GLOBAL SOCIAL CHANGE LEADERSHIP: A FRAMEWORK FOR BUSINESS

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Abstract

This article posits a framework for thinking about the role business leaders can play in creating global social change. The qualitative, grounded theory research study rests on the assumption that alternative paradigms exist compared to our predominant, profit-maximizing corporate model. The study seeks to understand how 39 formal and informal leaders consciously act within business contexts in order to create forms of wealth that include, but are not limited to, financial profits. The framework's four propositions characterize attitudes and values espoused by the snowball sample of individuals. Implications are hypothesized for the influence relationships created within our larger global society as a result of interconnection actions occurring at individual and local levels.

KEYWORDS: Business and society, wealth, interconnectedness, leadership

Introduction

I was inspired in the late 1990's to begin systematically looking for ways in which businesses and individuals were considering business objectives beyond individual financial profit maximization. Though formally schooled in Adam Smith's free market theory as the paradigm for successful business in society, I intuitively suspected that something more comprehensive mattered than money alone. I call that something *holistic wealth*. Indeed, sociologists, theologians, psychologists and even environmental scientists explained "success" differently than my internationally recognized business education would have me believe mattered. Therefore, I sought to understand leadership behaviors and organizational models from a more humanistic perspective. I began by asking, in what ways do profit-oriented business, and leaders within them, engage in practices that benefit society at large? This paper espouses such an alternative paradigm. The individuals I studied, from whom the espoused paradigm comes, are referred to here as *positive change leaders* because they intentionally seek to create holistic wealth locally. By virtue of systems thinking, local actions are considered to have global implications. Therefore, positive change leaders are considered to be creating *global social change* through business.

Theories, concepts and perspectives articulated here are not new. What is unique to this work is the arrangement of existing ideas and cross-disciplinary thinking applied to business. The arrangement illustrates a framework for how individuals can choose to engage in contemporary business towards global social health. By virtue of stepping outside of the traditional business assumptions and hypothesis testing, I inquire in order to build theory about what matters to some executive minds. The emergent theory

therefore is grounded in stories. Admittedly, my own lens shapes and filters the meaning I make from the executives' narrative data. Just as feminist theory suggests, I assume here that my experiences and my status within the socio-economic and political hierarchies of society influence what I find salient in others' stories. With that said however, as a social scientist and action researcher, I also consciously note my role as participant-observer. Therefore, I seek to identify clusters of themes within data (not simply incidences of expression) and to corroborate my analysis with the study's participants and other constituency groups wherever possible. So while hermeneutic reflection informs this paper, the emergent framework reflects executive thinking as well as it reflections my own hopes for social change.

Study's Context: A Global Dialogue

Data for this study, and insights for narrative interpretation, came through a larger inquiry and dialogue called Business as an Agent of World Benefit (B.A.W.B.). The project inquires into the human strengths, positive experiences, and hopeful future visions at the intersection of business and society. B.A.W.B. is both a formal inquiry and an informal dialogic process. Formal inquiry is expected to foster an informal and on-going global dialogue. During the six month time period in which data for this paper was gathered, 180 interviews occurred and more than 800 people engaged in the grassroots dialogue. (The 39 person sample anchoring this paper represents the subset of 180 for which people trained in qualitative interviewers conducted the actual interview and relied on a common set of interview questions, all of which were asked and answered).

The on-going project has formal and informal components. The formal objective is knowledge creation through inquiry. The process includes research such as this study:

interviewees identified through a specific process, a standardized protocol, University oversight, and full interview recordings and transcripts for systematic analysis. The informal global dialogue follows an action research and social change objective rather than a theory building objective. While Universities and academics continue to be involved, the dialogue emphasizes large scale engagement. Virtual networks, local and multi-national business forums, and practioner-theorist relationships adopt B.A.W.B. themes to shape activities. For example, two global on-line conference brought voices together from disparate geographic and socio-economic groups. Action researchers joined a large manufacturer's summit in Brazil, after which businesses throughout the region collaborated on specific projects (see Worldinquiry.org for specific stories and projects).

I was the B.A.W.B.'s executive director working closely with others to pilot the project in the winter and spring 2002. Four organizations brought their resources to bear; each had unique missions and skills, semi-autonomous constituency groups, and a shared belief that the world can be influenced through positive action. 11 more organizations joined in support of the inquiry's pilot phase. A team of five doctoral students supported the operations and analysis. Within four months, we had collectively interviewed over 180 positive change leaders, established repeatable contact with nearly 800 people, analyzed interview summaries for emergent content themes, and begun to consider how to best foster and support a global dialogue over a much longer period of time. Structurally, the project assumes that every person who becomes involved in the social web of inquiry and conversation constituting the B.A.W.B. project – as planner, interviewer, interviewee, etc. – would in some way have his or her awareness heightened

to positive experiences and future hopes for a healthy world. Therefore, this involvement in the inquiry theoretically links someone to the larger and on-going dialogic web simply by having his or her awareness heightened (Ludema et al., 2000, p.189).

This particular study grounds its propositions directly in a 37 interview subset of the pilot's 180 interviews. Before introducing the study's process and sample though, I will first overview the inquiry and dialogue's theoretical underpinnings: appreciative inquiry and anticipatory learning. The underpinnings influenced the study's process and sample.

Theoretical Underpinnings of the Study

Business as an Agent of World Benefit (B.A.W.B.) comes out of a tradition of appreciative inquiry (AI), which is an organizational development philosophy and a large-scale change, action research based methodology. I introduce the philosophy here and the methodology in the next section. Appreciative inquiry (AI) perspective rests on a set of social science and behavioral principles originally set forth by David Cooperrider (1987). First, AI asserts the power in relationships and the value of language in shaping knowledge created in relationships. While some people may argue that words like "soul" have no place in a business paper, this AI principle encourages choiceful uses of words like soul if a business wants to foster human or environmental integrity as part of its core mission. Language therefore generates creative energy when unlikely pairings – business and soul – give pause for reflection. Knowledge about relationships develops through narratives. Second, AI adheres to systems theory's perspective that organizations are living systems. As living systems, organizations are made of and affected by complex

interactions between many variables, including the perspectives, wisdom and actions of the people involved in the business of that particular organization.

