes care of her mother, prepares the meals, and cares for her younger siblings. This is the exercise of agency not shelteredness by protective factors. Theories of resilience should be recast in proactive agentic terms, rather than in epidemiologic terms of protective factors buffering against the negative effects of adversity.

Diathesis-Stress Model

The difference between an agentic and a reactive conception of human adaptation also applies to the diathesis-stress model that dominates the thinking in the field of psychopathology. In this model, external stressors act upon personal vulnerabilities to produce emotional and behavioral disorders. This model is often combined with epidemiological risk-buffer models. Protective factors are posited as buffers to stressors.

This theory is heavily cast in reactive terms, devoid of agentic functions. A person is simply a host for vulnerabilities on which the environment acts. In fact, people play a proactive role in their adaptation. They do not simply undergo happenings in which environments act upon their personal endowments. Through the exercise of self-regulatory influence they have a hand in which environments they get into. They create supportive environments for themselves by seeking out beneficial social networks. They develop competencies that enable them to transform taxing and threatening environments into benign ones.

Substance Abuse

Because of selective inattention to successes, our theories similarly overpredict the inability to overcome tough problems, such as substance abuse. We build theories for why people are seemingly powerless to change addictive behavior. In the case of smoking, which is one of the most addictive substances, it is said to be intractable because it is compelled by two types of dependencies: Biological and psychological. With regard to biological dependence, each puff sends a reinforcing nicotine shot to the brain. Prolonged use is said to create a relapsing brain disease. Once addicted, aversive withdrawal reactions drive the users to heavy continual use of the substance.

A brief period of abstinence eradicates the physiological withdrawal reactions. The major challenge is resumption of drug use, after aversive withdrawal reactions are long gone as motivators. Environmental cueing of “craving” was proposed as the driving mechanism. In this explanation, exposure to situations that have been associated with drug use induce physiological craving that impels use of the substance. Negative affect was also invoked as a precipitating motivator that drives people to seek relief in smoking. The problem with these motivational explanations is that they predict vastly more than has ever been observed. Over forty million people have quit smoking on their own. About ninety percent of the ex-smokers have done so in this way. Where was their brain disease? How did they cure it on their own? Superimposed on the 40 million self-quitters, the dismal relapse curves that populate our journals are based on selective focus on hard-core cases. They are but a tiny ripple in the vast sea of successes.

The forty million ex-smokers were not detached from the situational smoking cues and smokers around them in their daily activities. As for the negative motivators, everyday life is strewn with episodes of negative affect. The forty million self-quitters are not leading lives free of negative affectivity. They manage to maintain abstinence despite bouts of negative affect. Both the cueing and emotive explanations require a self-regulatory component to explain successful self-management under situational and affective instigators. In other dysfunctions, negative affect

precipitates problem behavior in those of low efficacy, but infrequently in those of high efficacy (Love, Ollendick, Johnson & Schlezinger, 1985; Schneider, O'Leary & Ogras, 1987). Overcoming nicotine dependence is a tortuous process, often involving periods of torment and repeated relapses. But those who can persevere in the face of relapses have a good chance of eventual success.

There is similar inattention to personal successes in overcoming alcohol and narcotic addiction. Robins (1974) reported a remarkably high remission for heroin addiction among Vietnam veterans without the benefit of treatment. In other studies, successful quitters sever ties with drug-using friends and build new lives for themselves with enabling and supportive social networks (Hunt & Azrin, 1973; McAuliffe, Albert, Cordell-Londirs & McGarraghy, 1991). Vaillant (1995) has shown that a large share of alcoholics eventually quit drinking without treatment, assistance from self-help groups, or radical environmental change. Such successes testify to the human capacity for self-regulation. Granfield and Cloud (1996) put it well when they characterized the conspicuous inattention to successful self-changers in substance abuse as, "The elephant that no one sees." The massive elephant in our midst can tell us a lot about the mechanisms of successful self-change and how to enable people to overcome substance abuse.

To understand the human capacity for self-directedness requires study of successful self-changers not just the intractable ones (Bandura, in press). Naturalistic studies of self-directed change by Perri (1985) show that successful self-regulators are highly skilled in enlisting the component subfunctions of self-regulation. They track their behavior and the conditions under which they engage in it. They set proximal goals for exercising control over their behavior. They draw from an array of coping strategies rather than rely on a single technique. They create motivating incentives to sustain their efforts, and apply self-influence more consistently and persistently than do ineffectual self-changers.

Prosocial Foundation of Developmental Trajectories

Over the years much theorizing and research have been devoted to the adverse effects of early proneness to aggression on subsequent academic development and social relationships. Prosocialness involves cooperativeness, helpfulness, sharing, and empathicness. It promotes relationships conducive to social and academic development. Despite the many benefits of prosocialness on children's developmental trajectories, it has received comparatively little attention.

The relative impact of early prosocialness and aggressiveness on children's later social ties and academic achievement has been tested longitudinally (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, Bandura & Zimbardo, 2000). Prosocialness has a strong positive impact on later academic achievement and positive peer relationships. But early aggressiveness has no significant effect on either sphere of functioning. Such findings underscore the value of investing resources to develop and promote children's prosocialness. Doing so enhances the academic learning environment, facilitates academic success, and builds enabling social-support networks. Prosocial orientations, in turn, can contribute to more positive communal norms. It promotes beneficial modeling and social practices that together can help reduce aggression in our schools and communities.

Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

Human health is another domain in which we often tell only half the story, mainly the negative half. Our conception of health is heavily grounded in a biomedical disease model. We are pouring massive resources into medicalizing the ravages of detrimental health habits and prescribing vast amounts of pills to alleviate the common problems of life. A positive conception of health shifts

the orientation from a disease model to a health model. It emphasizes health promotion rather than mainly disease management. It is just as meaningful to speak of levels of vitality as of degrees of impairment and debility.

