

“That really takes me out of bed in the morning. Making a difference!”

(CEO of a multinational company in Australia)

From early childhood
to spiritual intelligence:
**The path to
conscious leadership**

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Abstract

With the global challenges our society currently faces, a new type of business leader is required to demonstrate awareness and compassion. Based on conscious capitalism and its emphasis on conscious leadership, this research aims to shed light on the determinants of consciousness in business leaders. Using a qualitative approach, and ten semi-structured interviews, we have sought to understand the life stories, and underlying processes of conscious leaders. The data analysis led to four main themes: early formative years, impactful experiences, role models and spiritual intelligence. For each of these groups, other subgroups were identified to better classify the determinants for conscious leadership.

This research proposes that the learnings and experiences from the early formative years, both from school and parents—together with the development of an individual's spiritual intelligence—are the foundation upon which individuals become ready for their raise of consciousness and transformation when other determinants of conscious leadership emerge. This foundation enables leaders to perceive impactful experiences and their encounters with role models in a way that raises consciousness so as to lead business as a force for positive change in society.

Connecting psychology, business, sustainable development and spirituality, this research aims to enhance leadership that effectively changes business models to address global challenges and societal needs. It has an important contribution to conscious capitalism and conscious leadership frameworks, as it brings evidence to support these concepts while capturing the voice of these leaders. This research also has important implications for business management, particularly for leadership recruitment and development. In addition, the importance of early childhood and education on conscious leadership, might also imply

that a change is required in our education system to help better raise women and men who can make a difference.

Statement of Originality

This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Research, Faculty of Business and Economics, Macquarie University. Ethics Committee approval has been obtained. Ref: 5201800244.

I hereby certify that this work has not been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university or institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself. This thesis represents the original work and contribution of the author.

Signed:

Tatiana Donato Trevisan

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Acknowledgment

I went to a surprising lecture from Brahma Kumaris, during the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 21), where I heard for the first time that: “The only way to make a transition to a more sustainable society is integrating spirituality into the sustainability agenda” (Sister Jayanti). That was my ‘light-bulb’ moment, when my whole journey towards conscious leadership started. This Master’s thesis has been part of that journey and with so many people important to this, I will not be able to name all within this chapter.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Global wealth is increasingly concentrated among a small wealthy elite (Hardoon, 2015) and inequality is growing to unprecedented levels, with the richest one percent of adults in the world now owning nearly as much wealth as the rest of the world's population combined (Share the World's Resources Organisation [STWR], 2015). United Nations' (UN, 2017) data shows that more than 700 million people still live in extreme poverty on an income lower than \$1.90 a day, and more than 46,000 people die every day simply because they do not have access to life's essentials (STWR, 2015). Hunger and malnutrition kill a child every six seconds; 1.8 billion people do not have access to clean drinking water and sanitation; and 2.3 billion people do not have access to electricity (Dyllick & Muff, 2016).

Exacerbating the problem, is the fact that poor populations and developing countries suffer the most from the impacts of climate change (Leichenko & Silva, 2014). Despite all the efforts made to mitigate climate change, CO² concentration is increasing and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2018) anticipates that global surface temperature change is likely to exceed the safe 1.5°C limit. Also, the extinction rates of mammals and birds have been increasing so fast that it can be compared with the magnitude of the 'Big Five' mass extinction events in the fossil record. It seems likely we are possibly standing on the tipping-point of a sixth great wave of mass extinctions (May, 2011).

Considering these, and other daunting challenges, a potent source of change is required. Business can serve as a very powerful mechanism for change to address global challenges, because organisations are the primary players in economic development with the financial resources, technological knowledge, and the institutional capacity to implement sustainable solutions (Quinn & Dalton, 2009). Porter and Kramer (2006; 2011, p. 64)

affirmed that “businesses acting as businesses, not as charitable donors, are the most powerful force for addressing issues we face” as companies can apply considerable resources, expertise, and insights to activities that benefit society. Hart (1997) also viewed companies as the economic engines of the future, stating that the responsibility for ensuring a sustainable world falls largely on the shoulders of the world’s enterprises.