Third, AI says that systems move in the direction of what is discussed. Cooperrider (1987) named this the "principle of simultaneity;" by inquiring into what is life giving rather than problematic within an organization, the organization will shift in the direction of that which is most life giving. Therefore, this study seeks to discover what people hold as "good" in others and in their organizations. Furthermore, the act of inquiring as a researcher cannot be separated from the complex relationships creating changes within the organization. The act of interviewing someone about good simultaneously shifts their attention to that which they cherish, thereby intervening in the larger organizational system to catalyze more "good." (The only definition of "good" offered here is that which promotes well-being.) This principle becomes particularly relevant in this study when considering the ways in which each proposition independently describes and simultaneously functions together without the others to catalyze change.

Fourth, AI assumes that living systems, and therefore business organizations, are poetic. Like a poem, organizations will have different meanings based on who is reading or participating in the system. The organization's narrative is continuously being written and interpreted by the individuals engaged with the system. The implication of this principle is that organizations cannot be seen as static, reified entities. Each individual and each stakeholder group may well interpret decisions, processes, and goals differently from corporate executive's perception or intention. Learning from representations of whole systems becomes crucial in order to understand the complex facets of the organization. The poetic principle lends two perspectives to this study: studying global

social change leadership means we must broadly conceptualize leadership; and no individual, not even a chief executive officer, can accurately represent or dictate all of the behaviors an organization exemplifies. These two implications will be discussed further in the methodology section and on sampling.

Fifth, AI subscribes to the power of anticipation, particularly around positive imagery. For organizations, this means that change can occur in natural ways through ordinary conversation focused on high aspirations. This process is distinct from glossing over problems and only highlighting good. Instead, the principle suggests that whatever is anticipated is more likely to become reality. So methodologically, instead of interviewing people about problems and problem solving, AI engages interviewees in focusing on what they hold most dear and then designing approaches to reach it.

The anticipatory principle also informed the project itself through participants' interest in anticipatory learning. Botkin (1979) contrasts anticipatory learning with participatory – direct involvement in experimentation – in relationship to global social learning:

> In the context of global issues, learning from the future is even more important than learning from the past…Anticipatory learning can reveal, through simulations and scenarios, a wide class of possible but future events which can and do influence not only changes in behavior, which are observable, but also changes in preparation and purpose, which may exist whether immediately observable or not.
>
> In both [participatory and anticipatory] conceptions of learning, 'environmental change' and 'past experience' are seen as the motive force of learning. Anticipatory learning, however, focuses on human initiative and on our capacity to influence events, environments, and experience that are not yet inevitable or irreversible (p. 49).

Participatory learning happens by experimenting; anticipatory learning recognizes that some experiments are too costly to try. We must begin, at global levels, to anticipate the

need for a clean environment for example, rather than experiment with global warming and ozone thinning. Similarly, anticipating – and therefore creating – positive global business models makes more sense than experimenting with mass inequities and exploitative practices. Participating in a global experiment to see whether or not wars will break out to equalize socio-economic conditions is simply too costly today. Therefore, this study emerges out of the belief that we can anticipate and then create larger spheres of well-being by inquiring into the role business might play to foster peace, to catalyze global welfare, and to act as an agent of change.

Process and Sample

In order to learn about the process of leading business change towards a holistic construction of wealth, I gathered interviews through an AI process and then iteratively analyzed the narrative data iteratively in conjunction with relevant literature. The process concluded when I constructed a grounded, thematic framework of propositions. The propositions ultimately advocate generating *holistic wealth*. The process mapped here is important for organizational behavior because it offers an alternative way of aligning business activities to generate wealth outcomes that many corporations and societies already say they favor – worker empowerment, people finding meaning in their lives, environmental sustainability, peace, dignity and even justice on a global scale. I elaborate further on holistic wealth in this paper's literature section.

The framework for leading this global social change is particularly grounded in narrative data from 37 leaders. Each leader was recommended as a "positive change leader," though no pre-existing definition of positive change leadership existed. A characterization of "positive change leadership" was developed through this study. Specifically, leaders (people to whom others listen and respond) at multiple

organizational levels of hierarchy were recommended by educators and practitioners pre-disposed to think about hopeful visions of the future (see previous section, Study's Context). Recommended business leaders were then interviewed about their beliefs, values, operating practices, and images of success. From these narratives, "positive change" in business was characterized as ways in which corporate, profit sector businesses can and do help society to reach images of success. People at all levels of organizations participated in the larger and on-going dialogue. However, this particular study concentrated on senior executives in order to learn about visions and practices from people with high degrees of influence on money and other people (see Methodology for demographics).

Literature

Grounded theory building requires a researcher to listen to data in a hermeneutic reflective process in order to construct propositions. A researcher has a focused question and comes to the process of researching the question from a perspective shaped by theory and experience. However, the researcher has a responsibility to draw on themes within the data before attempting to locate those themes within existing bodies of knowledge. Therefore, this literature section may do more to inform the reader after absorbing the propositions found in the Positive Change Leaders section.