The quality of health is heavily influenced by lifestyle habits. This enables people to exercise some measure of control over the state of their health. To stay healthy, people should be physically active, reduce dietary fat, refrain from smoking, keep blood pressure down, and develop effective ways of managing stressors. By managing their health habits, people can live longer, healthier, and retard the process of aging. Self-management is good medicine. If the huge benefits of these few habits were put into a pill it would be declared a scientific milestone in the field of medicine.

Current health practices focus heavily on the medical supply side. The growing pressure on health systems is to reduce, ration, and delay health services to contain health costs. The days for the supply-side health system are limited. People are living longer. This creates more time for minor dysfunction to develop into chronic diseases. The social cognitive approach, rooted in an agentic model of health promotion, addresses the demand side (Bandura, 2000, 2004a). It promotes effective self-management of health habits that keep people healthy through their life span. Psychosocial factors influence whether the extended life is lived efficaciously or with debility, pain, and dependence (Fries & Crapo, 1981; Fuchs, 1974). Aging populations will force societies to redirect their efforts from supply-side practices to demand-side remedies. Otherwise, nations will be swamped with staggering health costs that consume valuable resources needed for national programs.

There are two major ways in which people's belief in their personal efficacy affects their health. At the more basic level, such beliefs act on biological systems that mediate health and illness. At the second level, they operate by the exercise of control over habits that affect health and those that impair it. Stress is an important contributor to many physical dysfunctions. Perceived controllability appears to be the key organizing principle in explaining the biological effects of stress (Maier, Laudenslager, & Ryan, 1985). Exposure to stressors with ability to exercise some control over them has no adverse physical effects. But exposure to the same stressors, without the ability to control them, activates autonomic, cardiovascular, catecholamine, and opioid systems.

Uncontrollable stressors can also impair immune function. Most of these findings are based on studies with animals in which they exercise either complete control over physical stressors or none at all. In contrast, most human stress is activated while developing competencies for managing the demands of everyday life. Moreover, their stress is governed, in large part, by beliefs about their coping efficacy. Stress experienced while gaining mastery and hope enhances immune status rather than impairs it (Wiedenfled, et al., 1990). The higher the growth in perceived self-efficacy, the better the immune status. This has substantial evolutionary benefits. Given the prevalence of stressors in everyday life, if they only impaired immune function, we would be bedridden much of the time, if not done in.

There are countless studies of the adverse effects of stressors on immunocompetence. The few studies that have examined the immune effects of positive emotions in everyday life show that antibody levels to orally ingested antigens are higher on pleasant days (Stone, et al. 1994). We are heavily preoccupied with the physically debilitating effects of stressors. Self-efficacy theory also acknowledges the physiologically strengthening effects of mastery over stressors. A growing number of studies document the physiologically toughening effect of successful coping (Dienstbeir, 1989). The benign neglect of the positive side of emotional life, limits our understanding of the psychosocial contributors to health.

Effective self-management of health behavior is not a matter of will. It requires development of self-regulatory skills on how to influence one's own motivation and behavior. Knowledge of self-regulatory mechanisms has provided the theoretical foundation for new health-promotion models that are highly effective in enhancing health and reducing risks for disease (Bandura, in press; DeBusk, et al., 1974; Holman & Lorig, 1992). These self-management systems equip participants with the skills and personal efficacy to exercise self-directed change. These systems are individually tailored to participants' needs, provide them with personalized guidance that enables them to bring their influence to bear on their health, and offers valuable health-promoting services at lower costs and higher effectiveness than the standard medical care.

Vast populations worldwide have no access to services that promote health and help in early modification of habits that jeopardize health. For example, high smoking rates worldwide foreshadow a massive global cancer epidemic. We need to develop implementational models of global reach that are readily adaptable to diverse ethnic populations. Internet-based systems enable people worldwide to exercise some control over their health, wherever they may live, at a time of their own choosing, at little cost. Even people at risk of health problems who have access to health services often ignore preventive and remedial help. But they will use Internet-delivered guidance because it is readily accessible independent of time and place, highly convenient, flexible, and provides a feeling of anonymity.

A growing body of evidence based on randomized controlled trials attests to the effectiveness of online self-management programs in diverse spheres of functioning (Lorig, Ritter, Laurent & Plant, in press; Munoz, et al., 2006; Seligman, Rashid & Parks, 2007; Taylor, Winzelberg, & Celio, 2001) There is every reason to expect that benefits of such models will be enhanced as we gain further knowledge on the optimal level, timing, and quality of online interactivity and how to blend of online and face-to-face interactivity for individuals at different levels of changeability, and at different phases of change.

Negative Spillover of Dual Roles

According to the prevailing theories of human stress, it arises when perceived task demands exceed perceived coping capabilities. But there is another demand-capability relation, that is largely ignored, even though it is an important stressor. People also experience emotional strain when they are trapped in activities that permit them little opportunity to make full use of their talents.

Whether overload or underload is stressful is largely determined by perceived self-efficacy. Matsui and Onglatco (1992) found that women employees who have a low sense of efficacy are stressed by heavy work demands and responsibilities. In contrast, those of high efficacy are frustrated and stressed by blocked opportunities to make full use of their talents.

The neglected underload stressor highlights the prevailing negative bias in research on the effects of multiple role demands on women in dual career families. The family has been undergoing major structural changes that are altering women's roles. A sharp drop in birthrate and increased longevity creates the need for purposive pursuits for women that provide satisfaction and meaning to their lives over the expanded lifespan. They are seeking fulfillment in career pursuits as well as in their family life. These changes pose new challenges on how to strike a balance between family and occupational demands.