In 2015, the United Nations defined the Sustainable Development Goals¹ (SDGs), and there has been a huge expectation from society for ways in which the private sector could contribute to achieving them (Scheyvens, Banks, & Hughes, 2016). Increasing the pressure on business, customers and employees are expecting more from companies than just selling products or services to maximise profit—and they are starting to search for purpose and integrity in the places where they work, and in the products they buy (Sisodia, Wolfe, & Sheth, 2014). Therefore, whether by altruism, justice or survival, companies need to re-invent themselves if they want to succeed during the next decades. That means, changing their business models to meet society’s expectations, solving social problems, and addressing global challenges (Zadek, 2004). It is more than focusing on the prevailing approaches of corporate social responsibility, which are very disconnected from business. Instead, companies need to start analysing their prospects for social responsibility using the same frameworks that guide their core business choices, so it can become a source of tremendous social progress (Porter & Kramer, 2006).

¹ The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests (UN, 2018).

In this context, conscious capitalism is one of the main platforms that has been working to engage and support companies in this transition. For conscious capitalism, a core business must be socially responsible, and the purpose should be to improve people's lives, and to create value for all stakeholders (Mackey & Sisodia, 2014). A conscious approach to business is based on the adoption of a higher purpose—that transcends profits, has a stakeholder rather than a shareholder orientation, and that is driven by conscious, and service-oriented leadership (Sisodia, 2009). Conscious capitalism states that raising consciousness in business leaders is key to achieving a deeper sense of corporate responsibility, and the promotion of effective changes in business models (Kotter & Cohen, 2002; Zadek, 2004).

Consciousness, as described by Kofman (2006), is the ability to experience reality, to be aware of our inner and outer worlds, to be more compassionate and less egocentric; and to pay attention to others' needs, while assuming responsibility for one's own impact in the world. Raising consciousness in leadership means having leaders who cultivate self-awareness, exhibit deep understanding of others, who can deal with diverse peoples and interests; and overall, relate to society and the natural world (Mirvis, 2008). These could all directly impact the way leaders understand the consequences of their actions—short and long term—and make decisions.

Although there is robust literature on leadership, its focus on sustainable development is limited (Quinn & Dalton, 2009) and little is known about the intersection of sustainability and leadership (Van Velsor, 2009). It is evident that the traditional leadership orientation on individual and corporate goals, shareholder value, and the financial bottom-line, while important, is inadequate to address global challenges, and advance the common good (Brown, 2011). And yet, the current understanding of leadership, and its relationship to conscious business is still in a fledgling stage (Egri & Herman, 2000), and some authors

believe that only a new leadership paradigm can deliver global sustainability (Lewin & Regine, 2000; Senge, 2008).

In this context, conscious leadership brings an innovative approach to the leadership literature, with the understanding that the transition to new business models begins with each leaders' personal change (Mackey & Sisodia, 2014; Marshal & Zohar, 2004). In other words, leaders need to change themselves first, before embarking on changing the world. Presented as one of the tenets of conscious capitalism, this leadership model makes effective use of existing literature, joining important skills and traits from main leadership styles, such as transformational and servant leadership (Haski-Leventhal, 2018). It also includes the importance of individual self-knowledge, regarding leaders' own values, beliefs, and life purpose, proposed by spiritual leadership (Fry, Vitucci, & Cedillo, 2005). However, it is an emerging concept, and understanding the determinants of conscious leadership, would allow us to contribute to the limited research on this important topic, and to the emerging business practice, with the aim to use business as a force for good.

Therefore, based on the conscious leadership framework, this research aims to identify what are the determinants and underlying processes for raising consciousness in leadership.

CHAPTER 2 - Literature Review

During the last decades, business have been considered as the main cause of social, environmental, and economic problems (Formentini & Taticchi, 2016; Porter & Kramer, 2011). In 1987, the Brundtland Commission published a report called *Our Common Future* linking the issues of economic development and environmental protection—defining for the first time the concept of sustainable development—and highlighting the importance of private sector engagement (United Nations, 1987). Following this report, different movements and frameworks have been proposed to incorporate social responsibility into business strategy. During the past several years, there has been an exponential increase in references to corporate sustainability and sustainable strategies (Montiel & Delgado-Ceballos, 2014). However, companies have varied between approaching sustainability with “band-aid” solutions not affecting their mission or strategy; towards a “more serious” lifecycle approach to products, and sustainable strategies supported by consistent investments; to adopting “deep-change” strategies by completely rethinking business models and operations (Shrivastava & Hart, 1995). Unfortunately, few companies have been able to make this deep-change (Hart, 1997). When analysing the literature of organisational change, a lack in leadership engagement and efficiency is indicated among the main reasons (Gill, 2003; Kiron, Kruschwitz, Haanaes, Reeves, & Goh, 2013).

