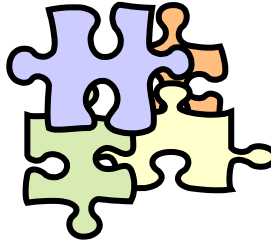# Engaging and Mobilizing Society through Edutainment[1]

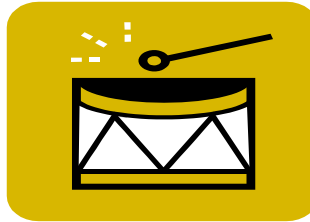## Experience-Sharing and Cross-Learning among Four Pioneering Organizations

by

Arvind Singhal, Ph.D.
Samuel Shirley and Edna Holt Marston Endowed Professor
Department of Communication
University of Texas @ El Paso
El Paso, TX 79912, USA
asinghal@utep.edu

and

Virginia Lacayo
Ph.D. Student
School of Media Arts and Studies
Ohio University
Athens, Ohio 45701, USA
lacayo@mac.com

A Narrative Presented to Oxfam-Novib, KIC Project

The Drum-Roll….

Engaging and Mobilizing Society through Edutainment

The stage:	**Ingwenya Country Estate, outskirts of Johannesburg, South Africa.**
The season:	**March 12 to 21, 2007.**
The actors:	**Representatives of four pioneering edutainment and social change organizations that work in four different settings.**

- Soul City Institute of Health and Development Communication, South Africa.
- Puntos de Encuentro, Nicaragua.
- Breakthrough, India and USA.
- La Benevolencija, Rwanda, Burundi, and D R Congo

The crew and roles:	**Executive and Associate Producers**

- Oxfam Novib (funder, backstage)
- Academic scholars (facilitators, front-stage)
- Learners (observers/participants, side-stage)
- Scribes (rapporteurs/notetakers, roaming)

The purpose	**South-South peer learning and South-North reverse learning**
The outcomes	**Multiple**

- Tangible and intangible
- Relational and material

The learning	**The narrative that follows**

Lights! Camera! Action!

Experience-Sharing and Cross-Learning among Representatives of Four Pioneering Communication for Social Change Organizations

The Cast and Crew

Engaging and Mobilizing Society through Edutainment

Experience-Sharing and Cross-Learning among Four Pioneering Organizations

Table of Contents

Edutainment: Dare to Imagine?

"Is it possible?" I asked

"It is if you dare to imagine it," came the reply.

* * *

Is it possible to harness the power of commercial media for social good? Can a citizenry be engaged through quality entertainment fare and be simultaneously challenged to question their existing reality? Is it possible for the "popular" to be "purposive"?

Four organizations, located in four different parts of the world, dared to imagine that such was possible[2]. Believers in, and leaders of, a communication for social change approach called edutainment (short for "entertainment-education"), espouse, embody, and enact the synergies of combining the popular with the purposive. Over the years, through the creative use of communication processes, these four organizations have developed a knowledge-base, a know-how, that is their stock in trade: Their precious intellectual capital.
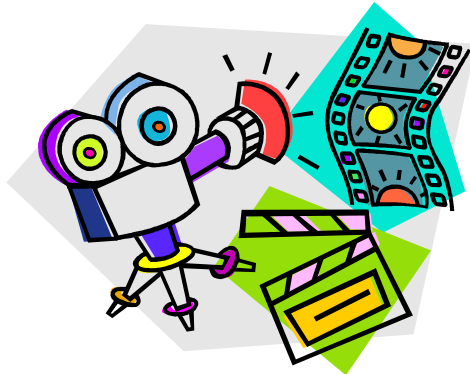
Edutainment, Mixing the Popular With the Purposive

In March, 2007, over a ten-day period, 4-5 representatives of each of these organizations, located in different parts of the developing world, met in South Africa to share their intellectual capital, engage in peer-learning, discuss their individual and collective challenges, and to chart formal and informal collaborative alliances during workshop sessions, small group processes, and field visits.
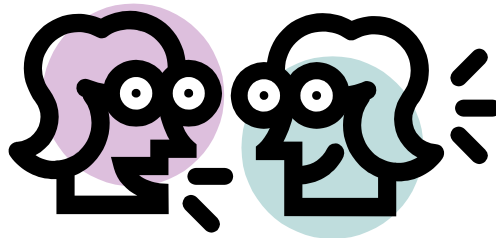
The four organizations included:

1. Soul City Institute of Health and Development Communication (www.soulcity.org.za).

Soul City is an innovative multi-media health promotion and social change initiative, reaching more than 16 million South Africans through prime-time television, radio drama, and printed materials. Through its multi-media and advocacy strategies, including its flagship television dramas, *Soul City* and *Soul Buddyz*, the Institute strives to create an enabling environment to empower audiences to make healthy choices, both as individuals and as communities.

2. Puntos de Encuentro (www.puntos.org.ni).

Puntos de Encuentro ("Meeting Places" or "Common Ground") is a Nicaraguan NGO that promotes youth and women's rights, challenging social norms and unequal power relationships[3]. Puntos combines cutting-edge media, leadership training, community education, and alliance building as tools for creating a just society. Its popular television soap opera, *Sexto Sentido* (Sixth Sense) is part of a multimedia strategy that includes a daily radio talk show, a feminist magazine, billboards, and other allied activities.

3. Breakthrough (www.breakthrough.tv)

Breakthrough, an international human rights organization, uses media and popular culture to promote values of dignity, equality and justice. With offices in India and the United States, Breakthrough addresses a wide range of issues including gender-based discrimination, HIV/AIDS, immigrant rights and racial justice. Breakthrough's hit music video, *Mann Ke Manjeere*, enacted the journey of a fearless woman who leaves an abusive marriage and works as a truck driver to support herself and her daughter. The video helped initiate a public debate in India on the topic of violence against women. In recent years, Breakthrough has launched hard-hitting multi-media campaigns in India including *What Kind of a Man Are You?* and *Is This Justice,* advocating for greater male responsibility in HIV/AIDS prevention and to address the stigma and discrimination faced by HIV-positive women.

4. La Benevolencija (www.labenevolencija.org)

La Benevolencija produces radio programs in Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo, educating listeners about preventing ethnic violence, moving toward reconciliation, and coping with the trauma of genocide. Begun in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide of 1994 which claimed over 800,000 lives, La Benevolencija airs a popular soap opera *Musekewya* and other radio programs, explaining the origins of violence, how it evolves, and how to prevent it.

Cross-Border Experience-Sharing

While this workshop was initially viewed as a KIC (South-South exchange) project, in its final outcome it was also consistent with KIC-Novib's emphasis on South-North "reverse development." Representatives were engaged from organizations in The Netherlands and the U.S, as well as from the UNICEF India country office, to participate in the discussions and to learn from the participants' expertise. These representatives include:

*Two officials from UNICEF India, Supriya Mukherji and Naysán Sahba, interested in the topic of edutainment, and now engaged in the production of an edutainment soap opera on Indian television,

*Researchers and scholars Dr. Martine Bouman of Netherlands[4] and Dr. Arvind Singhal, then of Ohio University and now at the University of Texas @ El Paso[5], both experts in edutainment, who co-facilitated several workshop sessions, including the ones on theories of communication-for-change, as well as impact evaluation of edutainment programs,

*Virginia Lacayo, a doctoral student in the School of Media Arts and Studiesat Ohio University and a former co-manager of Puntos de Encuentro, Nicaragua, who together with Professor Arvind Singhal, led the process of systematizing and documenting the outcomes of the workshop in the form of the present report,

*Olaf van Oudheusden, radio broadcaster from the Dutch VPRO, who actively participated in the workshop deliberations and, among other things, produced two items for the Dutch radio program *De Ochtenden* ('The Mornings'), one about *Soul City* Community make-over television show (which was in production during our visit), and another dedicated to La Benevolencija.

*Ester Veldhuis of Oxfam Novib in the Netherlands, who championed this workshop (including supporting it with KIC funds) to provide an opportunity for cross-learning among peer organizations engaged in edutainment, advocacy, and social change in different parts of the world.

The Build-Up to South Africa

The seeds for the March, 2007 workshop were planted a year previously when in March 2006, three of the four participating organisations (Soul City, Puntos de Encuentro, and Breakthrough) came together for the first time for a two day workshop hosted by Oxfam Novib in

the Netherlands as part of its knowledge sharing initiative (part of the KIC project)[6]. This was more or less a spontaneous meeting encouraged by the fact that both Puntos and Breakthrough were participating in the 50th anniversary celebrations of Novib in the Netherlands. There was thus an opportunity for organizations working in the same domain to meet and discuss how they could systematize their experiences, share with others, and others and promote edutainment as a communication strategy for social change. Two days in The Netherlands in 2006 were not enough to discuss the gamut of issues that interested the participants. Many questions of common concern were raised: for instance, how to maintain ownership of the edutainment while partnering with mainstream television? How to sell one's product in the market? How to sustain buzz about the edutainment initiative over a long period of time? How to design evaluations that respond to the interest of the donors as well as those of the implementing organizations? And how to design and implement sound evaluations with limited budgets while building in-house capacity? How to preserve organizational identity as projects are up-scaled? How to improve organizational sustainability and, alongside, achieve independence from donors? How important is the notion of "brand" for a development organization, and how to pursue it systematically? How branding affects the politics of partnership with other stakeholders? And many more.

This first meeting in Netherlands in March 2006, and its ensuing outcomes, was supported by Novib as part of their knowledge-sharing initiative to establish "communities of practice" about entertainment-education strategies. The fact that all three participating organizations had experience and expertise in their own home-grown approaches to edutainment called for an ongoing dialogue. Over the ensuing months, plans for a more formal workshop began to emerge to address the questions raised in the Netherlands workshop.   Perhaps more organizations could participate and there could be more time to reflect in depth about communication and edutainment strategies for social change, strategic planning and evaluation, marketing, branding and up-scaling, sustainability, private sector involvement and celebrity engagement, and the like.

Above all, the purpose of both meetings was to encourage cross learnings among practitioners who used entertainment initiatives to foster social change. Through a systematization of their edutainment experiences, triumphs, challenges, and lessons the participating organizations could not only learn from each other, but other organizations interested in edutainment could also benefit from this exchange.

Affirming South-South and South-North Knowledge Flows

The 2007 four organization workshop was hosted by the Soul City Institute of Health and Development Communication in the picturesque Ingwenya Country Estate retreat, located on the outskirts of Johannesburg.

Workshop Participants in South Africa

       While all four organizations work in different settings, workshop participants were able to highlight their similarities and look for common experiences, successes, and challenges. Workshop discussions centered on many topics, including what each organization was doing in their local environment; how they forged on-the-ground partnerships and built alliances with other stakeholders; what theories, methods, and/or intuition guided their work; their struggles in fund-raising and program evaluation, including how they couched program effectiveness in donor-driven performance metrics, and the like. The value of theory, models, frameworks, and approaches, including their pitfalls, were broached; the new possibilities afforded by positive deviance approaches (www.positivedeviance.org) and complexity science were discussed; and the benefits and challenges related to marketing, branding, corporate sponsorships and private sector involvement in edutainment initiatives were mulled over.

       The workshop employed a mixed discussion format, comprising indoor presentations, lectures, and dialogue, as well as outdoor group work. Further, a day-long field visit to Munsieville Township (which we discuss later in this narrative) was also included where Soul City was piloting its reality TV-based community makeover project.

Outdoor Group Work

Social Justice: Whom and How?

"Justice for whom?" I asked.

"For all," came the reply.

* * *

What is Just Change? Who Determines?

All four organizations are engaged in social change activities, addressing issues such as human rights, domestic violence, HIV/AIDS prevention, prejudice and discrimination (on the basis of gender, age, race, class, caste, and disability), HIV prevention and stigma, and community empowerment. Although they all work toward the creation of more equitable and just societies, where people can enjoy equal rights and opportunities, their foci -- or locus of intervention – is determined by the exigencies of their local context.