The effects of combining dual roles are typically framed negatively in terms of interrole conflicts breeding family distress and discord. There are countless studies on the negative spillover

of job pressures on family life. But few on how job satisfaction enhances the quality of family life. Ozer's (1995) research shows that women's sense of efficacy in managing dual roles contributes to personal well-being and better health. We need to be studying the positive spillover on family life of fulfilling career pursuits.

Dual Nature of Moral Agency

Our theories about the exercise of moral agency also tell only half the story. They focus heavily on the inhibitive form of morality, but neglect the positive side of moral functioning. In social cognitive theory, the exercise of moral agency has dual aspects: inhibitive and positively proactive (Bandura, 2004). In the inhibitive form, people refrain from behaving inhumanely to avoid self-condemnation for violating their moral standards. However, there are many social and psychological maneuvers by which moral self-sanctions can be selectively disengaged from inhumane conduct (Bandura, 1999). This enables people to behave transgressively and injuriously while preserving their self-regard.

In the positively proactive form, people behave humanely by investing their sense of self-worth so strongly in humane convictions and social obligations that they act against what they regard as unjust or immoral even though their actions may incur heavy personal costs. Failure to do what they regard as right would bring self-devaluation. Psychology emphasizes how easy it is to bring out the worst in people through dehumanization and other self-exonerating means. What is rarely noted is the equally striking evidence for the power of humanization to curb cruel conduct even under authoritarian pressure (Bandura, 2004). Experiences in which people's joys and suffering are experienced conjointly create empathic responsiveness to the plight others (Bandura, 1992). Empathicness fosters prosocial behavior and curbs inhumane conduct.

The extraordinary power of humanization, to curb violence, is poignantly documented in a remarkable event on the battlefield in 1914. It is recreated in the movie, *Joyeux Noel*. It is Christmas Eve. The Allied, and German forces are poised in their trenches for a bloody assault. A few Allied soldiers start singing Christmas hymns and carols. The singing spreads and before long, the entire Allied and German forces are in spiritual song. They leave their trenches and mingle with each other, during which they personalize their lives. They spontaneously create a one-day truce during which they share their rations and drinks, look at pictures of their families, and play cards and soccer.

They then return to their trenches to prepare for the battle to follow. The German commander walks over to the Allied trench. He invites his foes to come over to the German trench because they will be bombarded unmercifully in 10 minutes. He spares their lives. The military commanders realize that this act of humanization pacified their forces. They resorted to a depersonalization solution. The French relocated their soldiers to another battlefield, the Scots sent their soldiers back, and the Germans shipped their soldiers to fight on the Russian front.

The force of proactive moral agency to override compelling pressures to behave inhumanely is tellingly documented in Holocaust rescuers (Oliner & Oliner, 1988). They saved persecuted Jews from the death camps at great risks to themselves and their families. They took on a heavy burden of extended protective care. The rescuers had no prior acquaintance with those they sheltered, and nothing material or social to gain by doing so. Such moral commitments involve courageous humaneness amid overwhelming evil. As previously noted, humanization rouses empathic sentiments and a strong sense of social obligation. This enlists self-evaluative reactions that motivate humane actions on behalf of others at sacrifice of one's self-interest or even at one's own peril. The rescuers viewed their behavior as a human duty rather than as extraordinary acts of heroism.

The transforming power of a sense of common humanity is further illustrated in a daughter's mission of vengeance (Blumenfeld, 2002). Her father, a New York rabbi, was shot and wounded in Jerusalem by Omar, a Palestinian militant. Twelve years later the daughter set out to gain revenge by forcing him to confront his victim's humanity. In the course of exchanging letters with the jailed gunman, under a concealed identity, the parental victim, militant gunman, and filial avenger were humanized in the process. In a dramatic courtroom parole hearing the daughter identified herself to Omar as she pleaded for his release from prison, vowing he would never hurt anyone again. He wrote to her father, likening his daughter to, "the mirror that made me see your face as a human person deserved to be admired and respected". Hatred that breeds escalative cycles of violence turned into mutual compassion.

At the national level, Nelson Mandela displaced hatred for the practitioners of apartheid, that could have produced a national bloodbath, with reconciliation by affirming common humanity. Social psychology often emphasizes the power of the situation over the individual. In this case of proactive moral courage, the individual triumphs as a moral agent over compelling situational forces.

Loci for Promoting Human Well-Being

People do not operate as autonomous agents, nor is their behavior wholly determined by situational influences. Rather, human well-being and attainments are products of a reciprocal interplay of intrapersonal, behavioral, and environmental determinants (Figure 1). All three of these complimentary classes of determinants – cognitive, behavioral, and environmental – can be enlisted in the service of human well-being. At the cognitive locus, self-hindering habits of thinking are supplanted with positive, enabling ones. Functional cognitive skills are cultivated for comprehending and managing one's environment in beneficial ways. The cognitive focus also involves commitment to values that give meaning and purpose to one's life.

People have a hand in shaping the course of their lives by the choices they make and the actions they take. They affect the world around them by how they express their beliefs and value commitments in their behavior. Efforts at the behavioral locus center on cultivating competencies and adopting behavioral pursuits which bring satisfaction through what one is doing. Efforts at the environmental locus are aimed at creating hospitable environments that foster personal development and provide supporting resources and opportunity structures that enable people to realize a satisfying and meaningful life.