Holistic Wealth

Wealth here is defined far beyond financial profit. According to Webster's dictionary (1983), *wealth* means happiness, and "a rich abundance or profusion of anything." Socially however, Americans have come to perceive wealth narrowly as the individual's financial or economic abundance rather than in terms including the happiness and well-being of the global

community. The case for actualization of happiness frequently appears in popular business press as quite distinct from the case for economic wealth (beyond subsistence levels). The press reinforces ways in which friends, social relationships and national well-being provide deep satisfaction at the individual level. Wealth here is intended holistically. *Holistic wealth* includes strong relationships and webs of community relationship; experiences of wholeness; meaning in one's life beyond self; belonging to and interdependence with collectives; freedoms of choice, expression, and vocation; ecological sustainability; and justice on a global level (or on a local level and therefore holding global implications). Holistic wealth can be the experience of interconnection such as Mitroff and Denton (1999) describe when defining *spirituality:* "the basic feeling of being connected with one's complete self, others, and the entire universe" (p. 83), and "individual and intensely personal and incorporated feeling of interconnectedeness" (p. 84). Holistic wealth can also be seen through interdependent practices within an industry (such as coffee when farmers, refiners, distributors and customers work across boundaries in order to learn together how to deliver a product in ways that enhance all natural systems). I call the people engaged in the process of intentionally creating this form of wealth *positive change leaders*. I refer to their process of being, engaged in creating holistic wealth at many hierarchical levels of organizations and society, as *leading positive change*. This study seeks to understand what we can learn from positive change leaders in order to expand how we do business such that we can choose to include positive, mutually dependent relationships between business and society.

Interconnectedness

The people interviewed for this study consistently raised hopes and concerns about the interconnections between cultural and economic factors. For example,

interviewees expressed an underlying concern about our society's moral blindness and our disregard for the need to replenish the planetary ecology; and about the tensions between ethical corporate scandals exemplifying greed and large-scale hunger existent in the world. These themes emerge in sociology; Bellah and colleagues (1985) have inquired into how Americans create morally coherent lives. Bellah asserts that the question and struggle is far from new, ranging from Plato's Republic to Alexis de Toqueville's Democracy in America, and is consistently reasoned as a balance between private and public life (1985: vii-viii). The private and public spheres of organizations are increasingly complex, due to technological advances, complex interpretations of moral reason, and multi-cultural societies within single countries. This dramatizes the significance of a need for positive change; specifically, ways in which businesses can and do act as agents of world benefit.

Continuity of Time

A macro level of analysis of the relationship between business and society has emerged in recent years in some organizational and economic studies with emphasis on and urgency from advocates of *sustainability* – the premise that society should have a net zero impact on the natural environment:

> There is no longer any serious scientific dispute that the decline in every living system in the world is reaching such levels that an increasing number of them are starting to lose, often at a pace accelerated by the interaction of their decline, their assured ability to sustain the continuity of the life process. We have reached an extraordinary threshold (Hawken, et al., 1999: p.4).

Sustainability of natural systems includes human organizations such as businesses embedded in society. "Viewing the economic process as a disembodied, circular flow of value between production and consumption, argues economist Herman Daly, is like trying to

understand an animal only in terms of its circulatory system, without taking into account the fact it also has a digestive tract that ties it firmly to its environment at both ends" (Hawken et al., 1999, p.7). The question becomes, how do we cope with and break out of deteriorating cycles? Botkin et al. (1979) ask how we will choose to learn new behaviors: "it is not only our capacity to cope which is in question but also our ability or willingness to perceive, understand, and take action on present issues as well as to foresee, avert, and take responsibility for future ones."

Positive Psychology

Positive psychology literature offers the theoretical significance of considering positive potential at the intersection of business and society by suggesting rationale for believing that businesses might be capable of influencing world benefit. Because emotions are associated with urges to act, identifying, seeding, and nurturing positive emotions expands our individual and collective capacity (Frederickson, 1998). Improvements in health (Frederickson et al., 2000), ethics (Sandage & Hill, 2001), happiness of well-being (Meyers, 2000), and capacity for awe (Haidt & Kelner, 2001) result from positive emotions. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) articulate the relationship of positive psychology to business this way:

> The field of positive psychology at the subjective level is about valued subjective experiences: well-being, contentment, and satisfaction (in the past); hope and optimism (for the future); and flow and happiness (in the present). At the individual level, it is about positive individual traits: the capacity for love and vocation, courage, interpersonal skill, aesthetic sensibility, perseverance, forgiveness, originality, future mindedness, spirituality, high talent, and wisdom. At the group level, it is about the civic virtues and the institutions that move individuals toward better citizenship: responsibility, nurturance, altruism, civility, moderation, tolerance, and work ethic (p.5).

Therefore, focusing on people's strengths and visions of ideal futures holds the potential to shape businesses to act as agents of world benefit. In other words, seeking to

understand positive change leadership can be a vehicle for cultivating positive change leadership in myself (as researcher) and in others (interviewees and readers) as they focus on the topics of inquiry.

Propositions emerging from this study both contribute to and are inspired by these researchers and disciplines. The power comes from integrating multiple disciplinary perspectives. Rather than analyze business functions as independent from society, these propositions assume business practices as a collective of individuals. This work moves beyond economics and socio technical analysis to draw from organizational behavior, sociology, psychology, biology, environmental science, metaphysics and ancient wisdom traditions in order to understand emerging business possibilities.

Methodology

This work is exploratory. The theoretical framework is functionalist in that I study leaders within formal business contexts with particular focus on the human systems within corporations. However, the interpretivist influences of appreciative inquiry (AI) and hermeneutic reflection as a phenomenological process also shape my work. Cooperrider (1999) builds on over 30 years of theory when he says, "as made and imagined, organizations are products of human interaction and mind rather than some blind expression of an underlying order" (p. 91). Therefore, rather than seeking to prove or disprove an underlying order, this study seeks to suggest alternatives for leading businesses in contrast with the current implicit, underlying order of business organizations – the *dominant business ethos* – that short-term financial returns within corporate boundaries effectively measure success.

Underlying Assumptions

Two underlying assumptions gave rise to strategic decisions in the project design. First, I assumed that profit sector businesses, particularly Fortune 1000 companies, hold a powerful influence over societies' value systems. Therefore, to understand how business acts to create benefit in today's global market society, I focused on interviewing people perceived as leading positive change in the corporate sector. Furthermore, with the belief that corporate leadership shapes the *collective mind* of the organization (Brockmann & Anthony, 1998) – such as the culture, how people behave implicitly and explicitly towards colleagues and stakeholders, allegiance to certain ideas – I chose to concentrate on identifying and interviewing appropriate senior executives wherever possible. Methodologically though, it must be noted that to create robust social theory, many other populations must be interviewed.

