

Inside the Psychologist's Studio: Albert Bandura

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Albert Bandura, who has received both the APS William James Fellow Award and the APS James McKeen Cattell Fellow Award, is one of the most influential psychological scientists in history. Bandura was trained as a learning theorist, but when he arrived at Stanford University in 1953, a year after receiving his PhD from the University of Iowa, something bothered him.

“I looked around and I couldn’t figure out how it is that all our complex competencies and these complex social systems we created — how could this all be produced by trial and error learning and rewarding and punishing consequences?”

In an APS Inside the Psychologist’s Studio interview, Bandura told APS Fellow **Gian Vittorio Caprara** that this question inspired him to study how people might learn through observation alone. His [classic “Bobo doll” experiments](#), which showed that children who had watched adults beat an inflatable clown doll learned to model the same aggressive behavior, marked an important shift in the field of psychology toward a social-cognitive model of learning.

The modeling research that began with the Bobo experiments has been used for applications Bandura never foresaw. In the 1970s, the Mexican playwright and television producer Miguel Sabido used the modeling principles of the Bobo doll experiments to create serial television dramas that promoted adult literacy and family planning to break the cycle of poverty.

Since Sabido’s original dramas, television programs based on Bandura’s research have been used around the world for purposes of social change, addressing issues from child trafficking to environmental conservation. The modeling approach, Bandura says, informs and enables everyday people to take actions that improve their lives.

This interview is part of the APS series Inside the Psychologist’s Studio. See more interviews with legends of psychological science [here](#).