Changes are never easy and the transition to new business models that go against the status quo can be even more complex. As organisational change literature suggests, changes vary in depth, from shallow to deep, and companies that only change one part of their business model are significantly less likely to see profit than companies that change multiple parts (Kiron et al., 2013). Buchanan and Huczynski (2016) argued that minor, and perhaps

shallow changes, have a limited impact on people and performance, while penetrating and deep changes are more wide-ranging in their effects. Kanter (2007) also explained that bold strokes used for shallow changes happen too quickly to facilitate real learning, and they can impede the instructive long marches that ultimately carry an organisation forward. Focusing on superficial changes also masks the need for a deeper change in strategy, structure, or operations, and contributes to the anxiety that accompanies sudden change (Kanter, 2007). Therefore, organisations need to go through a deep and transformational change if they want to stop negatively impacting society and start creating positive value that benefit all stakeholders, while being profitable (Porter & Kramer, 2006; Zadek, 2004). However, to achieve such effective results of deep organisational changes, it is crucial to have the commitment of the organisation's top leaders – executive team and the board (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Kotter & Cohen, 2002; Shrivastava & Hart, 1995; Willis Towers Watson company, 2015;).

Historically, strategic decision making has focused on optimising the competitiveness of organisations, primarily in the service of the interests of shareholders (Peterlin, Pearse, & Dimovski, 2015). The traditional leader-first paradigms, which applaud a Darwinist, individualistic, and capitalist approach to life—implicating that only the strong will survive—have been causing damage to society (Paris & Peachey, 2013). This leadership style no longer works to solve 21st century complex challenges, and the call for a different leadership model is increasingly strident as the world becomes ever more complex and confusing (McCrimmon, 1995). The call is for leaders driven by a higher purpose, to inspire employees and lead the organisation on the right track (Kotter & Cohen, 2002; Sinek, 2009). Unfortunately, leadership has not been a focus of research in the field of sustainability, and the understanding of leadership, and its relationship to conscious business models is still in a

fledgling stage (Egri & Herman, 2000). With the emerging literature and the practice of sustainable and conscious business (Mackey & Sisodia, 2014; Montiel & Delgado-Ceballos, 2014), a better understanding of conscious leadership and the way it develops is essential for a comprehensive framework on this leadership approach. It would also enable businesses to develop and support such leaders in the future.

Significantly, however, there is also a growing body of theory and research gaining strength in the field, that attests to the importance of increased self-awareness and spiritual intelligence in leadership effectiveness; and leaders are being pressured to develop a higher purpose for the business in society (Marshall & Zohar, 2004; Stead & Stead, 2014; Waddock, 2002). As such, the concept of conscious leadership was proposed as one of the four tenets of the platform for conscious capitalism. Conscious leadership comprises the leadership characteristics needed to drive deep-changes in business models, such as passion, conviction and confidence in others; the ability to motivate, communicate and create environments supportive of teams; as well as to work on employees' empowerment to restore their confidence and positive attitude, raising aspiration and purposeful work among the teams (Gilley, Gilley, & McMillan, 2009; Kanter, 2003; 2007). At the same time, this framework also includes the skills such as self-awareness, empathy and compassion needed to guarantee these deep changes will direct the transition to a conscious business, (Marshall & Zohar, 2004; Stead & Stead, 2014; Waddock, 2002). Therefore, we will briefly explain the conscious capitalism platform and conscious business; discuss the main existing leadership styles that are included in conscious leadership framework; and consider knowledge regarding the potential determinants for raising consciousness in leadership.