Notably, all four organizations were built ground-up. Soul City, Puntos, and Breakthrough were created by, of, and for the local people, and La Benevolencija, despite some outside influence in its establishment, is firmly anchored in the ground realities of Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and run by mostly a local staff to meet the needs of local people. All organizations developed their own unique communication-centered approach to social change. While some may have had some knowledge of parallel experiences in other parts of the world, but it is fair to say that they began mostly from scratch, and build their portfolio of programmatic activities based on local needs accompanied with loads of trial and error. What is certain is that the communities in which these organizations work recognize them as being part of them. These organizations represent leading communication and social change organizations in their countries, and their activities and outcomes reflect their local realities and identities.

What is the local context in which these four organizations work? What drives what they do? What kind of changes do they seek in the social context in which they operate?

La Benevolencija[7]

Through its radio programs in Rwanda, Burundi, and Democratic Republic of Congo located in the Great Lakes [Grand Lacs] Region), La Benevolencija, educates its listeners about preventing ethnic violence, moving toward reconciliation, and coping with the trauma of genocide. The radio soap opera *Musekewya* in Rwanda, and the accompanying discussion programs *Kuki*

and *Akuzuyomutima*, engage the audiences to explain the origins of violence, how hatred evolves, how to prevent it, and what it takes for trauma healing.

To understand the context in which Radio Benevolencija operates, let's revisit the key events in Rwanda from 1994.   After Rwandan President Juvénal Habyarimana's plane was shot down on April 6, 1994, Rwanda, the tiny central African country, deep-down in the middle of Africa, plunged into chaos, witnessing unspeakable horrors[8]. Ironically, it was radio, notably the privately-owned radio station RTLM (and the newspaper *Kangura*), the voice of the majority Hutu power, that laid the groundwork for the genocide, explicitly and relentlessly blamed the ethnic Tutsis for the president's death, demonizing them as the enemy, and calling for their mass extermination. As Hutu students killed Tutsi teachers and Hutu neighbors slaughtered their Tutsi neighbors, thousands of Tutsis hid in churches across the country for sanctuary. Huddled under one location, these Tutsis became even easier prey for Hutu death squads who lobbed grenades into altars, clubbed people with sticks, and hacked them with machetes. As the genocide unfolded, RTLM urged more efficiency in killing the Tutsis, furnishing Hutu listeners with the names, addresses and automobile license plate numbers of Tutsis who were still to be killed.

Lieutenant General Romeo Dallaire, the hapless commander of the inadequate UN peacekeeping force in Rwanda, when the genocide occurred reflected: Rwanda "is a story of betrayal, failure, naïveté, indifference, hatred, genocide, war, inhumanity and evil…. Although ethical and courageous behavior was displayed, it was overshadowed by one of the fastest, most efficient, most evident genocides in recent history." In 100 days in the summer of 1994, the Hutu majority population murdered over 800,000 of the 1.5 million Tutsi minority citizens, most of them brutally hacked by machetes, while "the developed world, impassive and apparently unperturbed, sat back and watched the unfolding apocalypse."[9] Fifty years previously, after the Holocaust in which six million Jews were murdered in Nazi concentration camps, "humanity had stated 'never again,' but we could not find the political will or the resources to stop the unspeakable horror in Rwanda. The genocide in Rwanda was a failure of humanity that could easily happen again."

While surfing the Internet, we stumbled across the picture (below) from the Rwandan genocide. "Two unremarkable coffins with crosses. Two victims," we thought. Wrong! The caption noted that each coffin carried the remains (skulls, skeletons, and bones) of up to 200 people. Such are the disproportional horrors of genocide – an unfathomable scale of human destruction, grief, and trauma.

Disproportional Horrors of Genocide[10]

La Benevolencija's explicit goal: Never again should this happen again!

Puntos de Encuentro[11]

Relative to Radio Benevolencija mission, Puntos in Nicaragua, takes a relatively non-prescriptive route: Through it various media vehicles and outreach programs, it aims to influence the social context in which individuals live, and create conversational spaces where citizens can discuss and decide what kind of change they wish to achieve.

Founded in 1991 by a small group of feminist activists, Puntos combines cutting-edge media and edutainment formats, leadership training, community education, and alliance building as tools for creating a just society. The organization, relentlessly, links the personal with the political, questions power relations and shows alternatives, encourages networking, critical thinking, private and public dialogue and debate, and builds social support systems to create an environment open to informed personal and collective change.

Puntos' engagement with the media started modestly in 1991 with a 12 page mimeographed newsletter, *La Boletina*, that covered Nicaragua's women's movement. In 2007, with a print run of 26,000 copies, and each copy read by an average of six people, *La Boletina* is the largest circulation magazine in Nicaragua. Distributed to more than 1,000 women's groups by a volunteer network, *La Boletina* is Puntos' means for local organizing, consciousness-raising, and popular education. It is Puntos' most significant contribution to the Nicaraguan women's movement[12] connecting women and women's groups across the country, building a sense of belonging, and fostering visibility of the women's movements and its actions.

In 1992, a year after it was established, Puntos expanded its constituency to the youth, realizing that they were equally silenced (as women) by authoritarianism and violence in Nicaraguan society. Accordingly, Puntos launched *Sexto Sentido Radio*, a daily, youth-run "call-in" radio program, which became an instant hit. In 2007, in its 15th year of live broadcast on 11 local stations and via the Internet, *Sexto Sentido Radio* is perhaps the longest-running of the youth, for the youth, and by the youth radio program.

In 1996, Puntos organized its first annual youth leadership camp to address the demand for more in-depth discussion and training on issues of concern to young people. Now in its 11th year, Puntos has institutionalized this youth capacity building program (LIDERarte), providing an avenue for Nicaraguan youth from all walks of life to confront various forms of social discrimination in the communities where they live and work.

In the mid-1990s, Puntos floated the idea of developing *Sexto Sentido* (Sixth Sense), an indigenous television soap series, to reach a much broader population in Nicaragua, especially during a time of growing conservatism. With no in-house experience in television production, and no locally-produced drama series on Nicaraguan television, Puntos was starting from scratch. However, by leveraging its ten years of experience in working with young people and its know-how in developing mass media campaigns on domestic violence and sexual and reproductive rights, in 2001, *Sexto Sentido* went on the air, becoming the springboard for Puntos' first large scale multi-media, multi-level strategy *"Somos Diferentes, Somos Iguales"* ("We're Different, We're Equal"). Running for four seasons (2001 to 2005), and watched by 70 percent of Nicaragua's television audience, *Sexto Sentido* addressed bold topics in sexual and reproductive health, overt and covert prejudice and discrimination, and rights of the weak, vulnerable, and the marginalized, personalizing them in stories that reflected the problems, decisions, triumphs, and challenges of a group of young Nicaraguans. In 2007, reruns of *Sexto Sentido* are being broadcast on major television channels in Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico. *Sexto Sentido* has won several international awards and has been featured in over 40 film festivals in the U.S. and internationally.[13]

A Puntos Billboard on "We Need to be Able to Talk" Campaign

Beyond mediated television and radio fare[14], Puntos' media protagonists (e.g. major characters in *Sexto Sentido*) further break the silence about issues such as rape, abortion, and HIV

stigma in real-life: They take stands against abusive relationships, question gay stereotypes, and create visible and audible alternatives to unequal power relations. Building on platforms for public discourse created by popular television and radio, tours of the *Sexto Sentido* cast to high schools all across Nicaragua (and in other Central American countries), and the accompanying large-scale distribution of educational audiovisual and print materials, young people are provided safe spaces where they can facilitate dialogue and debates to voice opinions, share experiences, challenge biases, negotiate different viewpoints, and make decisions about how and where to create change in their lives.

In overall terms, Puntos strategically combines media and education with alliance-building partnerships with youth and women-friendly service providers to support on-the-ground social change movements in Nicaragua and Central America.

Breakthrough[15]

Founded by Mallika Dutt, a former Program Officer for the Human Rights & Social Justice Program at the Ford Foundation's New Delhi office, Breakthrough is a human rights organization that uses popular media channels to promote values of dignity, equality and justice[16]. With operations in India and the United States, Breakthrough focuses on gender-based discrimination, HIV/AIDS stigma, immigrant rights, and racial justice.

Breakthrough's first media splash came in 2001 with *Mann Ke Manjeere*, an album featuring renowned singer Shubha Mudgal that called for a new age Indian woman -- one who can dream, make her own choices, and knows her basic rights to life. The title song, which became a hit music video was inspired by the life of a young woman in Ahmedabad, Shameem Pathan. Born in a well-to-do family, the only daughter among seven sons, Shameen fell in love, marrying the man of her choice against family wishes. Finding herself in an abusive relationship, and with a three-year old son to support, Shameem left her husband to fend for herself. After a series of entrepreneurial ventures, including milk vending and kite-making, Shameem learned how to drive, an unheard occupation for an Indian woman, making a career as a van driver.

In the music video, actress Mita Vasisht dramatizes Shameem's life, enacting the journey of a fearless woman who leaves an abusive marriage and works as a truck driver. As she drives, women of all ages and backgrounds climb into the truck to escape the violence they face in their lives. They dance on the truck and then on the sand dunes of Rajasthan, raising consciousness about the issue of violence against women, women in non-traditional occupations, and women's access to public space. Winner of the Screen Awards 2001 in India and nominated by the MTV Awards for best Indian pop music video category, *Mann ke Manjeeré* reached 26 million households via satellite music television channels, mainstreaming discussions about domestic violence issues throughout South Asia and reaching as far as Tajikistan, Indonesia and the United States.

Mita Vasisht in *Mann Ke Manjeere,* signifying the New Age Indian Woman

In 2005, Breakthrough, launched a multi-media campaign, "What Kind of Man Are You?" to bring public attention to the growing incidence of HIV/AIDS amongst women in India, including the responsibility of the Indian male to use condoms to protect their wives from HIV-infection.

What Kind of a Man Are You?

Breakthrough's 2007 multi-media campaign in India was *Is This Justice?*, drawing public attention the stigma and discrimination faced by Women Living with HIV/AIDS (WLHA), most of who have been infected by their husbands or male partners.

Is This Justice?

Almost 80 percent of Indian women who are HIV-positive contracted the infection from their husbands or partners. Almost 90 percent of these positive women are thrown out of their homes after their husband dies of AIDS. *Is This Justice* questions how women in Indian society are ill-treated, especially if they are HIV-positive, or after their husbands die of AIDS[17]. The consequences of contracting HIV/AIDS for a woman are severe: She faces homelessness, increased violence, loss of jobs and families and lack of access to treatment and care."