A heavy self-oriented focus invites dismissal of positive psychology by critics as a "feel good psychology" in which individuals are self-absorbed in their emotional states. Positive psychology is not confined to the pursuit of happiness. Indeed, contentment does not make for personal growth and social efforts to improve the conditions of life. The striving for satisfaction and well-being must be considered within the broader purposes of life. Self-satisfaction comes from fulfilling standards linked to something one cares about. Personal investment in a desired future helps people to organize their lives, motivates them, enables them to put up with hassles along the way, and gives them meaning, purpose and a sense of accomplishment. Without commitment to something one feels is worth doing, individuals are bored, apathetic, and seek escape from the tedium in diversionary activities and hedonic gratifications.

It is not enough to have a vision of a future one cares deeply about. One has to invest the time and effort and put up with a lot of hassles to make it happen (Bandura, 1997; Locke & Latham, 1990). Long-range goals set the direction for one's pursuits. But there are too many competing influences for distant futures to regulate current behavior. Short-term subgoals focus efforts on what

has to be done in the here and now to turn a distal vision into reality. Subgoal accomplishments build belief in one's efficacy and beget satisfaction. These positive experiences create intrinsic interest in the activity. Through these motivational processes, even activities that initially held little interest can become a labor of love. People gain satisfaction from ongoing advancement toward what they value rather than suspend satisfaction until they fulfill the distal goals they set for themselves. Ongoing engagement in things one cares about provides the basis for a satisfying and meaningful life.

For life to be enduringly satisfying requires self-renewal for the transitional changes across the life course. When their worklife no longer commands their attention, people have to find new pursuits that give them a sense of purpose and satisfaction. With fore knowledge of their passing, their self-reflection turns to transcendental and spiritual issues.

There is a difference between pursuing happiness and achieving it through meaningful pursuits. Viewed from the perspective of social cognitive theory, perceived well-being and satisfaction are derived from how one lives one's life not just from episodic good feelings or transient pleasures. Annas (2004) has argued for broadening the perspective on the nature, determinants, and effects of perceived well-being and satisfaction. A society in which individuals strive to maximize their well-being with little regard for others would become an egocentric and divisive one. In contrast, a society in which individuals invest their well-being in the well-being of others as well would function more humanely, equitably, and with a sense of civic commitment.

At times, this involves even sacrifice of one's own well-being for the well-being of others. Millions of people are living under degrading conditions in social systems that marginalize them and deny them aspiration, their liberty and dignity. An agentic psychology also works toward enhancing people's well-being by enabling them to effect social reforms that improve the quality of their lives. These reform efforts are motivated by discontent with existing life conditions and hope for a better future. The concluding section of the chapter reviews such applications at the macrosocial level.

Comparative Determination of Subjective Well-Being

Many of the defining properties ascribed to subjective well-being have a hedonic flavor. They include high pleasant affect, low level of unpleasant affect, and satisfaction with one's lot in life. Self-satisfaction and subjective well-being are rooted in comparison processes. These include: Temporal comparison, social comparison, and aspirational comparison. The state of one's satisfaction and well-being is determined, in large part, relationally rather than solely by the absolute properties of one's life condition. For example, in contemporary society, even people of modest means are considerably better off than the royalty of yore in terms of objective life conditions, e.g., advanced health care, electrification, countless labor-saving devices, running water, cornucopia of appetizing food, limitless media entertainment, and speedy transportation, just to mention a few of the benefits.

The valence and functional status of the objective reality can be transformed depending on the relational context in which it occurs (Bandura, 1986; Premack, 1965). The same modest reward is satisfying in comparison with smaller prior rewards, but dissatisfying in comparison with large prior rewards. In *temporal comparison*, subjective well-being and satisfaction with one's life depends on whether it is better or worse than it was before. Even small gains can be dissatisfying if they fail to match larger prior ones (Bandura, 1991). Accomplishments in one's worklife that surpass earlier ones bring a continued sense of self-satisfaction. But people derive little satisfaction from smaller accomplishments, or even devalue them, after having made larger strides. The price of early notable success can be later self-dissatisfaction even with continuing attainments if they fall short of

one's earlier accomplishments. When Linus Pauling was asked what one does after winning the Nobel Prize, he replied, "Change fields, of course!" The strategy for maintaining a sense of well-being over the life course focuses on self-comparison during the period of progressive improvement, but shifts to social comparison with similar-aged cohorts when capabilities begin to wane in later years (Frey & Ruble, 1990).

People's judgments of their lot in life are also heavily influenced by unavoidable comparison with that of others. In *social comparison*, well-being and satisfaction depend on whether the quality of one's life compares favorable or unfavorably with the quality of life others enjoy. The people chosen for comparative evaluation makes a big difference in one's level of satisfaction. Even the rich, who compare themselves against the super rich flaunting their affluence, can drive themselves to discontent despite their objective wealth. In the past, social comparisons were largely confined to one's immediate environment. The prolific song writer, Irving Berlin, described how a bounded reality affects judgment of well-being in commenting on the hard times of his early life, "I never knew poverty because I never knew anything else."

People judge their satisfaction by what they make of their lives. In *aspirational comparison*, people's subjective well-being and satisfaction are influenced by how their life status measures up against the life ambition they set for themselves. For those who live up to the valued standards they set for themselves, life is likely to be satisfying and self-fulfilling. In contrast, those who see their life hopes dashed and opportunities foreclosed view their life as a disappointment.