The second assumption was that leaders' ideal future visions of "world benefit" could contain narrative themes even though no pre-existing definition was built for precisely what "world benefit" means. Scholars debate the specifics of an ideal future even though many assert visions of what the ideal might be. For example, futurist Hazel Henderson advocates a "global agenda of human responsibilities – from cleaning up our environmental life-support system to harnessing capitalism and materialism to social justice, higher ethical behavior, and global standards" (Harman, 1998, p. xiv). Ethicist Peter Singer (2002) calls for a new world ethic where nations consume and support the world community with less regard for boundaries and more regard for justice than ever before. Social economist Wolfgang Sachs (1992) denounces collective pursuits of world community that homogenize populations, suggesting that cultures are being extinguished at unprecedented rates and therefore the human species is systematically eliminating its

own potential. Even though people hold different visions for what world benefit might be, all share the belief that consideration of world benefit must become a North star (Beck, 2001) guiding our future directions. Therefore, I define *world benefit* here conceptually as the process of generating holistic wealth.

These two assumptions, lead to this study's sample being identified through the larger B.A.W.B.'s call to inquiry.

Call to Inquiry

A convenience sample of participants was compiled for this exploratory work by announcing a "Call to Inquiry" through a set of organizations identified as interested in the concept of holistic well-being coming through business. It invited everyone interested in the concept to consider interviewing one or more people who they considered to be a "positive change leader." A positive change leader was described as someone helping to make positive change happen at the intersection of business and society. Guidelines for our inclusive understanding of "leader" were provided (see Table 1: Demographics for definitions of five leader types).

Groups involved in the initial distribution of the Call to Inquiry were: three universities; a global learning community founded at a university and focused on building knowledge towards fundamental institutional change; a worldwide organization of appreciative inquiry practitioners; a world conference about spirituality and business; three professional business associations; a European foundation; and a consulting firm working specifically with Fortune 500 executives. The Call to Inquiry also encouraged recipients to forward electronic information about the global dialogue to others who might be interested. In this way, the project team and I hoped to reach a diverse sample

of people engaged in work that – through many different eyes – was perceived as "good." Both interested interviewers and recommendations for interviewees emerged for the larger inquiry.

Sample

Positive change leaders are imagined to be everywhere and equally of all ages, genders and ethnicities. The larger B.A.W.B. continues to reach broadly. This particular study concentrated on a group of executives interviewed in the initial three month pilot during spring 2002 (see Table 1: Positive Change Leaders). While many people were interviewed in this period, only summary data was often reported by volunteers. The 37 interviews here represent everyone in the pilot stage for whom full transcripts were made. Some characteristics of the focal group of 37 interviewees can be sketched. In keeping with the social change agenda embedded in appreciative inquiry, my hope is that the population is continuously increasing in all levels of business and society as the dialogue continues. The focal sample has the following demographics: 19% women (7 interviewees), 81% men (30 interviewees); 8% (3 interviewees) in their 20's and 30's, 81% (30 interviewees) mid-career leaders, and 11% (4 interviewees) technically retired yet still active in public life; 43% the interviewees (16 interviewees) have been or are currently senior executives with Fortune 1000 companies. The sample is almost entirely "American": 27 people self-identify as American without regard to ethnic heritage, one is an American living long-term in Asia, three are Asian living long-term in America, three self-identify as "Jewish Americans," and three are non-American living predominantly outside of America. Several people conducting interviews during the pilot were specifically focused on Asian and Latin American businessmen. However, the

perspectives of people sharing stories reflected in this work are biased towards white, Anglo-Saxon, American men in mid-career stages. I note this profile because Bennis and Thompson (2002) report on the importance of cultural context and era in which one is raised on the resulting values one holds. It suggests direction for future research.

Interviews

Semi-structured, guided interviews for the study lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. I conducted 10 of the 37 interviews; volunteers experienced in AI conducted the others. The larger inquiry draws on many volunteers, all with a wide variety of AI interviewer experience ranging from no experience to expert. The appreciative interview explores high point moments to understand the best in circumstances and organizations. It generates narrative data from which a grounded theory approach is typically used for analysis.

Analysis

Grounded theory is a systematic process of comparing qualitative texts, discovering relationships between codes identified within the texts, and building conceptual theories from these relationships that are grounded in the narrative data (Glaser & Strauss, 1971; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Codes are identified in two ways – open codes that inductively emerge, and axial codes that are formed through group, review, and interpretation of the open codes. Returning to the text with axial codes allows the researcher to then reconsider themes across all narratives. This process includes hermeneutic reflection between me, as researcher, and the texts of stories shared. Therefore, my professional experience and early code development work each shaped my insights during the hermeneutic reflection.

First, prior to engaging in doctoral studies, I had a career in corporate strategic consulting. I hold a masters degree in business administration and served as an executive for two large, non-profit organizations for seven years. Both of these careers shape how I perceive and interpret narratives. Second, I entered the narrative analysis phase of this particular study having already participated in a five- person analysis team working together from a related set of summaries to build a systematic thematic code (see Boyatzis, 1998) for the inquiry's pilot phase. While the summaries we used for thematic code development did not overlap with the set of 37 full-text interviews that I later used for this particular study. I did apply the thematic code-development insights to all available interviews and summaries. The implication of this process is that my perceptions of what the narratives might reveal was shaped over time by my early professional experiences, by the thematic code development process, by the writing of a preliminary report for a practitioner's conference, by the literatures I read, and by the actual narratives used in this sample set of 37. This reflects the iterative nature of the grounded theory intention (Hall & Callery, 2001).