In the United States, Breakthrough addresses issues of immigration and racism, especially in the wake of the 1996 immigration laws under which long-time residents can be detained and deported without access to due process and a fair day in court. Breakthrough's Value Families campaign uses creative multi-media such as, video interviews, stand-up comedy, interactive toolkits, and animations to examine how the policies are unconstitutional, unnecessary, and demean those who believe in American values (as the cartoon below illustrates).
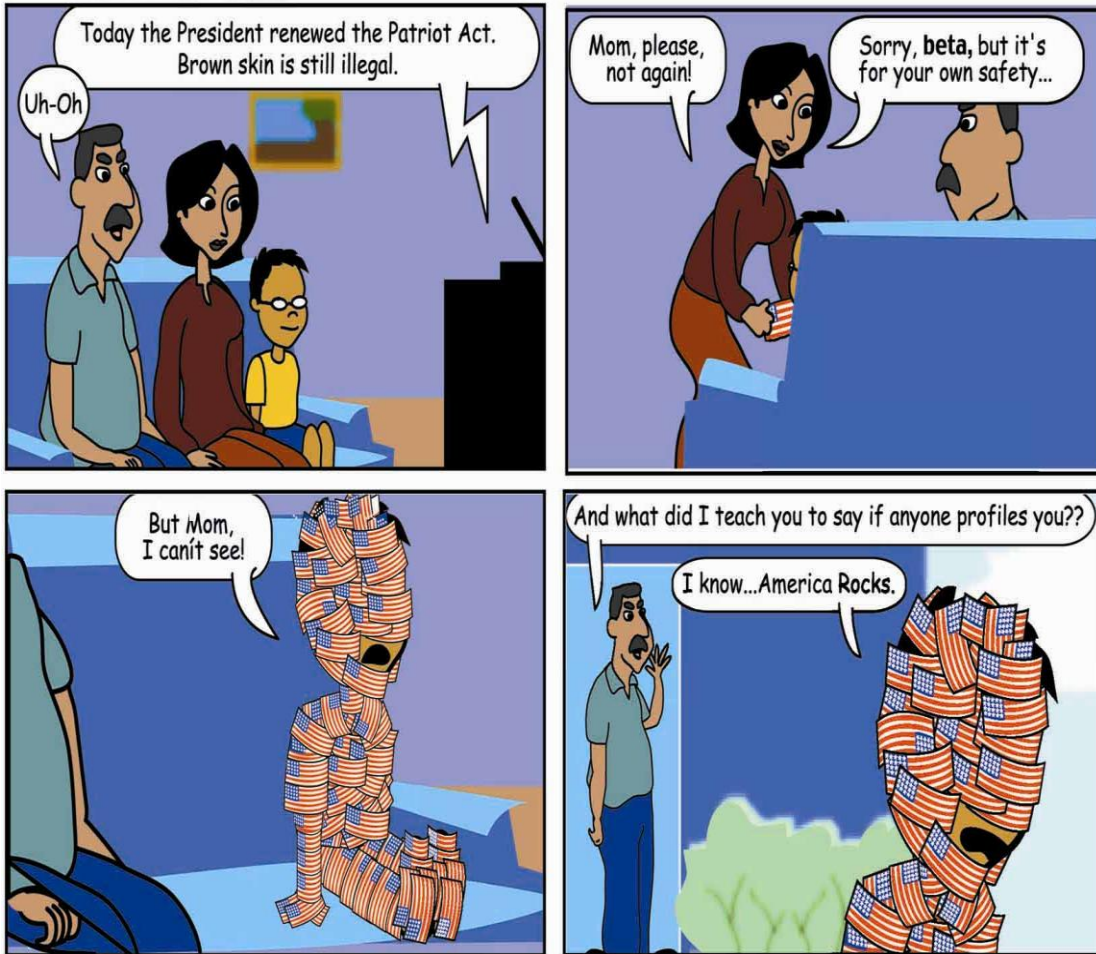
Soul City[18]

       With its multimedia communication strategy that uses television and radio drama to influence peoples' social norms, attitudes and behaviors, the Johannesburg-based Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication is regarded as an international leader in public health promotion. Its two flagship series (also referred to as "brands") are *Soul City* and *Soul Buddyz*, targeted to adults and 8 to 12 year olds, respectively, each containing a television series, a corresponding radio drama -- broadcast in nine of South Africa's 11 official languages - as well as glossy print material, including comic books, life skills materials, and workbooks.

Soul City and Soul Buddyz, the Two Flagship Brands

Soul City's origins go back to 1992, when Dr. Garth Japhet was working as a medical doctor at a clinic in Alexandra, a township just north of Johannesburg. The number one cause of child death in Japhet's clinic was diarrhea which was easily preventable death if mothers knew about how to rehydrate their child. Teaming up with another medical doctor, Dr. Shereen Usdin, Japhet launched Soul City, a health education initiative that was to reach the people through multimedia edutainment programming. Its television series, *Soul City,* became an instant hit, and the organization since then continues to march forward. In 1999, it launched *Soul Buddyz*, its series targeted to 8 to 12 year olds, addressing their problems and concerns in school, at home, and their communities.

Soul City uses an exhaustive research process to create highly compelling storylines. For each of its series, Soul City chooses prioritizes three or four health and development issues to address, and holds consultations with experts, civil society groups, medical doctors, and scholars. Its in-house researchers engage in a long consultative process with audiences, trying to understand what they know about the issue, how they feel, and what barriers prevent them from practicing desired behaviors. Accordingly, scripts are developed and pre-tested for their entertainment and educational value, clearing the way for production, broadcast, and distribution of multi-media materials.

Soul City is currently collaborating with partner organizations in eight other countries in the Southern African region -- Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe - to build capacity among the region's health communications programs. The local partner chooses which Soul City materials (television, radio and/or print) to adopt (and adapt) to their local contexts. Namibia's flagship drama program, for instance, is called *Desert Soul,* in Malawi it's *Pakachere,* and in Zimbabwe it's *Action Pals*.

Communication: Olive in the Martini?

"Is it the Olive in the Martini?" I asked?

"No, it is the Martini," came the reply.

* * *

The Olive in the Martini

From our previous section, it was abundantly clear that all four organizations are deeply engaged in social change processes, seeking social justice in all its diversity and form. Also, it was apparent that all four organizations are wedded to the creative and strategic use of mass media channels, group processes, and interpersonal dialogue to attain their goals.

All four organizations view communication processes as not just being the olive in the social change Martini, but the Martini itself. That is, these four organizations view communication processes not just as an accompaniment, or an embellishment, to accomplish social change, consistent with the dominant prevailing mindset, but view it as an integral and fundamental part of the change enterprise. Such a communication-centric focus geared to questioning existing social realities (for instance, through a melodramatic television series), and the opening up of communicative spaces to broach new possibilities, is highly rare. These four organizations thus put communication front and center in articulating their identity, and in defining their function in society.

As noted previously, both Soul City and Puntos de Encuentro use their locally-produced edutainment soap operas as launching pads for their multimedia, multilevel communication strategies, and couple them with on-the-ground advocacy initiatives and partnerships with local organizations to synergize social outcomes. The impact of their television series reaches places and people in highly inspiring ways, as the newly-christened black township in Pretoria suggests.

A Black Community in Pretoria names itself Soul City After the Television Series.

Arlene, a Puntos' staff member, discussed the impact of a special edition of *Sexto Sentido* dealing with sexual abuse on a remote community in Nicaragua where no other media can reach:

"We were in Bilwi, a remote community in the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua, and the woman directing the *comisaria de la mujer*[19] told us that she used the special edition of *Sexto Sentido* – "We need to be able to talk" – to train police officers in the remotest of communities. The special edition told the story of Laura, a 14 year old character in the series who is sexually abused at home. During one of the trainings, when the tape was playing, people from the neighboring community gathered around to watch the show. The show elicited varied reactions from the people who had gathered, and the tape must have sparked reflection on this topic as the number of reported cases of sexual abuse increased significantly in that community. Most of cases were filed by women who had suffered sexual abuse when they were young and didn't have the chance to tell someone about it, or find any kind of social support. These older women took the decision to break the cycle of silence not just for themselves, but also for their daughters. Many of them – especially those who lived in the most remote communities – traveled for days in harsh road conditions to take their daughters to the police station to press charges against their abusers. Sometimes it meant that they had to sleep under the vestibules of shops, if they did not enough have resources to pay for a room. What was amazing was that while there is no electricity in those communities, and people have no access to any media, and most of them are illiterate, the especial edition hit home for many women helping them to take action. Even though few perpetrators spent time in jail, the cases of sexual abuse declined. Most importantly, women in the community felt empowered by the process of breaking the silence and helping their daughters to get out of the abusive situation,

given no body had done that for them when they were abused. So, the learning process from the special edition of *Sexto Sentido* went beyond the mere denouncement of sexual abuse, an important act in itself, but also helped develop emotional networks and social support so essential for such changes to occur."

In Rwanda, the radio drama, *Musekeweya*, produced by La Benevolencija addresses the long-standing hatred between the Hutus and the Tutsis, the two main ethnic groups in the country, opening spaces for reconciliation, respect, and mutual understanding. Charles, the scriptwriter for *Musekeweya,* noted: "One of our radio soap opera's main storylines was about Batamuliza and Shema, two young people who loved each other but since they came from different villages and belonged to different ethnic groups, their parents opposed their romance and marriage. We received a touching letter from Ernest Mugwaneza, a young male that identified with the story. He was a Hutu in love with a Tutsi girl and her parents were against their love. While most people in the community knew about their love, there were no supporters. When *Musekeweya* began broadcasting, Ernest was happy that someone began to raise this issue in public, and slowly he began to receive support from the community. Eventually, the parents of the girl were convinced to let them love each other and get married. The boy came to our office with a wedding invitation accompanied by his fiancé… and a thank you letter as well"

In essence, La Benevolencija's radio drama in Burundi helped create a communication space, both on-the-air as well on-the-ground (see photo below), for people to examine their existing social realities, question them, and raise possibilities for new ways of reframing the status quo.

La Benevolencija, Creating Communicative Spaces On-Air and On-the-Ground

Connections: Deconstruct and Reconstruct?

"What is the hoopla about shaking hands?" I asked.

"You mean the meeting of hands?" came the reply.

<p align="center">* * *</p>

Reconstructing the Connections between People

In addition to creating mass-mediated edutainment about social issues, and unleashing public dialogue and conversations on such topics, all four organizations understand the value of interpersonal communication and training activities to enhance local capacities and promote both individual and collective agency for action. These organizations know that social systems are characterized by relationships and interactions among and between diverse agents, and by enhancing the quality of the connections between them; a more healthy system can be realized.

A Breakthrough team member shared a compelling story: "After attending a workshop on domestic violence, a woman from rural Karnataka, decided act against her son who was inflicting physical and emotional violence on his wife. She sent her daughter-in-law to her parents' home, and encouraged her to take a stand against her own son. Through the workshop, she realized the importance of morally, emotionally, and financially assisting her daughter in law. When her son realized that his wife would stand up to him, and his own mother would support her actions, he had no choice but to turn for the better. Now there is no violence or abuse in that family."

A Breakthrough Training Session for Women in Rural India

This story from rural Karnataka is especially salient for various reasons. First, recognizing and taking action against domestic violence is a huge step in a male-dominated society where men are in positions of authority. Second, it is unusual for supportive alliances to develop among women suffering from domestic violence, given their low self-esteem and a lack of self-efficacy. Further, such alliances are particularly unusual between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law who usually compete for their son or husband's favor.

All four organizations know that for social change to occur, oppressive relationships need to be identified, then deconstructed, and then reconstructed among the interactants. .

Puntos de Encuentro, for instance, believes that when people remember, recognize, and analyze the experiences of discrimination and oppression in their own life, they are able to identify with others who are oppressed. Yet, a safe environment is needed for people to let go of their old mental models and to open themselves to new possibilities and potentials. Puntos tries to create such an environment in its youth leadership camps. Juan's story[20] illustrates this point:

Puntos' Youth Leadership Camps: A Space for Letting Go and Letting Come

Juan participated in Puntos' youth leadership camp in 2005 living for 15 days on a farm with another 150 young men and women, most of them around his age. They hailed from different parts of Nicaragua and other Central American countries, were members of different types of social movements, belonged to different social, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, and with different physical abilities, sexual preferences, and religions.

On the first day, the facilitators lined everybody against a wall and asked the men to cross to the other side of the room. Juan crossed over proudly. All the women looked at him from the other side of the room. Then, the facilitators asked people to cross over if they were poor. Juan

crossed over to the other side, but this time, he was somewhat ashamed. Then the facilitators asked people to cross over if they were literate, with disabilities, or had sexual preferences other than heterosexual. And so on. Juan crossed over for some and stayed put for others. There was some nervous laughter and some emotional moments, but at the end, everyone, included Juan, understood that everyone was different and each one found himself or herself on the side of "power" on one criterion or another. While Juan is young, dark skinned, and poor, and had suffered discrimination and violence because of these conditions, but he is also male, heterosexual, and literate and has discriminated and abused others based on the power that he derived from those vantage points.