Because of the relational nature of subjective well-being and satisfaction, individuals who vary markedly in objective life conditions may nevertheless be similarly satisfied with their lot in life. The combination of some improvement in one's life circumstances, being slightly better off than one's cohorts, and having low ambition for upward mobility can produce some measure of satisfaction with even a marginal existence. Conversely, stagnation or decline in one's life circumstances, seeing one's cohorts prosper, and adhering to high social status and riches as the standard of adequateness will breed discontent even in individuals living under objectively affluent conditions. Because of these dynamic comparative determinants, increases in wealth and alluring material possessions over time have not raised people's level of satisfaction with their lives (Diener & Seligman, 2004). For similar reasons, those living under impoverished conditions in Calcutta may not differ all that much in satisfaction with their lives from those living affluently amidst the balmy Palms in Beverley Hills.

The outcomes that figure in subjective well-being include not only material possessions and the approval of others, but self-evaluative ones as well. People live in a psychic environment largely of their own making. They have to live with themselves. They adopt standards of merit and morality and regulate their conduct and emotional life by their self-evaluative reactions. They do things that give them satisfaction and a sense of self-worth, and they refrain from behaving in ways that violate their standards because such conduct would bring self-disapproval. A sense of self-worth and positive self-regard weighs heavily in people's subjective well-being. Indeed, it would be difficult to enjoy a happy and satisfying life while harboring a low sense of self-worth.

Sociocognitive Model for Effecting Society-Wide Changes

The most ambitious applications of social cognitive theory toward human betterment are aimed at abating some of the most pressing global problems. Soaring population growth is an ecologically consequential global problem of massive proportions -- deforestation, advancing desertification, global warming, raising sea levels by ice-cap and glacial melting flooding low-lying

regions, topsoil erosion and sinking of water tables in the major food-producing regions, and depletion of fisheries. In addition to destroying the earth's life-support systems, soaring population growth is degrading the quality of life and draining resources needed for national development. Millions of people are living under squalid conditions and struggling to survive with scarcities of food, fresh water, and basic sanitation, medical services, and other necessities of life. Promotion of family planning is unique in the scope of its benefits (Cleland, 2006). It reduces the cycle of poverty, decreases maternal and child mortality, liberates women for personal development by relieving the burden of excessive childbearing, and aids environmental sustainability by stabilizing the planet's population, which is headed for a 50% increase in the next 50 years.

Another widespread problem is the pernicious gender inequality in familial, educational, health, and social life. In these societies women are subjugated, disallowed opportunities to develop their talents, denied their liberty and dignity. Given that women constitute approximately half of population, societies that marginalize or subjugate women undermine their nation's social, technological, and economic viability by neglecting this vast human resource. The spreading AIDS epidemic is another mounting global problem with devastating societal consequences. Some societies present unique problems that require special social themes tailored to their cultural practices. Approximately 130 million women in Africa are subjected to the brutal genital mutilation procedure. In our change program, Muslim clerics explain that these practices are not sanctioned by their religion. In the African nation of Mali, child traffickers trick impoverished parents with large families to give up children under the promise that they will receive good care and send money home. They are then sold for slave labor under inhumane conditions. Some are sold for the sex trade. They also sell orphans of parents who died of AIDS. The change programs dramatically expose these cruel practices.

Long-running serial dramas serve as the means for promoting personal and social changes. These productions bring life to people's everyday struggles and the effects of different social practices. The storylines speak ardently to people's fears, hopes, and aspirations for a better life. They inform, enable, motivate, and guide viewers for personal and social changes that can improve their lives. The dramatic productions are not just fanciful stories. They dramatize the realities of people's everyday lives and the impediments with which they struggle. These enabling dramas help viewers to see a better life and provide them with strategies and incentives that enable them to take the steps to realize it. The storylines model family planning, women's equality, degrading dowry systems, spouse abuse, environmental conservation, AIDS prevention and a variety of life skills. Hundreds of episodes get people emotionally engaged in the evolving lives of the models and identify with them.

There are three major components to this social cognitive approach to fostering society-wide changes (Bandura, 2001b). The first component is a *theoretical model*. It specifies the determinants of psychosocial change and the mechanisms through which they produce their effects (Bandura, 1986, 1997). The second component is a *translational and implementational model*. It converts theoretical principles into an innovative operational model, and specifies the content, strategies of change and their mode of implementation. Miguel Sabido, (1981) a creative playwright and producer, devised the translational model based on the tenets of social cognitive theory. The third component is a *social diffusion model* on how to promote adoption of psychosocial programs in diverse cultural milieus. Population Communications International (PCI) and the Population Media Center (PMC) serve as the global diffusion mechanisms (Poindexter, 2004; Ryerson, 1999).

Cultural and Value Analyses

These are not social programs foisted on nations by outsiders in pursuit of their self-interest. The dramatic serials are created only on invitation by countries seeking help with intractable problems and in partnership with their media personnel. Extensive cultural and value analyses are conducted to create serials appropriate to their culture. This formative phase identifies problems of major concern and the obstacles people face. These interviews provide the culturally relevant information for developing realistic characters and engrossing functional plotlines. The dramatizations are grounded in the internationally endorsed values codified in United Nations covenants and resolutions. These values embody respect for human dignity, equitable opportunities, and social practices that support common human aspirations. Once a program is aired, producers monitor how viewers perceive the characters, with whom they are identifying, how they view the dramatized options, and the types of futures they envision. The dramatized options and how they affect the course of life enable people to make informed choices to improve their lives.

Elements of Enabling Serials

There are four basic principles guiding the construction of the dramatic serials. The first principle enlists the power of *social modeling* for personal and social change. Seeing people similar to themselves change their lives for the better not only conveys strategies for how to do it, but raises 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.

Three types of contrasting models are used to highlight the personal and social effects of different styles of behavior. 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 discarding detrimental styles of behavior in favor of beneficial ones. Viewers are especially prone to draw inspiration from, and identify with, transforming models by seeing them surmount similar adverse life circumstances.

