

Applying psychology: PCI media impact and prosocial modeling

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The University of Alberta was presented an incredible opportunity this summer, when Dr. Albert Bandura graced us with a thought-provoking presentation. The lecture revolved around social learning theory as applied to the dilemma of population growth and global human rights, presenting an innovative solution to an ever-growing problem.

Dr. Bandura spoke about his international endeavours with PCI Media Impact. This project is based on Dr. Bandura's social learning theory and is used to positively impact the lives of people in developing countries. PCI Media Impact produces affordable radio and televised serial dramas for developing countries. These dramas explore such topics as sexual and reproductive health, literacy, treatment of women, and economic sustainability. In many ways similar to soap operas, the dramas portray three scenarios: negative modeling and the inevitable consequences; positive modeling and the many ways such behaviour can benefit an individual; and transitional modeling, which demonstrates that everybody is capable of changing his or her behaviour for the better.

According to the research that PCI has conducted, prosocial modeling has proven to be an effective tool. As a result of the Indian program *Taru*, one village experienced a 680% increase in condom sales (PCI Media Impact, n.d.). Much of the modeling has self-sustaining results – in other words, the target audiences are not taught dependence

but rather independence. The educational benefits of such a program are immense, and Dr. Bandura noted that countries were requesting the program faster than programs could be produced.

Many of the questions posed to Bandura after his talk focused on how to bring this technology home and implement it on Canadian soil. He acknowledged that this was a largely international project, but examples of prosocial modeling in North America might include such shows as *Sesame Street*, which recently introduced an HIV-positive character. Although his reply to this topic was short due to time constraints, it proposed an interesting research path for any psychologist.

I found the lecture inspiring on many levels, and was most motivated in terms of professional options. As students of psychology we are privileged to have a wide variety of career choices available to us, and Dr. Bandura's lecture emphasized how a degree in psychology can be applied in any arena. With such great opportunity surrounding us, combined with motivation, any psychology student can surely have a positive impact on our global society.

References

PCI Media Impact. (n.d.). *Telling stories, saving lives: India*. Retrieved June 20, 2010, from www.population.org/programs_india_taru.shtml