Juan and the other 150 young participants spent the rest of the two weeks listening to each other, deconstructing and understanding how different forms of oppression affect our potential as human beings. They proposed new ways of relating with each other, forging friendships, and reconfiguring alliances with each other to be able to return to the "real world" and deal with issues of discrimination in a more empowered manner.

The *Soul Buddyz* Club, a joint initiative of Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication, SABC Education, and the government Department of Education, is another kind of organized space where young school-going children connect with each other on an ongoing basis while engaging in meaningful activities.[21] Donique de Figuieredo, Manager of the *Soul Buddyz* Club joined the workshop deliberations one morning, noting that the project was established in 2002 in response to an influx of requests from children who were fans of the *Soul Buddyz* children's television drama series (launched in August 2000).

Proud Members of a Soul Buddyz Club

Donique noted that while *Soul Buddyz,* effectively highlighted the challenges facing South African children, and in so doing was extremely successful, as per evaluation research, in terms of its reach and impact, there were gaps between what children were exposed to, and what they could actually do in their own lives. More often than not, children lacked the infrastructure and resources needed to take the desired actions.

The *Soul Buddyz* Club provides a platform where children are exposed to positive peer interaction, guidance on their health and rights, fun and adventure activities to stimulate their growing minds, and practical opportunities to develop leadership skills. The *Buddyz* Club emphasizes the importance of children working together in teams, creating a cohesive robust community with collective agency.

Since inception, some 2,500 *Soul Buddyz* clubs have been established with over 50,000 members. The "Buddyz" meet weekly in their teams, and have the opportunity to work through relevant life skills and training modules which tie in with ongoing television and radio broadcasts. They focus on issues such as reducing bullying, staying safe, and speaking up.

An outstanding *Soul Buddyz* club project is located in Camperdown Library in a small farming community in rural Kwa Zulu Natal. With the encouragement of James Zondi, the club facilitator, the club rejuvenated an old basketball court in the area, raising funds from local business people and garnering support of tribal authorities. Saxonsea Primary, based in the poverty stricken Atlantis community in the Western Cape, an area where violence is rife, was recognized a few years ago as the club of the year. According to Donique de Figueiredo: "Many of Saxonsea's members transformed themselves from being shy, troubled children into outspoken, caring and motivated leaders."

<p style="text-align:center">***Soul City Lives:* Extreme Community Makeover**</p>

Soul City's latest initiative (or experiment), *Soul City Lives*, is its boldest attempt to date in deconstructing and reconstructing social relationships in communities that are reeling from unemployment and underemployment, HIV/AIDS, alcoholism, drug abuse, and gang warfare. Designed as a prime time reality TV show, *Soul City Lives* is a pro-social spin on the hit ABC television program *Extreme Makeover*, which depicts ordinary men and women undergoing "extreme makeovers" involving plastic surgery, exercise regimes, hairdressing, and wardrobing. Each episode ends with the subjects' return to their families and friends, showing the "jaw dropping" reactions of their loved ones.

In a similar vein, *Soul City Lives* will involve nine communities (one in each of South Africa's nine provinces) that compete in an 'extreme community makeover' competition. Each community will choose and implement projects that bring about vast improvements in the community over a period of several months. The competition will involve the broader South African public, as audience members vote for best community achievement.

As part of the workshop, Soul City invited the workshop participants to visit the township of Munsieville in Gauteng Province, the pilot site for the Soul City community makeover reality television show. Production crews buzzed around community members as they underwent training under a massive tent, and gathered thereafter to plan collective actions. An aura of excitement and anxiety was palpable in Munsieville: This was the historic site where prime-time television, its reality format, and community make-over processes were being stirred in an experimental cauldron. One workshop participant affirmed our opening refrain: "Only Soul City would dare

imagine that such community makeover was possible." With high rates of unemployment, HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, and violent crime, Munsieville fit the bill for a community in need of an extreme makeover.

Munsieville, the Pilot Site of Soul City's Community-Makeover Reality Show

Munsieville, the Pilot Site for an Extreme Community Makeover

We learned that Munsieville was the childhood home of Nobel-Laureate Bishop Desmond Tutu, and his younger sister still lived in the family home.   Further, the manager of the first *Soul City Lives* series, Lebo Ramafoko, who was a key organizer of the present workshop, grew up in Munsieville, bringing a certain familiarity and grounded understanding to shore up this pilot experience.

Lebo Ramafoko with Indra de Lanevolle, Responsible for Producing the Pilot

During our visit, over 100 community members in Munsieville, both men and women, were undergoing training under a massive tent, led by the husband and wife team of Isabel and Ivan Labra, psychologists, who specialize in preparing community members to attain the organizational skills needed to scale up local initiatives.

Ivan Labra leading the Organizational Workshop (OW) in Munsieville

Community Makeover Teams in Discussion in Munsieville

Production Crews Buzzing Around in Munsieville

One of the workshop participants noted in her diary: "Today we went to Munsieville where the Soul City reality TV show is being piloted. I learned a bit about OW (organizational workshop) methodology by the Labras. It seems to be a practical exercise in creating a social enterprise and developing individual community members to allow them to grow through the experience of organizing themselves. The practice allows the community to make mistakes and resolve them and in the process become a functioning enterprise."

Humanization: Heart and Mind?

"It is mind over matter, is it not?" I asked.

"You mean heart over mind," came the reply.

* * *
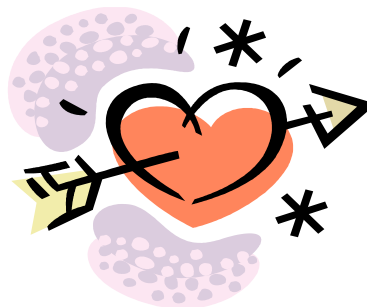
Heart over Mind

All four organizations know the value of "humanizing" social issues – whether through fictional characters in a television series or real people, caught in the daily grind of lives. These organizations know the value of story-telling and the importance of "showing" problems and possibilities, a less didactic and non-threatening approach than "telling" people what to do. Further, people connect better with real life stories, than with abstract ideas and concepts. Stories allow for emotive engagement, an opportunity to experience emotions, valuing the murmurs of the heart and the mind.

In a world where news about violence, war, discrimination, oppression, and torture represent the daily fare, it is easy to perceive these as far away events, news from unknown lands, unfortunate circumstances experienced by other people. However, these organizations know what we cannot directly experience, we can be made to experience vicariously through engaging stories. We may not be able to directly experience what life is in a refugee camp, but we can feel for Sara, the refugee girl in a drama series, who is sexually abused, deprived of food and sleep, and traumatized.

For most people in the world, including most of the workshop participants, the Rwandan genocide of 1994 represented "news from a far away land". We may know that the Hutus slaughtered their Tutsi neighbors with machetes, families were ripped apart, but we shrug our shoulders, intellectualize the tragedy, and go on with our daily business. However, consider the narrative power of a video showing the reunion of two long lost friends, one a Hutu and the other a Tutsi, after more than 10 years of separation. When the genocide started, they were pitched against each other as enemies. Both of them lose their parents and siblings, coming out as lone survivors. Over the next ten years, they believe that the other was dead.

However thanks to La Benevolencija's collaborative intervention with one of its field-based partners[22], the two friends are reunited through video letters[23]. The idea behind video letters is simple: someone who lost touch with a childhood friend or a lifelong neighbor from a different ethnic group is invited to record a message. They tell their gut-wrenching story on camera in "flesh and blood." The producers then trace the "lost" person (if they are alive), show them the video letter, and tape a return reply. These tapes can then be played over the airwaves or hand-carried, and almost always result in an emotional reunion. Bitter feuds and ethnic divides are bridged in a stream of heartfelt tears.

Through La Benevolencija's humanized approach, the two boys (and many more like them), who were tragically separated by hate and politics, find a way to overcome the baggage of their pasts, moving toward reconciliation and healing.

Emmanue, are you still alive?
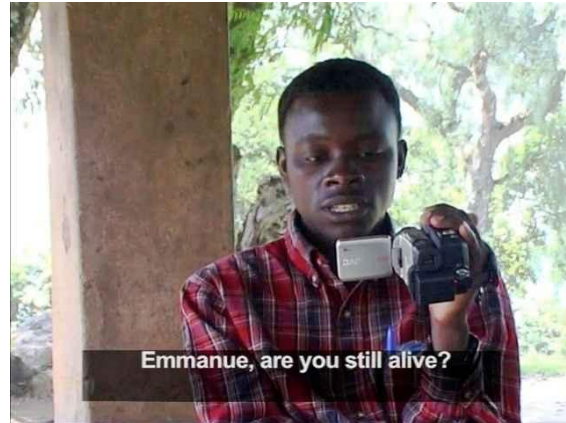
Video Letters: Humanizing the Genocide, the Reconciliation, and the Healing

Eventually, we'll meet in heaven, where we shall find...

Immigrant rights are another polemic topic. Legislators, sitting in Washington D.C. or in state capitals, pass laws framing immigration as a socio-economic or political issue. Breakthrough believes that the right of immigrants is foremost a human right issue and a citizenry should understand how "public policies" influence the daily life of millions of people, many of whom are our neighbors, co-workers, or relatives. Through simple videos, brochures, and web-based technologies Breakthrough puts a human face on this issue, asking real people to tell their stories.

Consider the narrative of Agatha Joseph, a native of St. Lucia, who immigrated to the United States in 1986. In 1997, her 16 year-old daughter, a legal resident of the United States, was found with a marijuana joint for which she was booked and fined by the local police. Several years went by without an incident. One fine morning, as Agatha's daughter returned to the U.S. after a vacation in the Caribbean, she was arrested on arrival and sent to a detention center. The charge: The same old marijuana violation for which she was fined at age 16. Why so? Because, as a result of the revised immigration laws of 1996, the minor crime committed years ago was now categorized as an "aggravated felony" and subject to double punishment.

Agatha Joseph, Putting a Human Face to Violation of Immigrant Rights

Breakthrough humanizes a mother's trauma through Agatha's and her daughter's story. In a highly emotional video, Agatha describes the horrific conditions and harsh treatment that her daughter faced during three years of detention. She was transferred seven times without prior notice, and barely survived a gymnasium fire on account of a chained exit.

Humanization of issues can occur through mass-mediated characters, as well. Puntos, for instance, addressed HIV risk perceptions and accompanying stigma through its most popular character, Gabriel, in the *Sexto Sentido* television series. Gabriel, the youngest male character in the series, was a darling of the Nicaraguan audience. They loved him, witnessed his first romantic relationship, and his sexual initiation. He was charming, witty, and very charismatic. When he found out that he was infected with HIV, the audience responded with anguish: "Why him!?" The audience wrote to the producers asking "Why are you trying to kill the character we love the most? He is just a normal boy, a good one!" they said. The producers answered, "Precisely because Gabriel is a normal boy, a good boy, and because you love him. He is HIV-positive because we know you would care".

Stories, whether real or fictional, help us to understand the complexity underlying such issues as domestic violence, HIV/AIDS, immigration, homophobia, xenophobia, racism, and other forms of discrimination and oppression. It is hard to understand the socio-cultural complexity of domestic violence by emphasizing that it is illegal, cause a lot of physical and emotional pain, and should hence be avoided. The process of getting out of a violent domestic situation is a non-linear, paradoxical bind. No woman wants to continue in an abusive relationship, but to leave a partner or accuse him in a court of law requires more than courage. There are feelings involved for he may be the "loving" father of your children, and then there are other dependencies and interdependencies that come in a marriage. Abused women have to not just consider their welfare, but also others who may be affected by the situation, especially her children, her parents, her in-laws, relatives, friends, and neighbors. Simply denouncing the perpetrator does not solve these highly intertwined personal, economic, and socio-cultural dilemmas. Therefore each woman who is in an abusive relationship has to first deal with her denial, and then wrestle with the non-linearity of unclear options, with unclear consequences.