The second feature of the dramatic productions enlists *vicarious motivators* as incentives for change. Unless people see the modeled lifestyle as improving their welfare they have little incentive to adopt it. The personal and social benefits of the favorable practices, and the costs of the detrimental ones are vividly portrayed. Depicted beneficial outcomes serve as positive incentives for change, whereas depicted detrimental outcomes function as disincentives.

Some of the efforts at social change challenge power relations and entrenched societal practices supported by individuals who have a vested interest in preserving the adverse practices. Successes do not come easy. To change their lives for the better, people have to challenge adverse traditions and inequitable constraints. They must be prepared for the obstacles they are likely to encounter. There are several ways of building resilience to impediments through social modeling. Common problem situations and effective ways of overcoming them are modeled. People are taught how to manage setbacks by modeling how to recover from failed attempts, and enlist guidance and social support for personal change from self-help groups and other agencies in their localities. Seeing others succeed through perseverant effort also boosts staying power in the face of obstacles.

The third principle aids personal change by enhancing attentional and emotional engagement in the dramatized lives. To change deeply held beliefs and social practices requires strong emotional bonding to enabling models who exemplify a vision of a better future and realistic paths to it. Plotlines that dramatize viewers' everyday lives and functional solutions get people deeply involved. They form emotional ties to models who speak to their hopes and aspirations. Unlike brief exposures to media presentations, that typically leave most viewers untouched, ongoing engagement in the

evolving lives of the models provide numerous opportunities to learn from them and to be inspired by them.

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. Environmental guides and supports are provided to expand and sustain the changes promoted by the media. Epilogues delivered by culturally admired figures provide contact information to relevant community services and support groups.

Global Applications

Social cognitive principles are generalizable but their application has to be tailored to the cultural practices and the types of desired changes. Many worldwide applications of this creative format in Africa, Asia, and Latin America are promoting personal and society-wide changes that are bettering the lives of millions of people. Some of these applications and formal evaluations of their effects are summarized briefly in the sections that follow. These applications are reviewed elsewhere in greater detail (Bandura, 2006b; Singhal, Cody, Sabido, & Rogers, 2004).

Literacy is vital for personal and national development. To reduce widespread illiteracy, the Mexican government launched a national self-study 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 primers developed for this purpose. It was a good idea but enlisted few takers. So Sabido created a year-long serial with daily episodes to reach, enable, and motivate people to enlist in the program (Sabido, 1981). A popular performer was cast in the role of the literate model. She recruits a diverse set of characters to represent the different segments of the population with problems of illiteracy. Assumed similarity enhances the power of social modeling.

A prior interview survey revealed several personal barriers that dissuaded people from enrolling in the literacy program. 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 and the critical period was long gone. Still others felt that they were unworthy of having an educated person devote their time to them. These self-dissuading misbeliefs were modeled by the various characters and corrected by the mentor as she persuades them that they possess the capabilities to succeed.

The episodes included humor, conflicts, and engrossing discussions of the subjects being read. They portrayed the characters struggling in the initial phases of learning, and then gaining progressive mastery with 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. One of the epilogues, by an admired movie star, informed the viewers of this national self-education program and encouraged them to take advantage of it. The next day 25,000 people showed up at the distribution center to enroll in the self-study program!

Millions of viewers watched this series faithfully. Compared to nonviewers, 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. Enrollment in the literacy program was about 90,000 in the year before the televised series, but rose abruptly to a million during the year of the series (Sabido, 1981). As people develop a sense of efficacy and competencies that enable them to exercise better control over their lives, they serve as models, inspiration, and even tutors for others in the circles in which they travel. In the year following the televised series, another 400,000 people

enrolled in the self-study literacy program.

Another serial drama in Mexico promoted family planning to check the cycle of poverty heightened by a high rate of unplanned childbearing. Contrast modeling portrayed the process and benefits of family planning. The storyline centers on the lives of married sisters. The beneficial family life of a small family was contrasted with that of a married sister burdened by a huge family living in impoverishment and hopelessness. Much of the drama focused on the married daughter from the huge family living in her parents' despairingly crowded and impoverished environment. She has two children and is pregnant with the third. She is in marital conflict and distress over her desire for a voice in her family life and to cease having more babies that will condemn her family to an impoverished life without ability to care adequately for them. This young couple served as the transition model. As the drama unfolds, the couple is shown gaining control over their family life with the help of a family planning center, and bringing about meaningful changes in their family life. In epilogues, viewers were informed about family planning services to facilitate the changes.

Compared to nonviewers, heavy viewers were more likely to link lower childbearing to social, economic, and psychological benefits (Sabido, 1981). They also developed a more positive attitude toward helping others plan their family. Family planning centers reported a 32% increase in new contraceptive users over the number for the previous year. People reported that the televised program was the impetus for consulting the health clinics. National sales of contraceptives rose from low of 5% and 7% in the baseline years to an abrupt increase of 23% in the year the program was aired.

Efforts to reduce 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 subserviently. In some societies, the equity problems stem from machismo dominance; in others, from arranged marriage with no say in the choice of husband or the number and spacing of children; and in still others from dispossession by polygamous marriages. Exploiting the cultural preference for sons in India, radiologists offer cheap ultrasound tests to identify female fetuses, some of which get aborted. This practice is producing a growing imbalance of females to males that will have huge long-term societal consequences.