The essence of grounded theory is rooted in social constructionism. Reliability becomes subject to researcher interpretation. Hall & Callery (2001) argue that science should be less condemning and more encouraging of participant-research interactions and relationships because through those relationships we are likely to actually be getting richer, more authentic stories from participants because of increased levels of relationship or trust with the researcher. Reflection continues until a level of theoretical sensitivity is reached. Hall & Callery refer to Strauss and Corbin (1998) in defining theoretical sensitivity because it "reflects the investigator's ability to use personal and professional

experiences and the literature to see the research situation and data in new ways and exploit the potential of the data for developing theory" (p. 259). Thus theoretical sensitivity refers to the researcher's manipulation of the data to yield explanations that best reflect the reality that is being apprehended.

Positive Change Leaders

Leaders thought to be creating positive change through business held a common worldview that is fully explored in the paper. Quite generally, these leaders believed the world functions as a highly interconnected system, that wealth extends to qualities far beyond financial profit, and that success must be measured over multiple generations of time.

Leading Global Social Change

Three things need clarifying about leading global social change. First, the word leader often implies a hierarchical, organizational, business leader, one whose name appears in a company's annual report. "Leader" here is used in the broadest sense: people whose actions are having an influence, people who others look to for guidance regardless of title or formal authority.

Second, the larger dialogue in which this study is embedded sought participation from private, public and social sectors. This study's sample predominantly comes from the private sector of business, the for-profit organizations. This bias fits the objective of learning about possible ways profit oriented businesses might create social and environmental benefit in addition to economic returns. Business, primarily the private sector, is an enormously powerful force shaping how global social change occurs. For example, sourcing decisions in the United States impact wages and standards of living

worldwide. Soccer balls made in Pakistan and India require children because children's fingers are small enough to hand stitch the small patches together that make the balls. No child labor laws prohibit 16 hour days, enforce break times, or regulate wages in Pakistan. Where one child collapses, another is ready to work. Yet in the American consumer market, we seek low price guarantees regardless of supply chain implications. Similarly, product decisions can change market supply and demand. McDonald's decision to include shrimp salad on their menus so affected the world market for shrimp that the entire market price was driven up past the point where McDonald's could afford to include shrimp salad on their own menus! These examples illustrate the implicit power business decisions have in shaping social worlds.

Third, leading "global social change" here means working within one's sphere of influence while holding the philosophical belief that all things are connected. I do not need to be working at a global level in order to be seen as valuably leading global social change. In fact, most of the leaders interviewed saw themselves as simply doing what they thought was "right." Only a few sought to change the world (one interviewee grinned as she acknowledged she wanted to change the world, and then she added, "and I have absolutely no need to do it on my own.") Academically, systems theory suggests patterns and relationships exist between parts of larger systems. Therefore, a farmer can work in a domestic business but, because our economies are increasingly interdependent and our societies increasingly interconnected, the farmer's domestic level work has implications on the larger global world. When anyone's decisions consider the positive implications for people, the same decisions have implications on the larger society. The same is true with the environment; when an individual sees himself as a responsible

environmental steward, his actions have implications for the global environment. Therefore, many small actions – even unsynchronized ones – have ripple effects on patterns that create global social change.

Worldviews

The term *worldviews* comes from Beck & Cowan (1996). They explore the evolutionary nature of worldviews as ever changing, adaptive, and framing how different individual experience similar circumstances. Here, I found three prevalent elements in the frames of reference positive change leaders used interpreting their circumstances. Their worldviews, include: a holistic concept of wealth, long perceptions of time, and a belief in interconnectedness. Each is informed by previously discussed literatures.

1. Holistic concept of wealth. These leaders talked about wealth quite holistically. For example, their perception of success included time to be with family members, business products and processes that are environmentally sensitive, and spiritual and physical health. One executive told the story of a company arranging geographic transfers and then later holding his job open for him while he and his wife got extensive medical treatment for her health. He explained that his relationship with clients strengthened during that period because clients were impressed by his commitment to family and well being. When talking about their ideal world, these leaders talked about food for everyone worldwide, peace beyond absence of war, laughter, and a healthy natural environment. Contrary to popular culture messages, no leader cited a new car, a large bank account, or a corner office as their image of the ideal.

2. Multiple generations of time. These leaders talked about their actions in terms of the implication for grandchildren. One engineer was focused on basic scientific

research to change nuclear waste into a cancer fighting agent saying we need to become more innovative rather than putting the waste into a mountain for the people 10,000 years from now to deal with. The leaders measure the implications of their success against multiple generations of time rather than against quarterly financial returns or a 3-year plan. This is not to suggest that these leaders do not notice short-term progress or the need to be successful short term, however they consider the present simultaneously with considering the future. The ability to hold both temporal realities together distinguishes them.

3. Interconnectedness. These leaders operate under the assumption that all people and actions are somehow connected to each other in larger patterns and systems that we cannot necessarily see. Academically, this means they root themselves in systems perspectives. Scientifically, this means they believe in quantum theory and quantum physics beyond Newtonian or causal theories of physics. Practically, they believe that their actions matter because of some unifying or coordinating force that is greater than themselves (God, Spirit, Karma, process). One executive talked about the significance of investing time and money into a long-term plan to build schools in Pakistan for children who were working in the factories sourcing soccer balls. By educating the children, promising them jobs after graduation, and hiring other family members related to the children while the children attended school, a systemic level "fix" is constructed to one experience of child labor exploitation. Another executive talked about the significance of dealing honorably in supplier relationships. He clearly believed that his product (and mission) would be better for the end user when he extended his commitment far beyond his own payroll to include people and companies

up and down his supply chain. Finally, another executive talked about doing "good" because she believed it all "comes back to you;" religiously she considered it casting her bread out onto the waters.

The three dimensions of a world view shape business decision making. Priorities and outcomes emerge from the three dimensions differently than priorities and outcomes that emerge from people for whom short-term financial wealth defines success. The interviewees' perspective led to proposition 1:

Proposition 1: Business acts as a natural and appropriate agent for world benefit when people behave as if:

a. all living physical and metaphysical systems are interconnected;
b. wealth encompasses global, holistic well-being, far beyond financial profit; and
c. relevant time extends from past to future generations.