Conscious Capitalism and Conscious Businesses

Conscious capitalism is a new philosophy of doing business—an evolving paradigm proposed by Mackey and Sisodia in 2014—that simultaneously creates multiple kinds of value and well-being for all stakeholders: financial, intellectual, physical, ecological, social, cultural, emotional, ethical, and even spiritual wellbeing (Mackey & Sisodia, 2014; Sisodia, 2011). For conscious capitalism, core business must be socially responsible, and the purpose of business should be to improve peoples' lives, and to create value for all stakeholders (Mackey & Sisodia, 2014). These companies have a high level of consciousness or service consciousness—focusing on social responsibility, ethics, and sustainability, and keeping a long-term perspective on their business, and its impact on future generations (Barrett, 2018). Conscious companies view themselves as existing to advance the well-being of society. A conscious approach to business is based on the adoption of a higher purpose that transcends profits, with a stakeholder rather than a shareholder orientation (Sisodia, 2009). It is about doing business with the aim of a spectrum of positive effects, rather than having one positive “main” effect and many negative “side effects” (Sisodia, 2011). Consequently, business is then better aligned with the true needs of customers and all stakeholders, allowing shareholders to invest money where it makes a difference, and save money in non-value adding areas. Businesses can then offer better prices to customers by eliminating wasteful costs, instead of squeezing their suppliers or employees (Sisodia, 2011). A conscious business fosters peace and happiness in the individual, respect and solidarity in the community, and mission accomplishment in the organisation (Kofman, 2006).

A study by Sisodia et al. (2014), showed that conscious businesses outperformed the overall stock market at a ratio of 9:1 over a ten-year period. Another study confirmed the better financial performance of conscious companies, as they outperformed the overall stock

market at a ratio of 10.5:1 over a fifteen-year period, delivering more than 1,600 percent total returns on investment (Mackey & Sisodia, 2014). The authors believe that conscious companies succeed because they tap into the full potential of all the people (not just employees) they touch, generating more than just financial results, and creating many other kinds of social value such as, far more engaged and fulfilled employees, loyal and trusting customers, innovative and profitable suppliers, and thriving and environmentally healthy communities (Sisodia, 2011).

Conscious capitalism proposes four interconnected tenets: higher purpose, stakeholder integration, conscious leadership, and conscious culture and management (Mackey & Sisodia, 2014; Sisodia, 2011 – Figure 1). The focus of this research is conscious leadership and its determinants. This leadership approach and its related leadership styles will be explained next.

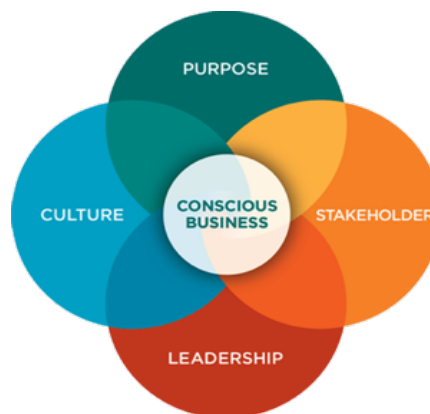


Figure 1: Tenets of Conscious Capitalism (Mackey & Sisodia, 2014)

Conscious Leaders and Related Leadership Styles

Leadership, which is different from management, is about gaining people's hearts and minds, and motivating staff with a sense of direction and commitment. Buchanan and Huczynski (2016, p. 26) defined leadership as "the process of influencing the activities of an organised group in its efforts towards goal setting and goal achievement". Burns (1978) stated that "true

leaders” are sensitive to the needs of others and learn from others. He explained that leadership plays its proper role when elevating people from lower to higher levels of needs and moral development. True leaders come from self-actualising individuals who are motivated by a desire to grow, to be efficacious, and to achieve, rather than to be famous—in short, to fulfil themselves (Seligman, 1980).

Haski-Leventhal (2018) suggested that conscious leadership is an integration of other leadership styles: it brings the collective action towards a vision from transformational leadership; the clarity for working for a strong purpose, from purpose-driven leadership; and service as a main motivation, from servant leadership. In view of the complexity to make the deep changes needed in business, this research proposes that conscious leadership is the best model to change awareness and business practice, as it gathers the main skills of other leadership styles and focuses its main purpose in benefiting society. We will therefore explain the other leadership styles upon which conscious leadership is built: transformational leadership, servant leadership, and spiritual leadership, and briefly discuss their limitations.