India has passed the 1 billion mark and is on the brink of surpassing China as the most populous nation in the world. At the present fertility rate, the population will double to 2 billion in 40 years. The serial in India 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). The subthemes devoted particular attention to 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 detriment of dowry requirements; 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 series was immensely popular, enjoying the top viewership on television and a massive outpouring of 400,000 letters from viewers offering advice and support to the characters. The programs fostered more equitable attitudes toward women. The more viewers were aware of the messages being modeled, the greater was their support of women's freedom of choice in matters that affect them and limiting family size (Brown & Cody, 1991; Singhal & Rogers, 1999). Intensive

interviews with village inhabitants revealed that the dramatizations sparked serious public discussions about the broadcast themes concerning child marriages, dowry requirements, education of girls, the benefits of small families, and other social issues (Papa, et al., 2000). The enrollment of girls in elementary and junior high schools rose from 10% to 38% in one year of the broadcasts.

The serial drama in Kenya illustrates the creative tailoring of storylines to key cultural values. Land ownership is highly valued in Kenya. A major storyline in this serial drama linked the impoverishing effect of large families to the inheritance of land. The contrast modeling centered on two brothers, one of whom has one wife, a son and several daughters, whereas the other brother has multiple wives, nine sons and even more daughters. They squabble over how to pass on the inherited family farm to their next generation. In Kenya, only sons can inherit property. The monogamous brother argues that his lone male heir is entitled to half the land, the polygamous brother insists on dividing the farm into ten small plots which would provide, at best, a marginal subsistence for them all. In another concurrent plotline, a teacher pleads with parents, who want their young daughter to quit school, be circumcised and married off to an arranged partner, to allow her to continue her education which she desperately desires.

The serial drama, which was broadcast via radio to reach rural areas, attracted 40% of the Kenyan population each week as the most popular program on the air. Adoption of contraceptive use increased by 58%, and desired family size declined 24%. A survey of women who came to health clinics reported that the radio series helped to persuade their husbands to allow them to seek family planning. Quantitative analyses included multiple statistical controls for possible determinants (Westoff & Rodriguez, 1995). These included life-cycle status, number of wives and children, and a host of socioeconomic factors such as ethnicity, religion, education, occupation and urban-rural resident. The media effect remained after applying these multiple controls. The social impact of the dramatizations was enhanced with increased exposure to them. Internal analyses of evaluation surveys further revealed that the media influence was a major factor in raising motivation to limit birthrate and adopt contraception practices.

China 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 that already are plagued with advancing desertification and massive air and water pollution. Urban areas have achieved replacement level fertility, but the inhabitants in rural areas continue to have large families. The Chinese one-child policy heightens the traditional cultural preferences for sons.

This televised serial, which won numerous prestigious awards, addressed a variety of societal issues with multiple intersecting plots, in addition to the discriminatory gender norms and practices. These include girl's education, arranged marriages, coerced pregnancy, son preference, and allowing women to have some voice in their lives. The dramatizations graphically portray the tragedy and injustice of social practices that force women into arranged marriages they do not want and bearing baby girls who are culturally devalued.

Societies are undergoing a historic transition to the information era. It is supplanting brawn with intellect in modern work life. At times of transformative change, there is a mismatch or structural lag between dated normative practices and contemporary social reality. The drama tries to foster a better normative match to the challenges and opportunities of this new era.

In this serial a father is desperate to receive a dowry payment so he can buy a bride for his son, his pride and joy. He demands that his daughter agree to an arranged marriage to an arrogant man of means. She resists because she is in love with a musician of modest means. But to spare her younger

sister, who the father targets next, she eventually agrees to the arranged marriage. As the wedding procession is going down the river, her boyfriend is running along the river bank shouting to her and playing a tune he played when they first met. Her husband is enraged by the boyfriend's intrusion. He kicks out the guests after the wedding ceremony and rapes her. She finds herself trapped in a miserable marriage with an abusive husband. As the story unfolds, she gives birth to a female infant. He demands she get pregnant again to bear him a son. She leaves him, remarries, and pursues a successful career.

Viewers were 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 central figure in this serial has become a highly admired national model for raising the valuation of women and expanding opportunities for them to become active participant in the social and economic life of Chinese society.

Tanzania, which contains regions with separate radio transmitters, provided a unique opportunity for an experimental comparison of the effectiveness of the serial dramas to a non-broadcast region coupled with a delayed treatment design. The population of Tanzania is 36 million, the fertility rate is 5.6 children per woman, and the doubling time for the population at the current rate is 25 years. No economic development can cope with this soaring population.

The serial drama was broadcast by radio in one major region of the country and the other region served as the control. The program targeted both family planning and sexual practices that increase vulnerability to infection with the AIDS virus. At the outset, the populace was well informed about contraception and AIDS prevention and were not unfavorably disposed toward such practices. They had access to contraceptive methods and family planning clinics. But they did not translate these attitudes into action. When other influences conflict with personal attitudes, people can find reasons not to act on their attitudes or justify exemptions to them. The problem was neither informational nor attitudinal, but motivational. The dramatic series provided the impetus for change.

Compared to the control region, the serialized dramatizations raised viewers' perceived efficacy to determine their family size, decreased the 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, Vaughan, Swalehe, Rao, Svenkerud, & Sood, 1999). Both regions increased slightly at the same rate during the three year prebroadcast period. The adoption rate increased only slightly in the control region but at an abrupt pronounced rate in the broadcast region. These effects were replicated when the serial was later broadcast in the control region. The replicated effects provide further support for a genuine conditional relation.

As in the Kenya findings, the more often people listened to the broadcasts, the more the married women talked to their spouses about family planning and the higher the rate of adoption of contraceptive methods. These diverse effects remained after multiple controls for other potential determinants, including exposure to other radio programs with family planning and AIDS contents, prebroadcast levels and changes in education, increased access to family planning clinics, radio ownership, and rural-urban differences.