Many different religions hold a perspective on the concept of wealth meaning far more than money. Sociology and natural sciences rely on interconnectedness to understand social patterns and evolutionary or biologic systems. History and philosophy are among the many disciplines considering multiple generations of time. Surprisingly though, these characteristics are not often associated with the study or practice of business, and business is arguably the most influential arena in shaping global societies. Therefore, this analysis suggests that positive change leaders are perceived by peers as outstanding because they are doing what comes naturally to them in a domain – business – where the paradigm generally calls on people to narrowly define wealth as financial, a

focus on boundaries rather than interconnectedness, and race to a clock measuring quarterly reports rather than multiple generations.

Awakenings

Behaviorally, these positive change leaders might look like many other people doing their jobs. A key difference in their stories is their motivation. Most often, they said that they do what they do is because it is "the right thing." These positive change leaders believe in something larger than themselves and see how their actions are taking a very small step towards making a difference in the world. Their actions themselves are only a part of what they do; woven into their actions is a clear intention to help others.

Four clusters emerged when these leaders were asked if they remembered how or when they learned their intention. First, many told of an early childhood experience (seeing poverty first hand, helping a relative help others, listening to stories of a treasured teacher). From the early childhood experience, their value system and behavioral code was solidified. Others recalled a crisis, a wake up call. For one it was cancer, for others the death of a child or parent. The crisis woke the leader's consciousness, repositioning people, environment, and joy central to life's purpose. Similarly, people talked about events of the soul, times when the crisis occurred internally through depression or a religious conversion. These first three ways in which positive change leaders come to believe in business differently than the dominant paradigm all occur in a human, emotional realm.

The fourth way people shifted to prioritize holistic wealth was external and strategic. In several cases, a strategic opportunity presented itself. For example, activists pressure spans unlikely partnership between a corporation and people in an economically

depressed manufacturing site, and then an executive becomes aware of the human faces behind business decisions. The awareness generates an awakening in the executive, an awakening to wealth beyond financial gain. In all cases though, the leader had internalized a deep desire to exist in a worldview reliant on interdependence.

Proposition two characterizes the role of these awakenings as follows:

> *Proposition 2*: Positive change is catalyzed by events that awaken people to the possibilities of holistic wealth, including early childhood experiences, crises, events of the soul, and strategic opportunities for partnership and collaboration.

Some expressed their intention as a "calling," others suggest their religion is the driving motivator, and still others talk about a mentor, colleague or relative who imprinted upon them the significance of considering others. Wherever the intention arose, these peoples' ways of being in the world complement the positive actions that they are doing.

Interwoven Traits

These positive change leaders manifest their worldviews in their style (intention), ways of acting (the things they do) and ways of knowing (how they perceive). Together, these traits form the positive change leaders. How these leaders conduct themselves distinguishes them:

> *Proposition 3:* Positive change leaders demonstrate knowing and doing in a unique style that is soulful, heedful, authentic, and grounded in metaphysical principles.

Leaders were asked how others would describe them. Table 2: Self Descriptors groups leaders' responses into three categories: style, ways of acting, and ways of knowing.

Style (Intention). Stylistically, the positive change leaders talked about how they process information and ideas, their approach to business, distinguishing qualities of their character and their world view. To describe how they believe others see them, the leaders used words such as creative, flexible, open minded, straight forward, and the capacity to believe in the unknown. We consider these traits ways of processing ideas and information. The descriptors suggest an openness to what the universe has to offer, then an openness to imagining how to make use of the ideas and resources available.

When using the ideas and resources, the leaders described themselves in others' eyes as persistent, committed, driven, entrepreneurial, restless and even peripatetic. Clearly, these leaders are not waiting for the Universe to unfold; instead, they are staying open to what might come and quite actively engaging in the process of transforming possibilities into opportunities. In doing so, they act with honor. Qualities of character emerge through self-descriptors such as integrity, honesty, loyalty, high energy, courageous, and positive values. So these leaders are creatively acting with intention and honor, and bringing vitality to their process.

Ways of Acting (Behaviors). These leaders are behaving in ways popular motivational management literature suggests – listening, treating others with respect, demonstrating compassion and care for others, and doing so with humor. Perhaps the only distinguishing feature is that these things are done interwoven with the intention of being honorable and open to all that is around them. Through this, they motivate others.

Some said others might think of them as articulate, motivational, inspiring, and able to communicate. One person quoted a factory worker's comment about him, "you're the smartest person I've ever understood."

These leaders connect with other people. In the workplace, they are seen as passionate, having a positive outlook about the possibility for change, being focused, authentic and enthusiastic, and some even comfortably able to manage ambiguity. Doing these things while also bringing a vitality and honor of intention to ones purpose is distinguishing.

Ways of Knowing (Perception). Finally, beyond being admirable people, these positive change leaders are also quite savvy about business. They are considered strategic, able to analyze and solve problems, willing to make decisions, and able to see how moving parts fit together. They expect colleagues would describe them as wise, knowledgeable in the field, capable, and demonstrating good judgment. Again, many people could be considered smart or knowledgeable about business. However this group knows or perceives in conjunction with their intentions and behaviors, a knowing tempered by wholeness rather than exploited for a game of being shrewd.

Beyond their worldviews, positive change leaders hold anticipatory visions. Furthermore, their worldviews and anticipatory visions catalyze change in others.

Anticipatory Visions

Incentive to learn more about these people comes back to the underlying belief in systems and patterns. All actions shape cultural patterns we cannot see. Notice, this is not advocating cause and effect; simply, actions shape patterns. For example, global warming does not kill fish, but global warming does affect the larger biosphere in which

fish live, making their food sources sparse and their habitat small, which in turn leads to the extinction of various species of fish. The same is true with people's positive actions influencing the possibilities for global social change.