Transformational leadership

As conscious leaders work from a higher purpose with the vision to change the world, it relates to the notion of transformational leadership, which causes a change in individuals and social systems through a strong vision (Kendrick, 2011). According to Burns (1978, p.20), transformational leadership "occurs when one or more person engages with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality". Transformational leaders inspire people by shifting their focus from the individual to the collective, and towards a common vision for a greater purpose (Waldman et al., 2006a; Waldman, Siegel, & Javidan, 2006b). Leaders and followers’ purpose become fused, and values such as justice, liberty and brotherhood become their main aspiration (Seligman,

1980). If the change is a new business model that benefits the broader society, as agents of change, transformational leadership will provide a pathway (Haski-Leventhal, 2018).

Transformational leadership is a very popular approach among scholars and managers to motivate employees in extra-role performance (Wang, Oh, Courtright, & Colbert, 2011), but it is not without its limitations. Focusing on the leader's ability to communicate and transfer the vision, it sometimes ignores the issues with vision. Thus, it only focuses on business success instead of a vision for a sustainable development, inclusive society or issues that really matter to the current and next generations. Still, not all employees are lucky enough to have a transformational leader, and a substitute that provides employees with a source of intrinsic motivation that lies within the person is required (Kroon, van Woerkom, & Menting, 2017).

Servant leadership

Servant leadership can perhaps provide the ethical grounding needed to help address the challenges of the twenty-first century (Paris & Peachey, 2013). While transformational leader's focus is directed towards the organisation objectives, the servant leader's focus is on the followers and their wellbeing (Gregory Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004). According to Greenleaf, servant leaders put other people's needs, aspirations, and interests above their own, as their primary reason to exist is to serve, not to lead: "It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first" (1977, p. 7).

Servant leadership can be considered as an inward lifelong journey, and the leader's individual characteristics—not their leadership techniques—will cause them to choose to lead or serve first (Dennis, Kinzler-Norheim, & Bocarnea, 2010). This brings into focus the relationship between people's values and virtues, and the kind of leader they will end up being (Paris & Peachey, 2013). Patterson (2003) detailed "constructs" of servant leadership,

which are the values or virtues upon which a servant leadership is based: agapao love², humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service. These virtuous constructs will shape servant leaders' attitudes, characteristics, and behaviour, and help to raise their consciousness.

However, Dennis, et al. (2010) stated that servant leadership is based solely on the readings of Greenleaf's essays, but is not grounded in solid research studies. These authors raised the need to investigate the antecedents of servant leadership development, such as personal attributes of the leader, background of the leader, and organisational history and trajectory, as one of the challenges for theorists. This research aims to address this gap.

Spiritual leadership

Spiritual leadership has been defined by Fry, Vitucci and Cedillo (2005, p. 836) as comprising "values, attitudes and behaviours required to intrinsically motivate one's self and others in order to have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership". In other words, spiritual leaders experience meaningful lives, have a sense of making a difference, and feel understood and appreciated.

Spiritual values are ultimately embedded in all activities, including paid work (Maslow, 1970). Recent literature suggests that spirituality is the ultimate competitive advantage, and that people—as part of their spiritual journey—search for the meaning of work (Crossman, 2011; Mitroff & Denton, 1999; Pandey, Gupta, & Arora, 2009). Creating meaningful work has been recognised as the most important managerial task in the 21st

²Agapao love is a moral love, meaning that the leader should do the right thing, at the right time and for the right reasons (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010)

century, as common values, and a shared sense of purpose can turn a company into a community where daily work takes on a deeper satisfaction (Pandey et al., 2009).

Therefore, we can understand that spiritual leadership incorporates and extends transformational and charismatic theories as well as ethics- and values- based theories (e.g., servant leadership), as it creates value congruence across the strategic, empowered team, and at individual levels (Fry et al., 2005). However, spiritual leadership seems to focus mainly on the individual and not enough on business success, let alone, its impact on society. While a higher purpose and consciousness can help bring meaningfulness, we can better expand on this using the framework of conscious leadership.