Some segments were included to prevent the spread of the AIDS virus. A particular problem was the transmission of AIDS heterosexually by long-distance truckers at truck stop hubs with hundreds of prostitutes. About 60% of them are infected, and about a third of the truck drivers are also infected. The common belief was that AIDS is transmitted by mosquitoes. Some of the males

believed that condoms caused infection, that having sexual intercourse with a virgin would cure AIDS, and that sex with young girls is safe because they are unlikely to be infected. The program quickly debunked the false beliefs.

In the contrast modeling, the negative trucker engages in risky sex with multiple partners; the positive model adopted safer sex practices and cut back on the number of partners; and the transitional model begins with risky practices but adopts safer ones. The truckers using the safer practices try unsuccessfully to talk their friend into changing his risky ways. He refuses. His wife fears that she will get infected. The community helps her to gain employment to support her family. She leaves her husband, who eventually gets infected and dies of AIDS.

Compared to residents in the control region, those in the broadcast region increased belief in their personal risk of HIV infection through unprotected sexual practices, talked more about HIV infection, reduced the number of sexual partners, and increased condom use (Vaughan, Rogers, Singhal, & Swalehe, 2000). The number of condoms distributed annually by the National AIDS program remained low in the control region, increased substantially in the broadcast region, and increased significantly in the control region after exposure later to the broadcast.

The serial drama in Ethiopia also addressed the widespread AIDS problem. Compared to their baseline status and to that of non-viewers, the viewers were more informed on how to determine their HIV status. They were more likely to get a blood test for their HIV status. Knowing one's serostatus fosters adoption of safer-sex practices (McKusick, Coates, Morin, Pollack & Hoff, 1990). To augment the impact of the serial drama, the truckers and sex workers were provided audiocassettes focused on AIDS prevention. They lined up eagerly for each new episode.

Like the other serial dramas, the radio serial in Sudan had multiple intersecting plot lines. These included the benefits of family planning to limit the number of children and their spacing, providing educational opportunities for daughters, the injustice of forced marriage and risks of early childbearing, domestic violence, embroilment in drug activities leading to a life of crime and narcotics, and prevention of HIV infection. A special theme centered on the devastating consequences of the widespread practice of genital mutilation. In the dramatization, Muslim clerics disapproved such practices as without religious justification. As the storyline unfolds, the dangers and deadly consequences of this practice were portrayed. It reversed the social norm from favoring this brutal practice to widespread support for abolishing it.

The Population Media Center assists in creating significant social themes that can be easily incorporated into the popular *telenovelas* on TV Globo in Rio de Janeiro. Dubbed into different languages, the prime-time telenovas reaches 900 million people worldwide.

Concluding Remarks

Humans have an unparalleled capacity to influence the course and quality of their lives. The present chapter documents the benefits across diverse spheres of life of an agentic positive psychology that accents human enablement rather than dwells on human failings and dysfunctions. The lives that people lead are rooted in social systems. The potentialities they cultivate and the life paths that become open to them are partly determined by the societal systems to which their development and well-being are entrusted. Social systems that cultivate competencies, build people's belief in their efficacy to influence events that affect their lives, create equitable opportunity structures, provide aidful resources, and allow leeway for self-directedness, increase the changes that people will realize what they wish to become and gain a sense of fulfillment in what

they make of their lives. An agentic positive psychology also addresses future societal and ecological well-being. This includes improving the quality of life in societies at large, and preserving a habitable planet for future generations.

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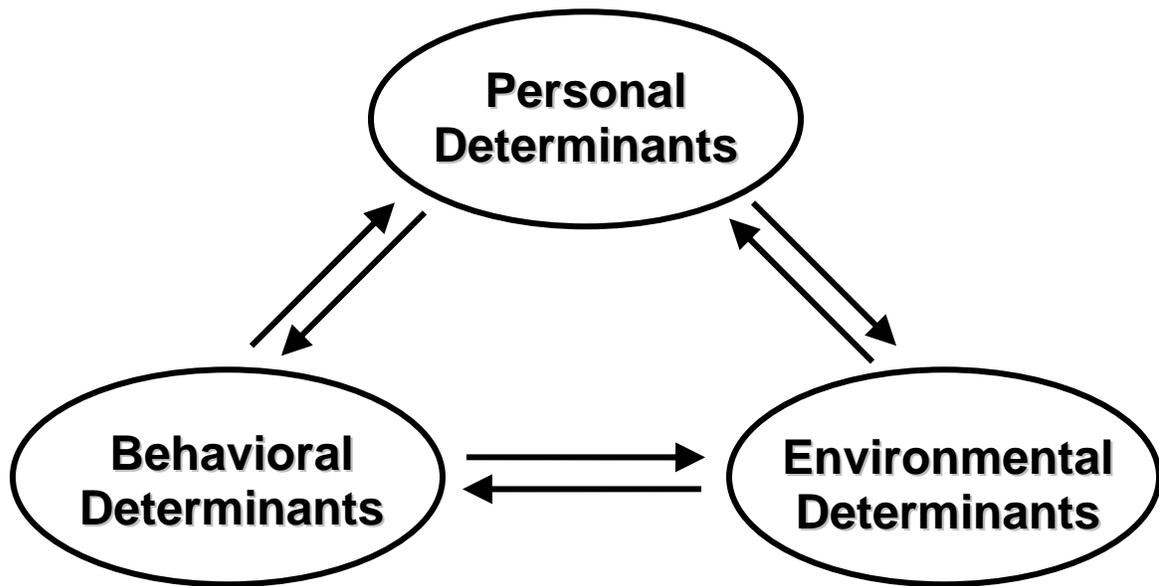


Figure 1. Schematization of triadic reciprocal determination through the dynamic interplay of intrapersonal, behavioral, and environmental influences.