Both Soul City and Puntos use their soap operas to tell the stories of women and children affected by domestic violence, including the social stigma that a woman faces when she simply denounces her partner. By showing their process of denial and struggle in which they make

mistakes, flounder and try again, muster courage and seek help from friends, audiences may see how they are able to get out of the binding situation. Such intimate, on-screen humanization of the domestic violence issue provides a space for the audience to reflect on their own experiences, and to try to find their own way out (or come to the aid of others).

Self-Organizing: Cues and Clues?

"What should I do to them?" I asked.

"The doing lies with them" came the reply.

* * *

While being in the business of providing cues and clues -- that is "showing" realities and possibilities of change, these four organizations know that sustainable change only happens when the strategy is able to promote self-organizing processes within the communities. The community members need to attend to the messages, reflect on them, and act accordingly.

Many examples of self-organizing processes associated with the four organizations were highlighted in the workshop deliberations.   For instance, Breakthrough shared an experience about the community impact of their work: "In 2005, Breakthrough India launched a campaign on the growing vulnerability of women to HIV/AIDS called *What Kind of Man Are You?* It broached the idea of male responsibility in protecting their partner and use of condoms even among married couples. As part of the launch, a public event was organized in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh (a South Indian state with high rates of HIV infection), which was coordinated by the local office of CHARCA (a UNICEF project). Among those helping in organizing this event was a Muslim man, Mr. Subhani, a well-known and highly respected member of the community. This was a very conservative Muslim community; the idea of talking about sexuality among spouses was perturbing, let alone talking about the use of condoms. After the campaign materials were displayed and explained to those in the audience and people on the dais, Mr. Subhani stood up in front of the audience and spoke about how the Breakthrough campaign had motivated him to talk to his wife about using a condom. When she raised the obvious question of "Why they needed to use condoms as a monogamous married couple," he said it was to protect her. The audience seemed to be in shock at hearing Mr Subhani's testimony. For a man of his background and leadership abilities, to stand up and tell his story in this manner, and attributing it to a Breakthrough campaign, was indeed a breakthrough moment."

In 1999, *Soul City*[24], rattled its prime-time viewers when a well-respected character, a school teacher, Thabang slapped his wife, Matlakala.

The Prime-Time Slap that Rattled South Africa

As the cycle of violence increased and began to take a heavy physical and emotional toll of Matlakala, she shared her plight with her mother. She was advised to *bekezela*, that is, endure the abuse given it was primarily a woman's duty to make a marriage work. Thabang's father agreed, emphasizing that as per tradition a husband must discipline their wife.

When Matlakala's beatings got worse, including a hospitalization, she learned about South Africa's new Domestic Violence Act, and served Thabang a protection order. Matlakala's father explicitly urges the neighbors to not be "silent colluders"; but rather to intervene. As the television series rolled, and when in an episode Thabang begins to beat Matlakala, her neighbors, collectively, stood outside Thabang's house beating their pots and pans (see below). The loud noise of dozens of pots and pans sent a clear message to Thabang that the community disapproved of his actions, and an assurance to Matlakala that her neighbors cared about her.

A New Community-Centered Approach to Combating Domestic Violence

This pot-banging episode, which earned one of the highest audience ratings in South Africa in 1999, demonstrated the importance of creatively modeling collective efficacy in order to energize neighbors, who, for social and cultural reasons, felt previously inefficacious. By watching the neighbors collectively act against an abuser on screen, viewers learned new ways to break the cycle of spousal abuse. Within weeks, pot banging to stop partner abuse was reported in several communities in South Africa (including in Khayelitsha Township, Cape Town, as the photo below illustrates). Clearly, members of these communities self-organized themselves to discuss, decide, and act to curb this insidious social practice. Interestingly, patrons of a local pub in Thembisa Township in South Africa self-organized themselves to reinvent the new collective behavior they learned. They collectively banged bottles in the bar when a man physically abused his girlfriend.

**Community Members in Various Black Townships in South Africa
Self-Organized Themselves to Combat Domestic Violence.**

Puntos de Encuentro has also had experiences with community appropriation of their work and self-organizing communities of practice. *La Boletina* is Puntos de Encuentro's national feminist magazine that reports on the growing women's movement in Nicaragua and promotes dialogue and debate around topics relevant to women's lives and organizations. *La Boletina* is free of charge and is distributed by hundreds of volunteers that travel long distances in buses and canoes to Managua to pick up magazine packages and hand carry them back to towns and villages all over Nicaragua where they are distributed to local groups. Sometimes, these groups further distribute the magazine to smaller groups that cannot go to Managua to pick up the magazine. The distribution network of *La Boletina* is a unique phenomenon of self-organization. It works through mutually supportive relationships between women's groups that use the magazine as an educational tool in study circles, discussion groups, workshops, and adult literacy campaigns. Activist groups have also used special editions of *La Boletina* as tools for political lobbying. *La Boletina* is also used as a resource to establish and strengthen connections among women groups.

La Boletina: **A Magazine That Distributes Itself**

Framing: Theories and Hunches?

"What is theory?" I asked.
"A hunch," came the reply.

* * *

Have A Hunch?

Interestingly, none of the four organizations were established by individuals with academic training in communication theory and research.   Far from it: Soul City was started by two medical doctors, Breakthrough by a lawyer, Puntos by people with a humanities background, and La Benevolencija by media producers (not theoreticians) and criminologists. A common sentiment echoed by representatives of all four organizations in the South Africa workshop was that they "learned by doing," and got the theory along the way as they critically reflected on their experiences. As their experience accumulated, they adapted those theories to their specific goals and realities. Today, they represent leading organizations in the realm of communication for social change.

From the above realization, and based on the dialogue generated during the workshop sessions, we gleaned the following: All four organizations are "learning" organizations: that is, not afraid to tread on uncharted territory, not afraid to follow their intuitions, open to collaboration and partnerships with others who "know," and obsessively reflexive about their programs and outcomes, including the connections between the two, to do it even better in the future.

However, now that all four of these communication-centric organizations are relatively mature, expanding in operation and scope, and donor-dependent, they are asked (rather required) to more systematically and scientifically evaluate their campaigns, and frame their interventions and findings in theoretical terms. However, with limited expertise in communication theory and research in-house[25], they face the challenge to articulate their work in a language that the donors or the scientific community are conversant with.

So it was not surprising that during the South Africa meeting, the workshop participants wished to spend time in familiarizing themselves with communication and health education theories and research methodologies, so that they could "negotiate" and "deliver" the kind of "proof" that their donors and benefactors desired.

Dr. Martine Bouman and Dr. Arvind Singhal, both scholars of communication and social change whose dissertations were on edutainment, along with Virginia Lacayo, a doctoral student at Ohio University (and former Puntos co-manager who works closely with Dr. Singhal), helped serve as resource persons for these sessions on communication theories and research evaluation methodologies. However, they resisted the temptation to make these sessions purely skills-acquisition sessions (a task not possible given the limited time), but rather to facilitate a dialogue on the approaches, frameworks, and guides these organizations employed, including conversations about why they do what they do (see photo below). During these conversations, the resource persons tried to mainly intervene in the following ways:
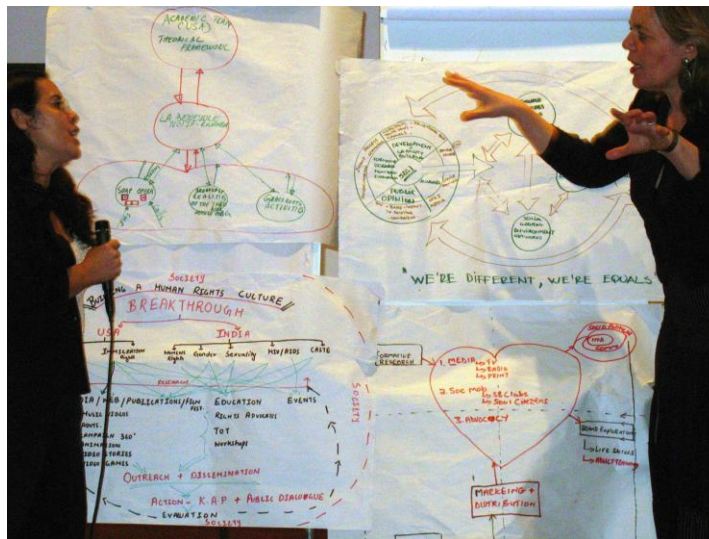
Dr. Bouman (Right) Connecting Intuition and Hunches with Theories

(1) Help the organizations to make connections (where they were less clear) between what the organizations were doing with established theoretical propositions so the participants could more clearly see how their work -- whether based on hunches or intuition -- strongly connected with theory. For instance, Breakthrough's work on using the popular media to put human rights issues on the public agenda dovetailed quite well with the theory of media agenda-setting;

(2) Introduce new cutting-edge approaches and theoretical sensibilities (such as positive deviance and complexity theory), highlight the multiple pathways to one could take to accomplish one's goals, and also the different ways in which one could articulate what one was doing.
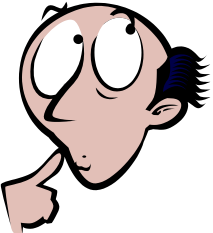
After a few days of workshop deliberations connecting on-the-ground organizational practices with theory, and vice versa, one of the present authors (Arvind) drafted a humble manifesto titled *Hunches Are all We Got* to demystify the theoretical gorilla, to validate the importance of hunches, intuition, and indigenous wisdom – given they are contextually derived, and also emphasize that each theory provides a partial explanation of the phenomenon that one is trying to describe or explain.

An abbreviated version of the humble manifesto is provided in the box below:

What is the Role of Communication in Social Change?

Hunches Are All We Got!
A Humble Manifesto

by

Arvind Singhal

Social change is a complex, non-linear process – involving too many interactions between too many actors, which are difficult (if not impossible) to grasp, control, and predict with any certainty. Social change is a multi-layered, multi-faceted, multi-textured process. Social change is a downright messy process.

There is no formula for social change. No recipe. Social change is not like making tomato soup, or mama's apple pie – where the agents [ingredients] and their interactions can be controlled and predicted with a high degree of certainty. There is no certain formula to promote a culture of human rights. There is no recipe to turn hate into love. There is no recipe to persuade men to give up the physical, emotional, and psychological violence they inflict on their spouse.

Although there are no foolproof recipes – that lead to knowable, agreeable, and predictable outcomes, we do have hunches about how social change might occur. Many hunches, actually. We have hunches about the process through which individuals, groups, communities, and societies are influenced from the outside and/or inside. We have hunches about what role communication plays (or does not play) in these social change processes. We have hunches

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about the role of mass-mediated, group, interpersonal, and intrapersonal processes [or a combination thereof] in social change. We have hunches about what mass media strategies, under what conditions, might be able to influence social change processes.   We have hunches about how mass media strategies might interface with group and interpersonal communication processes to foster social change processes. We have hunches about the influence of historical, political, cultural, and contextual factors in social change processes.

Humbly-speaking: Hunches are all we got.

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What is a theory? **A theory is a hunch.**

What are theories of social change? Theories of change are hunches about how social change occurs.

What are theories of communication and social change?   Theories of communication and social change are hunches about the role that communication plays [or does not play] in explaining how individuals, groups, communities, and societies change.

<div align="center">* * *</div>

Hunches are useful. Hunches are valuable. They may help explain why something happens or does not happen. Hunches can help us plan, foresee, predict.