Therefore, proposition four takes on increased significance. Positive change leaders imagine an enormously hopeful future. Their decisions, relationships and priorities set daily activities in motion for a much larger cultural change to occur.

> *Proposition 4*: Positive change leaders are driven daily by anticipatory visions that imagine hope, team-ness, interdependence, and care-taking of the world.

These leaders generate energy in themselves, and therefore in the people around them, by moving towards images of hopeful futures.

Catalyzing Change

Given the reflexive nature of human behavior, individuals are catalyzing change in others as they behave in "positive change leader" ways. Individuals are nested beings, embedded in the groups and organizations comprising the fabric of society (Weick, 1979). By virtue of this highly relational existence, individuals are constantly learning from each other. This relationality emerged through positive change leaders' narratives about who influenced them in their lives and about how they perceive their influence on others. Positive change leadership not only embodies relationality and interdependence, but by doing so it manifests a ripple effect of positive change as the leaders engage interdependently with others.

Change is catalyzed in two ways. First, these leaders attract employees and foster strategic business partnerships with people who share their worldview. Second, they

draw out of followers the belief that ideals are valued and possible. These followers may have quietly held ideals for many years prior, but had never heard others, particularly hierarchical leaders, espouse the same hope. Alternatively, followers may be awakened to alternatives through strategic opportunities to do so. Either way, proposition two is evoked. An awakening has been catalyzed. Through the awakening, another person has begun to frame his business experience according to proposition one of wealth holistically conceived, interconnected, over multiple generations of time. The worldview shapes behavior, proposition three. The intrinsic drive calls forth visions of possibility, proposition four, that influence others to awaken to change, proposition two. Figure 1 illustrates how positive leaders can generate ripple effects far beyond the direct impact of their decisions.

(INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE).

Clearly more needs to be understood about why and how some people catalyze change in others where as some people are made scapegoats or marginalized for thinking differently than the mainstream. The hopeful possibility for global social change does exist. Each leader here is financially successful in mainstream business, each is highly regarded by peers and subordinates, and each is influencing others to notice the alternative worldview. This suggests the possibility for many more change leaders globally.

Implications: Generating Dialogue

The purpose of telling positive stories, like this study and like the larger dialogue in which the study is rooted, is twofold. First, people who think they are alone in their good intentions actually discover that they are part of a very broad fabric of people

globally believing in positive change. Strength emerges to do more, to take more risks towards positive change, to form stronger collaborations explicitly stating positive intentions. Positive change leaders discover they are not alone (some already know that, some do not). Even more importantly, people whose inner voice or soul calls them towards positive change hear that by following their intuition to act holistically, interconnected or with the long view in mind, they will not be alone in doing so. This influence leads to the second purpose for the study and the dialogue.

Second, people seeking positive role models, mentors, and wise guidance can get it from positive change leaders. Currently, our social conditioning about business predominantly says we should orient ourselves by quarterly reports (rather than sustainable growth), competition (rather than collaboration), consumerism (rather than holistic value on well-being). The larger dialogue, as well as papers like this one, lifts up stories that challenge the dominant paradigm. Doing so creates language for people to talk about these ways of being in business. Furthermore, by naming people who are leading positive change and by celebrating their stories, each of us influences the potential for generating more positive change by shaping business discourse.

Global social change leaders are among us making positive change happen. Identifying who, how and where helps all of us to foster more of what we hold "good." Interconnectedness suggests that we are all on this earth together and that actions of an American consumer or businesswoman influence other people in Asia or Eastern Europe, and therefore each hold the responsibility for considering global social innovation. By doing so, the well being of everyone is increased; our holistic wealth is enhanced. And

all of global social change can happen one person at a time, generation by generation. Therefore, research and action are needed.

First, scholars must continue to integrate existing theory from multiple disciplines in order for anticipatory learning and development to occur. We need a richer understanding of what drives people and groups' value systems and how that guides business decision-making. My research suggests some obvious beginning points such as the role of religion in culture which influences business decisions. Existing theories about society and about the firm as integral to social stability could inform how business practitioners think about behavior and intrinsic motivation. Human behavior, interpersonal dynamics and group theory hold ideas for how people learn from and influence others. These disciplines can expand our understanding of the possibilities for catalyzing change in others. And business strategy, including game theory and negotiations, can open doors to ideas on fostering holistic success in a collaborative global marketplace. Even humanistic economics can inform us with new ways to model a long-term, sustainable, global marketplace that values the environment and human beings, physically, spiritually and psychologically. Grounding theory in our most positive moments of reality keeps a tight link between research and applicable practice.

Second, we can foster action. Action can be manifested through teaching – formally in corporate training and in higher education, and informally through mentorship relationships. This action is already beginning through the larger Global Business Benefit dialogue. Partners such as the United Nations Global Compact and pedagogical experts insure that mainstream education is slowly beginning to notice marginalized points of view. As educators, we need more case stories about innovative

people and practices. By lifting up stories, business leaders and students worldwide can walk in each others' shoes through reading and discussing the experiences of "other." Education and curricular reforms can infuse 21st century living with global social change leadership principles.

A person's worldview can revolve around interconnectedness, holistic well-being, and multi-generations of relevant time. Whether noticing these views throughout one's life, or awakening to this perspective later, positive change leaders know what is meaningful and sustaining in their lives. These leaders behave in ways that are consistent with their worldviews. And, these leaders are driven by the very real possibility of their worldview being made manifest. Global social change leadership is not the norm, at least not in modern American, consumer focused, capitalist society. However, these positive change leaders are very real. They welcome others who also see a different possible future.