However, hunches, by their very definition, are not definitive. When we have a hunch we choose to see the world from a certain vantage point. We see certain things well; some not so well; some not all.   During a theatrical performance, for instance, we will see, hear, or engage differently depending on whether we are in front-of-the-stage, backstage, or on stage. We will have different views, different perceptions, and different interpretations of what is unfolding on stage, depending on whether we are in the first row or way back in the balcony. Our engagement with the performance will be different depending on whether we are an adult or a child; a man or a woman; a Brahmin or a *Dalit* (low caste); privileged or marginalized. Our guiding motivations will be different depending on whether we are an audience member, a lighting technician, an actor, the stage director, an usher, or a drama critic. All worldviews, vantage points, speak to a part of what we perceive as "reality"; not to all of it.

All worldviews, hunches, or theories, are thus **partial** representations; partial explanations. Depending on our vantage point, they are **partisan** representations; partisan explanations. And, because they are partial and partisan points-of-view, all theories are **problematic.** In essence, all theories [of social change; or the role of communication and social change] are partial, partisan, and problematic.

<div align="center">* * *</div>

There are hundreds of theories (or hunches, if you prefer) on how social change occurs, and what role communication plays in this enterprise.   Some, over others, have been reified over the years, spoken about, written about, and legitimized through peer-reviewed, peer-sanctioned, peer-moderated processes.   Standards, criteria, and assessments to judge the value, rigor, and relevance of these theories are steeped in a certain dominant vision of science, or a certain preferred reading of what constitutes evidence.

In the dominant discourse of social change practice, the value or a rigor of a theory is often judged by the "hard" [scientific] evidence that backs the knowledge claim, and is dismissive of the "soft" stuff [e.g. the real, situated, humanized experience of a living individual or individuals]. The educated elite (us included) who are socialized into this worldview -- e.g. donor officials who fund social change programs, social scientists who evaluate such programs, and public health or social change practitioners who implement such programs – usually, without questioning, buy into this "scientific" vision.   Faceless numbers (denoting scientific detachment and objectivity) are preferred over humanistic experiences.

Do not get me wrong. Science and evidence has its place. And theories that are backed by scientific tenets of inquiry (e.g. pre-post, treatment control experiments, for instance) have their place. By focusing attention on some variables (a reductionist worldview), a certain perspective on the unfolding social phenomenon is gained. Scientific inquiry, for instance, is vital to understand patterns of macro social phenomenon (e.g. what are the infection rates for HIV in a nation state; what are the breakdowns by geographic region, modes of transmission, or by gender; and what are the knowledge-awareness and practice indicators for let's say certain "high-risk behaviors).

Science and evidence, however, become problematic, when they begin to believe and profess (and often arrogantly) that the micro-behaviors of human beings can be assessed, understood, controlled, and predicted like the position of the sun or the moon; or the outcome delivered by the recipe of mama's apple pie.

Unfortunately, much of the social change literature, which has been legitimized by the academy, the donor community, the evaluation specialists, and the social change enterprise, is steeped in worldviews (or hunches) that have been validated or legitimized by certain reified criteria of scientific rigor. And, hence, barring some exceptions, most theories of communication and social change, and the practice of communication for social change, are premised on bringing about linear, incremental individual level-changes in peoples' knowledge-attitude-practice (KAP), implicitly subscribing to the misguided (but unquestioned) notion that social change can be predicted, controlled, planned, and measured with a high degree of certainty (especially with the unstated arrogance of expertise).

A Manifesto to Challenge

As social change practitioners, should we not question the dominant (1) hunches (theories) of communication-induced linear, step-by-step individual level changes, and (2) reductionist

measures developed to measure them?   Should we not, realize that such theories of social change, and the evidence-based measures to back them are partial and problematic, and not the holy sacrosanct grail they are made out to be? Or should we simply give in and surrender to the whims and fancies, predilections and preferences, of those in "power" who see the world in one way, and believe, mistakenly, that it is the ONLY way.

What should we do? What can we do? What can we do on our own? What can we do together?

Prevalent Hunches

A workshop participant asked: "If hunches are all we got, then are there certain hunches that are more privileged, preferred, and heard in the scholarly and praxis discourse of communication and social change?"

Emphasizing again that all frameworks, theories, and models are partial, partisan, and problematic, and recognizing that the workshop participants came with different academic and experiential backgrounds, the resource persons (Bouman, Singhal, and Lacayo) identified some of these hunches which they believed were privileged. In outlining them here, we are just providing a flavor of these approaches (much, of course, has been written about them in text books, journal articles, and research reports as these frameworks have been refined, questioned, validated, and critiqued).

Stages of Change Theory[26]:

A linear conception of how an individual becomes aware or knowledgeable about an issue (with communication inputs, of course), develops a favorable attitude toward the issue, ponders about changing their behavior toward that, develops an intention to change behavior, actually implements the behavioral change, and then maintains it.   Different communication inputs are seen as being useful in different stages of change. For instance, media inputs are useful at the knowledge-awareness stages; and interpersonal and group inputs in later stages.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory[27]:

A theory of how innovations (new ideas, new practices, new ideologies) are communicated over time among the members of a social system.   The members of a social system are connected to each other through social and communication networks. Some members in the social network are more influential, more connected than the others. These are opinion leaders. If the innovation is adopted by opinion leaders, it tends to diffuse rapidly. Social norms play an important role in influencing the rate of spread of an innovation. The more compatible, relatively advantageous, and non complex the innovation is perceived to be, the more likely it is to be adopted. So, how an innovation is "framed" is critical.

Most innovation diffusion happens from the outside-in. That is, experts or change agencies trying to convince folks (through mass and interpersonal communication channels) to adopt a certain product, service, idea, or practice.   The heterophily (dissimilarity) between the

change agents and the client audience is a barrier to effective communication. So, an understanding of the social norms, the social patterns of influence, the prevailing perceptions is critical in the diffusion of an innovation.

Social Cognitive (Learning) Theory[28].

Social cognitive (social learning) theory focuses on how humans learn new behaviors by observing others, and speaks to how a person's sense of self and collective efficacy will determine whether or not the learned behavior will be practiced. A central concept in social cognitive (learning) theory is the role of media role models in disseminating new behaviors (or innovations).

The principles of media role modeling were distilled over four decades ago by Professor Albert Bandura at Stanford University, who in the early-1960s conducted experiments to analyze the effect of televised violence on children.

In Bandura's famed Bobo doll experiment, young children watched a film of an adult role model beating a plastic Bobo doll, weighted at its base. The model punched, kicked, and hit the Bobo doll with his fists and a mallet. When hit, the Bobo doll falls backward and immediately springs upright as if offering a counter punch. Then children were let into a play room with several attractive toys including a Bobo doll. Interestingly, children who watched the film imitated the media model's behavior: They punched, kicked, and hit the Bobo doll. Bandura's experiment suggested that when exposed to a violent televised model, children were likely to exhibit the aggressive behavior they had observed. Also, by glamorizing aggressive behavior, children's restraints against the use of aggression were weakened. Bandura's experiments also showed that audience members learn models of behavior as effectively from televised models as from ones in real-life.

Bandura's principles of role modeling were creatively employed in the mid-1970s by Miguel Sabido, a creative writer-director-producer at Televisa, the Mexican national television network, to produce a series of entertainment-education *telenovelas* (television novels or soap operas). Sabido understood the central concept in mass-mediated observational learning is *modeling*, defined as psychological processes in which one individual matches the actions of another, not necessarily closely in time.

So, Sabido designed his entertainment-education *telenovelas* in ways that viewers could become affectively involved with the role models and learn socially desirable behaviors from them. For example, when a likable character modeled a behavior that was socially desirable, the character was rewarded. If an unlikable character emulated a socially undesirable behavior, he/she was punished. So, when Martha, the central character in Sabido's family planning *telenovela*, *Acompáñame* (Accompany Me), visited a family planning clinic, she was visibly rewarded. When a role model in *Ven Conmigo* (Come with Me) refused to enroll in an adult literacy class, he was observably punished. Sabido's programs also profiled "transitional" models, individuals who are in doubt about the value of performing the new behavior, the hesitators. As the storyline moves, some transitional models learn to initiate, refine, and practice the new behaviors, and are rewarded for it; and some do not and they are punished for it.

Agenda Setting

Why did the tragedy involving cyanide-laced Tylenol pain-reliever in the United States, which claimed seven lives in 1982, get front-page, top-of-the-news coverage, while the issue of AIDS languished in the U.S. media? *The New York Times* ran four front-page articles on the Tylenol tragedy, and printed over 50 articles in a three-month period.[29] It took four years and 20,000 AIDS deaths before the media, including *The New York Times,* began to give news coverage to the issue of AIDS. How does a new issue like the AIDS epidemic come to public attention, gain followers who believe that it is an important social problem, and climb to prominence on the national agenda?[30]

Usually an issue first gets on the *media agenda,* which consists of the hierarchy of news issues ranked as to their degree of news coverage. What puts an issue on the media agenda? Often this process begins with the coverage of an event with tremendous human interest (perhaps involving a celebrity). Seldom does an issue climb the media agenda due to indicators of the severity of a social problem. A *real-world indicator* is a variable that measures more or less objectively the degree of severity or risk of a social problem. In the early years of the epidemic, the weekly reports by the CDC on the number of HIV infections and the number of AIDS deaths did not put the issue of AIDS on the media agenda in the United States. The media reported these data, but the issue of AIDS did not yet have a human face. The mass media prefer to describe an abstract issue like the epidemic in terms of one or a few individuals who are suffering from HIV/AIDS, rather than in aggregate numbers or trends. So the abstract numbers of people living with HIV/AIDS, or dying from AIDS, provided regularly by the CDC, did not attract much media attention. However, when Rock Hudson, the famed Hollywood celebrity announced that he was HIV-positive, the media went into frenzy, putting the issue on the public agenda.

* * *

Newer Approaches

Two relatively "new" approaches that are increasingly permeating the communication and social change discourse are (1) positive deviance, and (2) complexity theories.

Positive Deviance (PD) Approach[31]

Can a community find solutions to its problems without requiring a lot of outside resources? Positive deviance (PD) is an approach to social change that enables communities to discover the wisdom they already have, and then to act on it.

Consider how Jerry and Monique Sternin applied this approach to combat child malnutrition in Vietnam. In 1991, when the Stenins arrived on the ground, more than 65 percent of all children living in Vietnamese villages were malnourished at the time. As opposed to focusing on the problem families, the Sternins sought out poor families that had managed to avoid malnutrition without access to any special resources. These families were the positive deviants. They were "positive" because they were doing things right, and "deviants" because they engaged in behaviors that most others did not. The Sternins helped the community to discover that mothers in the PD

families collected tiny shrimps and crabs from paddy fields, and added those with sweet potato greens to their children's meals. These foods were accessible to everyone, but most community members believed they were inappropriate for young children. Also, these PD mothers were feeding their children three to four times a day, rather than the customary twice a day.

The Sternins created a program whereby community members could emulate the positive deviants in their midst. Mothers, whose children were malnourished, were asked to forage for shrimps, crabs, and sweet potato greens, and in the company of other mothers were taught to cook new recipes that their children ate right there. Within weeks, mothers could see their children becoming healthier. After the pilot project, which lasted two years, malnutrition had decreased by an amazing 85 percent in the communities where the PD approach was implemented. Over the next several years, the PD intervention became a nationwide program in Vietnam, helping over 2.2 million people, including over 500,000 children improve their nutritional status

Positive deviance questions the role of outside expertise, believing that the wisdom to solve the problem lies inside. Social change experts, usually, make a living discerning the deficits in a community, prioritizing the problems, and then trying to implement outside solutions to change them. In the PD approach, the role of experts is to find positive deviants, identify the uncommon but effective things that positive deviants do, and then to make them visible and actionable . PD is led by internal change agents who present the social proof to their peers. In PD, the role of the expert is mainly to facilitate a process that can help amplify this wisdom locally. In so doing, solutions and benefits can be sustained, since the solution resides locally.

The PD approach emphasizes hands-on learning and actionable behaviors[32]. As Jerry Sternin notes: "It is easier to act your way into a new way of thinking than to think your way into a new way of acting". So, the PD approach turns the well-known KAP (knowledge, attitude, practice) framework on its head. As opposed to subscribing to a framework that says increased knowledge changes attitudes, and attitudinal changes change practice; PD believes in PAK, that is, beginning with changing practice. PD believes that people change when that change is distilled from concrete action steps.

Workshop participants drew parallels between the PD approach and some of the work they had implemented intuitively. For instance, Sunita Menon of Breakthrough noted: "Breakthrough used the real life story of a woman (a positive deviant) who came out of domestic violence in spite of various educational, financial and socio-economic restrictions, to make the *Mann ke Manjeree* music video, which was then widely diffused in India and beyond."

Amy Banks of Puntos emphasized how she was struck by the PD notion of "It is easier to act your way into a new way of thinking than to think your way into a new way of acting". That is, PAK (practice leading to attitude to knowledge) instead of KAP: "I had never thought about this particular concept [PAK] before, but in fact our annual youth camps are an example of that. In order to break down prejudices and stereotypes about people who are 'different', and to build alliances among people, the youth camp puts a diverse group of young people (and some adults) into an intensive 12-day live-in camp. Here people live intimately with other people who they might be afraid of, or hate. For instance, we combined poor and not poor; younger and older; urban and rural, different ethnicities; different levels of education; people with different kinds of physical

abilities and disabilities; gay, straight, bi, trans and questioning; HIV-positive people (who are willing to be "out"), and the like. The methodology is experiential and designed to show the intersectionality of power relations and the commonality among different issues, identities, and oppressions. By experiencing a different way to relate with the "other", stereotypes and prejudices are questioned, and new alliances are established. Upon reflection, the youth camps have a PAK methodology in the sense of putting people together and having them work together (i.e., practice)…. And then attitudes change as a result of this practice, and when people's lives have been changed from this experience, they carry that knowledge with them the rest of their lives."

Complexity Theories

Theories of complexity science provide insights that are not so easily derivable from traditional, behavioral social science conceptions of social change.

The Difference between Simple, Complicated and Complex Systems[33]

As Glouberman and Zimmerman (2002), note: For addressing simple problems – take cooking for instance -- a recipe of various ingredients is essential. "It is often tested to assure easy replication without the need for any particular expertise. Recipes produce standardized products and the best recipes give good results every time."

To address complicated problems, like sending a rocket to the moon, formulae or recipes are critical and necessary, but are often not sufficient. "High levels of expertise in a variety of fields are necessary for success. Sending one rocket increases assurance that the next mission will be a success. In some critical ways, rockets are similar to each other and because of this there can be a relatively high degree of certainty of outcome."

"Raising a child, on the other hand, is a complex problem. Here, formulae have a much more limited application. Raising one child provides experience but no assurance of success with the next. Although expertise can contribute to the process in valuable ways, it provides neither necessary nor sufficient conditions to assure success. To some extent this is because every child is unique and must be understood as an individual. As a result there is always some uncertainty of the outcome. The complexity of the process and the lack of certainty do not lead us to the conclusion that it is impossible to raise a child."

Complex problems, such as social change, disturb us because their characteristics are not reducible to their constitutive parts. When solved, the solutions do not function as recipes, which can be applied to others like problems. Complex problems are hard to predict and control, they are not linear, adaptable and heavily influenced by context. Yet, we deal with them as if they were complicated problems.

Complexity science addresses aspects of living systems that are neglected or understated in traditional social change approaches. Complexity science provides us with insights to better understand how complex social systems *actually* work and change (rather than how we think they
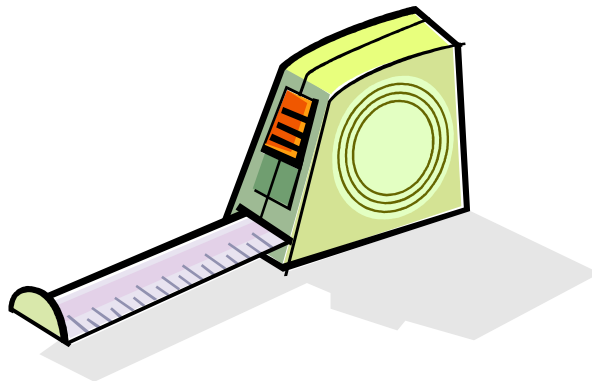
should), and invites us to examine the unpredictable, disorderly and unstable aspects of organizations and societies.

Measurement: Counts and Countables?

"Is it countable?" I asked.

"But does it count?," came the reply.

* * *

Measuring and Counting

The dialogue above illustrates the classic dilemma that underlies most social change evaluations. What counts? And does it count only because it is countable[34]?

This dilemma was best summarized by Albert Einstein, who was fond of telling his students: "Not all things that count are countable.   And not all things that are countable, count."

Monitoring and evaluating their interventions has always been and still remains a main concern for all four organizations. As Mallika explained: "Breakthrough works in a complicated social context and a cluttered media environment where it is difficult to gain audience attention. As a result, accurately understanding the reach and impact of one's work requires strong monitoring and evaluation practices, something that Breakthrough has struggled with to date. As Breakthrough scales up its programs for increased visibility, a firm understanding of how and why our programs are effective is necessary. Further, as the organization matures and accumulates learnings and experiences, it needs to reflectively analyze and document its programs so that they feed into the formulation of a Breakthrough approach".

But designing and implementing effective monitoring and evaluation processes is easier said than done. The lack of resources and internal capacities, the pressure from donors to speak to specific evaluation criteria, and the lack of agreement about the impact indicators to be used are

only few of the many concerns that organizations have when it comes to monitoring and evaluation.

Furthermore, there is no universal agreement on what we want to measure and how to measure it. Many practitioner organizations believe that "indicators of change in attitudes and behaviors are not enough. There is an urge to develop and legitimate new methodologies and indicators that could capture the complexity of social change processes: How does one "measure" processes? Or measure a "supporting environment"? Or measure "empowerment?" Or furthermore, when to measure empowerment? When, for instance, is the process of "youth empowerment" completed and ready to be measured? Needed are evaluations that explore the processes that lead to outcomes rather than only focus on demonstrating those outcomes"[35].

Irela, from Puntos de Encuentro, noted the following about impact evaluation designs and indicators ""We need to gain external legitimization of our work, but we also want to have an opinion and to participate in the design [of the evaluation] to guarantee that it will be coherent with our vision and mission. The problem is we still haven't developed enough theoretical and methodological frameworks that allow us to offer effective alternatives. We need new indicators, but they can only be validated during implementation, and that affects the evaluation because it cannot be planned in detail at the beginning of the project."[36]

In our workshop, participants also talked about how this dilemma is enacted day-in and day-out in the unnecessary debates about the value of quantitative versus qualitative approaches. The problem here is not about the choice of methods, but lies in the nature of the questions that are asked (or not asked). In essence, you get what you measure. There exists a big difference between designing evaluations to measure the "success" of an intervention and designing one to understand the process through which social change happened, or did not happen in the way that was expected.

Mulling Methods and Measurement

Here is a page from the reflective journal of Louis Spitzer of Breakthrough which speaks to his mulling about methods and measurement:

"The main issue is that the methodologies discussed tend to be towards large-scale interventions. Our intervention is small in comparison, so how do we best adjust it to fit our scale and capacity?
We do a lot of work on the Internet and there wasn't any real discussion on how to evaluate internet interventions. That brought up several questions for me.

How do you analyze a population that is by almost all standards "anonymous"?

These users are also self-selected so they aren't representative of, and you can't generalize to the rest of the population.

In most cases people who browse the Internet have little patience for questionnaires and surveys.

If they are coming to your site to look at media they are most likely predisposed to your cause.

Our Internet ads are quite complex in nature and cut across several issue areas. So, when we set up methodologies how do we make sure that all of the interdisciplinary elements of our ads are in sync? And how do you create an outcome that addresses our particular impact on those indicators. In essence what can we claim as a result of our ad?

Just a couple questions to ourselves:

How can we create more realistic expectations for our selves so that we achieve what we set out to achieve?

How can we make our message clearer in terms of evaluating their effect or to make it easier to evaluate their effect?

What is the best theory of change to address the Breakthrough model?

The Cadillac and Bicycles

When resources are limited, and one cannot afford a pre-post, treatment-control field experiment research design, what options might one have?

A useful metaphor in such a case is to think of purchasing a Cadillac or many bicycles? A Cadillac is the ultimate in road transportation. If there is a paved road, it can get from point A to point B, and provide a comfortable and secure ride. However, what if you needed to go to points A,B,C,D,E, and F and all at the same time? And, what if the roads to these destinations were not paved?

A Cadillac

It is relatively easier for social change organizations that work in tight resource constraints to invest in many bicycles that can ply many different routes, at different times, and capture diverse topographies through different sets of eyes.
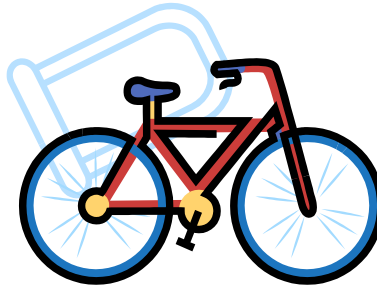
Bicycles

The evaluation experience of Puntos de Encuentro with the first phase of its communication strategy for social change "We are Different, We are Equal" is revealing. The impact evaluation of the first phase was affected, among other considerations, by financial issues. The survey questionnaire was administered only after the television series *Sexto Sentido* had gone off the air, meaning there was no baseline study for comparison. The survey questionnaire needed to be limited to two pages, which did not permit the coverage of many topics covered in the series. Further, the questionnaire adopted a rather unusual format -- of the same kind as quizzes found in magazines aimed at teenage girls where questions set up hypothetical situations –"what/how would you do/think/react if…" with multiple choice responses. Such was done to make it suitable for administration to 13 year olds, so that it could engage their interest and raise 'sensitive' issues in such a way that would not upset them or their parents.

In spite of the problems in codifying and making sense of data generated employing such "compromise" research methods, it allowed Puntos to explore issues not usually addressed in survey research. As Amy Bank explained: "The most exciting part of this research exercise has been to inventory and analyze the enormous variety of individual and collective change processes that have been sparked by this project, things that were not included in the original indicators we had developed, and that we definitely want to follow up on -- things that have to do with social cohesion, leadership, and the like". Interestingly, on one hand, evaluation experts criticized the survey methodology and thus the findings in terms of 'scientific rigor'; on other hand, development professionals approached the findings in a different way, initiating debates around what the outcomes actually meant, and what were the deeper issues for assessment.

In conclusion, in spite of the obvious criticisms, the first assessment experience of *Sexto Sentido* was extremely useful for Puntos to design the second phase of its communication strategy. The story about sexual abuse, for instance, emerged as a direct result of this evaluation"[37].

Marketing: Sales with Soul

"Is it about sales?" I asked.

"Sales and soul," came the reply.

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Soul with Sales

The vast array of media options available to consumers, and the increasing competition for airtime and viewership, means that a respected organizational "brand" becomes necessary. Further, the need to diversify income streams and sources of funds, and to achieve financial sustainability, non-profit organizations are increasingly incorporating marketing and branding strategies in their strategic planning and project work.

However, what does it mean for social change organizations to "market" their product? Does marketing necessarily mean selling one's soul? How can one create an exciting and ethical brand?

In the NGO world, Soul City is a recognized leader in the area of branding and marketing. And they do it with an intact soul.

John Molefe, Soul City's marketing "genius" noted the following: "A brand is a set of ideas, a promise, feelings… it's not tangible, but it creates expectations about quality, about certain points of view. A brand is more than a logo…"

John noted: "Soul City is educational, real, relevant, credible, inspirational, triumphant, fun, and youthful brand that offers hope and healing.   Emotively, Soul City is a unique, real, gripping and enjoyable edutainment experience with purpose that touches and enriches the soul. It is about the struggles and triumphs of ordinary people, it speaks to you about lifestyle choices in a light-hearted manner."