Table 1: Positive Change Leaders – Sample*

Definitions of Types As advertised	**Examples** From sample	**Sample Size N= 37**	**Men**	**Women**
Senior Executives: Leaders at the top levels in business organizations—Presidents, CEOs, COOs, Chairpersons—who are willing to share their highest hopes for the future of the world and newest examples and practices of "business as an agent of world benefit."	▪ CEOs of 6 Fortune 100 companies ▪ CEOs and VPs of small and mid-sized firms in diverse industries	15	15	0
Change Agents: Leaders in business organizations at every level who are operating from a new vision and practice of how real change occurs in the world through harnessing the very best elements of business.	▪ Assistant to CEO of medium sized technology firm	7	5	2
Idea Leaders: Organizational scholars, futurists, and visionary critics of business (from the grassroots) whose transformational ideas have the potential to disrupt assumptions of the status quo, elevate our sense of what's possible, and raise new options for better living.	▪ Organizational scholar and research center leader ▪ Philanthropic foundation president ▪ Religious educator focused on "disrupting assumptions"	3	1	2
Social Entrepreneurs: Dedicated innovators, networkers, and/or collaborating business partners from the not-for-profit or community sector—people who believe the same inventiveness used historically to create great wealth can be applied to world issues and change agendas.	▪ Educational software designer and entrepreneur ▪ Book publisher ▪ Senior administrator of a business association ▪ 3 non-profit agency presidents	8	6	2
Wisdom Companions: This refers to the voices of all business stakeholders and especially those of children, wise elders, and respected spiritual teachers—people who care about positive business for our future.	▪ Retired chemical engineer seeking ways to convert nuclear waste into usable product ▪ Town councilman, retired religious educator ▪ Retired organizational change pioneer	4	3	1

Note: People self identified character type of "leader" to which they felt best suited. These leader types were included in the original interview packet in order to facilitate broad thinking about leading change for business and society. Numeric tabulations relate only to the focal group of people for whom I have complete interview transcripts. No comparable tabulation is available for

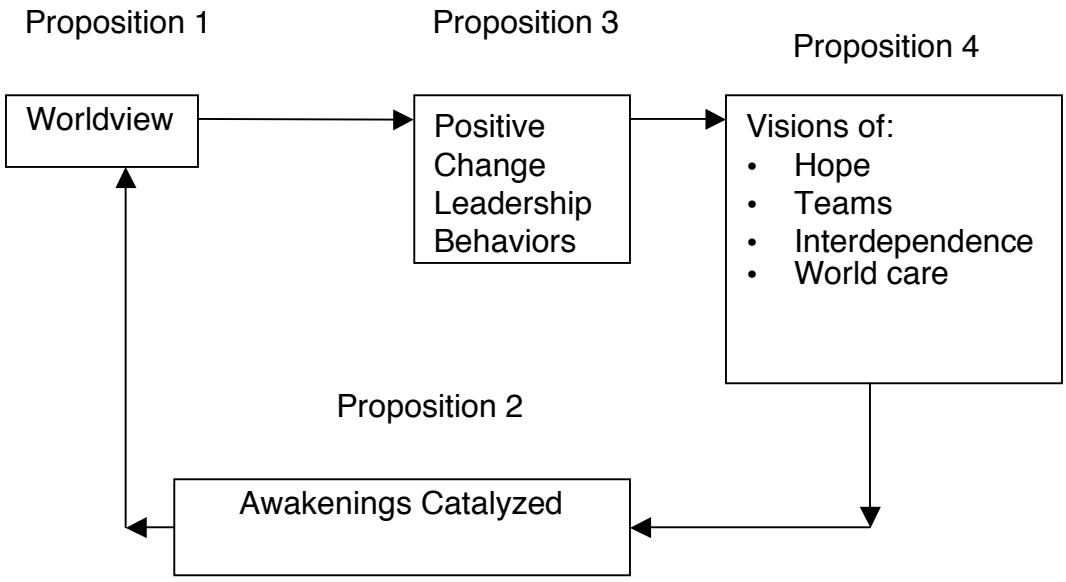
the additional population of approximately 140 people whose interviews were submitted as summaries (not full transcriptions) during the pilot or in the larger dialogue to date.

Table 2: Self-descriptors of Leaders of Positive Change

Inductive Dimensions		*Words used to describe these leaders of positive change*	
Style	**How I process ideas and information**	Creative (4) Flexible Open minded Open Capacity to believe in the unknown Straight forward questions	Inspiration in hard projects Extremely unconventional Innovative Using innovative ideas as a lever to engage local people Committed to chaordic organizations
	My approach to business	Persistence (3) Perseverance Steadfast commitment (2) Tenacious Stubborn Strong resolve Dedication I work hard at what I do	Very entrepreneurial (2) Driven A little hard to control Clarity Well Organized Gets things done Restless dissatisfaction Peripatetic
	Distinguishing qualities of character	Integrity (4) Honest (4) Trust worthy Loyal (2) Lots of energy (2)	Courage Studious Steady/Reliable Family values Positive values
	My worldview	Envisioning a preferred future Vision Provide a visionary direction I look at what the whole team needs I have a North star	Breadth of moving between various worlds Thought full in all sense of the word Dedicated to transforming the world Sees things in a 4th dimension
Acting	**How I am in relationship with others**	Humor (3) Compassion (2) Care about people (2) Kind Supportive Responsive Encouraging	Empathy (2) Listen well (2) Treat people with respect Deep concern for line associates Deep concern for customer Acceptance of everybody We're all the same
	How I express myself	A worker said "The smartest person I've ever understood" Articulate Extemporaneous expression Able to communicate	Ability to inspire people about their potential Motivating others Power deployer Mobilizing people's energies
	How I am in the workplace	Passionate (4) Positive outlook (3) Positive change is possible Focused (2) Enthusiastic	Authentic (2) Practices what he preaches Peacefulness or calmness Easy going (not affected by stress) Ability to manage ambiguity
Kno win	**Smarts**	Wisdom, Bright Knowledge in the field	Good judgment Capable

	Business acumen	Strategic Unfiltered desire & commitment Ability to analyze & solve Accurately predicts outcomes	See moving parts fitting together Willing to make decisions directly Accepts the challenge to be leader

Figure 1: Model of Catalyzing Change



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