Branding in a Bus Stop

Louis Spitzer of Breakthrough provided the following comments to Soul City's marketing and branding presentation (in his reflective journal):

"My first thoughts were that Soul City had actually gone too far and over branded itself. Perhaps even branded themselves into a corner….Upon reflection it is only because SC is so well branded that I can be as critical as I am. They have actually done a superb job in getting to where they are. The day, overall, was full of valuable learning and it was very helpful to have available the experience of Soul City. It made me think of what we as an organization were doing right and wrong. It occurred to me that our issue is that we do not have a clear product to market. In fact if you take our PSAs they are actually what are normally used to market other products. It poses an interesting conundrum. It became very clear that we had a long way to go and that we needed to take marketing and branding more seriously. We had already planned a serious branding exercise for the week that we returned, however, I will head into that meeting with a lot more knowledge now."

Learnings: What we Brought? What we Take Back?

"What did you bring?" I asked.

"Ask what I am taking away," came the reply.

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Brought-In and Take-Away

Representatives of all four participating organisations emphasized that they took back lessons learned from the Netherlands meeting of March 2006, and tweaked or changed internal strategies and policies (for example M & E strategies), and that they have several other new ideas to take back home.

Mallika Dutt from Breakthrough commented: "The KIC meeting was an extraordinary learning opportunity for Breakthrough. Having been in the social justice world for the last 25 years, I can safely say that the format of the meeting was one of the most invaluable capacity building learning opportunities that I have ever had. Spending time together with peer groups enabled us to share our stories and also compare notes. It made it possible for us to contextualize our work in a global space and understand what was local and specific and what was shareable and useful across contexts. Breakthrough is taking back all our learning to both the India and US office. We will be creating a reading list for our colleagues who did not attend, and also going into an organizational development meeting in June 2007. The KIC process will strengthen our work by giving us greater clarity about effective theories of change as well as evaluation methodologies that actually enable us to learn something rather than engaging in a fund-raising exercise." In a note written after the workshop, Mallika continued: "We have learned a lot from the deliberative South Africa workshop and are now busy developing messaging and branding processes; we are using the Soul City model for community mobilization as a reference, using Arvind Singhal's guidance on evaluation methods, and trying as we move forward to figure out impact evaluation processes for online social networking strategies, and what not!"

Amy Bank emphasized the relevance of this workshop for Puntos: "It afforded an opportunity for critical reflection about our own work: where we've been, where we're going, how we're 'positioned' in the edutainment and communication for social change world, especially in relation to our political/social role to other organizations and social movements, and not only as a producer/disseminator of media products and the ideas they represent, but beyond".

Even though the original plans for the workshop focused on sharing organizational practices, that is, "how do we do what we do and why", in the course of the event the focus shifted to a more fundamental plane, that is, "how do we do things step-by-step". It is understandable why the urgent often gets prioritized above the important, especially when time goes by quickly (even if it spread over 10 days. In spite of this shift in focus, all the participants agreed that there was great richness and benefits in this exchange for the organizations involved.

While all four participating organizations see it as a compelling social obligation to share their experiences with others; they expressed concern about being overloaded with requests for assistance. Participants emphasized that they do not have the capacity to thoughtfully assist others in the design and implementation of their social change initiatives. Hence, codifying and systematizing their practices is an important step to share experiences with the broader communication and social change community. There was recognition that even though learning and documenting is time consuming, it provides a way to capitalize on the organization's experiential strengths, and to obtain feedback toward the organization's future plans. Amy Bank from Puntos pointed out documentation "helps our organization learn internally." Increasingly international agencies are willing to support systematizations and there are resources available, both academic (as in universities) and in the social sector, that can contribute to this process. Organizations felt that they could perhaps look into more actively involving local (and overseas) graduate students in this task.

In Conclusion: Principles without Prescriptions

One participant concluded his reflective journal by noting: "I think it is incredible that 5 organizations from 4 different continents have come together to share their ideas and thoughts and present their knowledge and wisdom to one another with such openness and generosity. As this is a time when organizations tend to be acting more like businesses and are increasingly more competitive rather than supportive it is with much relief that I am part of the few that wish to share their resources rather than horde them."

Clearly, there are many other ways to conclude this narrative. And, there are many conclusions to this narrative.

In principle, we can conclude that social change is possible. That communication is essential, and not necessarily the decorative olive in the martini. That NGOs can design and implement effective multimedia-multimethod strategies toward social ends.

In principle, we also conclude that there are no prescriptions or recipe for design of effective communication for social change strategies.   One size does not fit all. There is no one recipe nor one stove on the burner. You may have the basic ingredients (which may be shareable) but the flavor of spices may be different. One may want to use local products, mix and match, try different heat settings, and add your favorite garnish to the final product. Then after tasting it, and having others taste it, you may wish to add a little more of this or a lot more of that; and in some situations, perhaps start all over again.

And, finally, here is another way to conclude what the South Africa meeting meant to some of us. A workshop participant who was making her first visit to South Africa, after our field visit to Munsieville, noted:

"The visit to Desmond Tutu's sister's house in Munsieville was a heartwarming experience in the middle of the workshop. It was a physical and emotional moment. She and her house are obvious symbols of where the country was, and where it is now. It was very symbolic to be in South

Africa and be able to personally attest the history of a social struggle against discrimination and how we cannot separate our own struggles and histories from other struggles and social realities."

Our Struggles are Joined

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Endnotes

[1] We thank Ester Veldhius of KIC Project of Oxfam-Novib, Netherlands; participants of all the participating organizations, resource people (such as Dr. Martine Bouman); and especially our gracious hosts from Soul City.

[2] There exist several organizations worldwide that implement edutainment initiatives (see Harter et al., 2007; Papa et al, 2000; Piotrow et al., 1997; Rodriguez, 2005; Rogers et al., 1999; Singhal, Cody, Rogers, & Sabido, 2004; Singhal & Rogers, 1999; Singhal & Rogers, 2002; Sypher et al., 2002; Storey & Jacobson, 2004; Tufte, 2004; Vaughan et al., 2000); however, these four organizations, while diverse in reach and scope, lead the pack.

[3] These details about Puntos and more can be found on the organization's web-site www.puntos.org.ni

[4] In collaboration with Dr. Bouman (2002; 2004), who is the founding principal of Bouman E&E (Entertainment-Education) Development in Gouda, Netherlands, possibilities are being explored to more actively engage Dutch media producers in the use of edutainment.

[5] Since Fall, 2007, based at the Department of Communication, University of Texas, El Paso.

[6] KIC is an acronym for Knowledge Infrastructure with and between Counterparts. KIC seeks to boost joint learning initiatives between the more than 3,000 organizations that 13 Oxfam affiliates worldwide support. The KIC Web Portal (www.oxfamkic.org) serves as a database as well as a platform for on-line communities of practice.

[7] This section draws upon information in La Benevolencija's website (www.labenevolencija.org)

[8] These details were gathered from various sources, notably Adelman, H. and A. Suhrke (eds). 1999. *The Path of a Genocide: the Rwanda Crisis From Uganda to Zaire.* Transaction, New Brunswick, NJ, USA; and Gourevitch, P. 1998. *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda.* Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, New York, NY, USA.

[9] See Romeo Dallaire (2005) *Shake Hands With The Devil: The Failure of Humanity In Rwanda.* New York: Arrow Books.

[10] This photo, available to the public, is available at http://www.flickr.com/photos/camera_rwanda/89256988/. It was accessed on October 19, 2007.

[11] This section draws upon information in Puntos' website(www.puntos.org.ni)

[12] See Carrión, L. and CIET Internacional (1996) and Rivera, L.M. (2000)

[13] The program was also featured in the 2007 Discovery Channel documentary about Ashley Judd and Salma Hayek's YouthAIDS tour to Central America.

[14] In addition, Puntos maintains an on-site information center and online database composed of articles, methodological materials, magazines, and videos. In 2008, it consisted of around 12,000 titles in over 50 topical categories, including social movements, human rights, identity, media, health, and other regional information. Some 10,000 documents are downloaded from its on-line database every month, that is, about 300 (on average) per day.

[15] This section draws upon Breakthrough's web-site (www.breakthrough.tv).

[16] Previously, while studying law at New York University, Dutt co-founded *Sakhi* ("Friend") for South Asian Women, combating the violence against women in the New York community.

[17] This hard hitting yet sensitive campaign has been created pro bono by advertising agency Ogilvy and Mather in four languages -Hindi, English, Kannada and Marathi. Developed by Piyush Pandey – National Creative Director and Emmanuel Upputuru - Senior Creative Director, the campaign asks for greater responsibility from the immediate family.

[18] Draws upon www.soulcity.org.za; personal interviews over the yeats with Drs. Garth Japhet, Shereen Usdin, Sue Goldstein, John Molefe, Harriet Perlman, and others; Usdin, Singhal, Shongwe, and Shabalala (2004); and Wilson, G. (2005, October) Soul City: A Strategy for Small-Screen Education. October, 2005, *eAfrica.*
http://www.saiia.org.za/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=724

[19] A Women's Police Unit.

[20] See Lacayo (2006). Retrieved from Puntos de Encuentro's website
http://www.puntos.org.ni/sidoc/nuestras_publicaciones.php#englishtitles

[21] This narrative on the *Soul Buddyz* clubs draws upon http://www.soulcity.org.za/programmes/the-soul-buddyz-series/soul-buddyz-club

[22] The authors of the Video letters Project are Katarina Rejger and Eric van den Broek, two Dutch filmmakers. They pioneered the idea of the video letters during the time of the war in the Balkans, and since then it has spread to other post-war countries as a tool of reconciliation.
http://www.videoletters.net/set-1030.1005-en.html

[23] Video letters also serve as a conflict prevention tool in multi- ethnic societies. By reconnecting former enemies, video letters contribute to open communication and makes reconciliation possible.

[24] This draws upon Usdin, Singhal, Shongwe, and Shabalala (2004), and Wilson, G. (2005, October) Soul City: A Strategy for Small-Screen Education. e*Africa.*
http://www.saiia.org.za/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=724

[25] Several steps are being taken to address these issues. One of them is through building of bridges between academics and practitioners. Virginia Lacayo, one of the present authors of this report, trained previously as a feminist lawyer and worked with Puntos for over a dozen years.

Now, she is earning her doctoral degree in the School of Media Arts and Studies at Ohio University. Similarly, Charlotte Lapsansky, a former employee of Breakthrough is now enrolled in the Ph.D. program in communication at the Annenberg School for Communication.   To their credit, however, all four organizations have been very open and inviting of inputs from communication scholars as consultants, advisors, or even board members. For instance, Arvind Singhal, one of the present authors, has served previously as an advisor to Soul City, and now serves on the advisory board of Breakthrough. However, academic training is not the only way to legitimize (or validate) the efforts and outcomes of ground-based organizations; workshops, such as the present one, also hold immense potential to systematize organizational knowledge through peer-based validation.

[26] See the work of Prochaska and DiClemente on stages of change.

[27] See Rogers (2003) and Singhal and Dearing (2006).

[28] See Bandura (1977; 1995).

[29] See Kinsella (1989).

[30] Dearing and Rogers (1996).

[31] See Sternin (2003); Sternin and Choo (2000); Sternin, Sternin, and Marsh (1999).

[32] A positive deviance inquiry focuses on eliminating those client behaviors from the strategy mix that are true but useless (TBU). TBU is a sieve through which a facilitator passes the uncommon qualities of positive deviants to ensure that the identified practices can be practiced by everyone.
[33] See Glouberman, S. and Zimmerman, B. (2002, p.6); and Papa, Singhal, and Papa (2006).

[34] See also Singhal & Rattine-Flaherty (2006).

[35] See Lacayo (2006, p. 47)

[36] Quoted in Lacayo (2006, p. 45).

[37] Ibid (pp. 43-44).