Conscious leadership

Conscious leadership, which is at the core of this research, is about leaders whose work aligns with their passion and purpose, and who hold a higher sense of serving society, and shaping a better future through their roles (Mackey & Sisodia, 2014). Conscious leaders know that by serving others and helping people, they bring happiness to themselves, while embracing transpersonal values that lift them to higher level of consciousness (Mackey & Sisodia, 2014; Marshal & Zohar, 2004). They first become aware of their true essence (internal) and raise their consciousness about the external environment to be able to lead from a place of love and compassion (Winston, 2002). Conscious leaders know that fear is the opposite of love, and that fear prevents people from being creative and innovative, and as a result, they become defensive and ego-centred. At the same time, these leaders understand that leading based on love serves the best interests of others, illuminating the corporate culture, and freeing the leader from self-doubt, self-criticism, and self-imposed limitations (Patterson, 2003; Russell & Gregory Stone, 2002). This brings an inexhaustible source of

power for conscious leaders, as their work brings joy and fulfilment, and inspires everyone around them (Mackey & Sisodia, 2014).

Conscious capitalism is also related and connected to the movement of social businesses and social entrepreneurship. For Dees (1998), social entrepreneurship is about applying the best of business entrepreneurship to the pursuit of a social mission or purpose—causing social businesses to become essential change agents in our society. In all definitions, social entrepreneurs are driven by a higher purpose, as well as by businesses success, similarly to conscious leaders (Brooks, 2009; Peredo & McLean, 2006). As in conscious capitalism, the leader—called in this case ‘a social entrepreneur’—is essential to creating new business models that will benefit the society in a positive way. So, social entrepreneurs are considered as conscious leaders in this research.

As expected from successful leadership, conscious leaders have high levels of analytical intelligence (measured by IQ tests) (Menkes, 2005). However, these leaders also tend to have elevated levels of emotional, spiritual and systems intelligence, in addition to an orientation towards servant leadership, high integrity, and a great capacity for love and care (Figure 2). All the traits and skills described, together with a focus on a higher purpose and on all stakeholders’ needs, enable conscious leaders to be successful while dealing with 21st century complexity (Mackey & Sisodia, 2014).

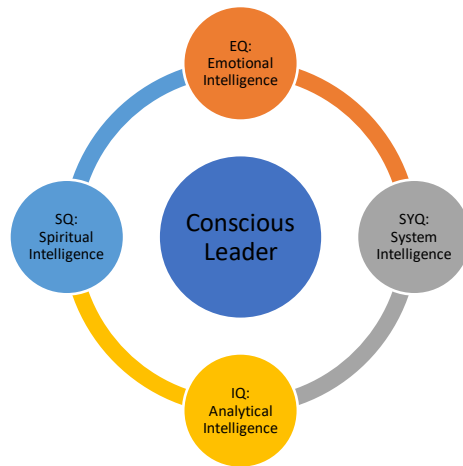


Figure 2: Intelligences of Conscious Leadership (Mackey & Sisodia, 2014)

Raising Consciousness in Leaders

While multiple and diverse definitions of consciousness have been proposed (Davies, 1999; Hobson, 2013) it is, however, most commonly understood as a state of being aware (Cunningham, 2015). In psychology, consciousness is defined as awareness, and it is the starting point in understanding why people ordinarily think, feel, and act the way they do. This is the groundwork on which the contexts of experience emerge and gain meaning for the person (Cunningham, 2015). This is the definition of consciousness used in this research.

According to Mirvis (2008), there are two dimensions that define a consciousness-raising experience:

- 1) A set of activities that expand people's consciousness of themselves, others, and the larger world around them. In other words, experiences that develop self-knowledge in a way that serves for interpersonal and intercultural development.
- 2) Experiences that deepen awareness of the self, others, and the larger world, in a way that stimulate introspection, and includes time and space for "inner

work”. For example, reflection, meditation, prayer, or journaling are all forms that deepen one’s sense-of-self.

Taylor (2012) defined moments when awareness and perception become more intense and broader than normal, as awakening experiences. In his words, an awakening experience is:

an experience in which our state of being, our vision of the world and our relationship to it, are transformed, bringing a sense of clarity, revelation and well-being in which we become aware of a deeper (or higher) level of reality, perceive a sense of harmony and meaning, and transcend our normal sense of separateness from the world (Taylor, 2012, p.74).

Barrett (2018b) suggested there are seven levels of human consciousness: From surviving, confirming and differentiating to individuating (letting go of others’ influence to become who you really are), self-actualising, integrating (working with others to make a difference in the world) and serving (Figure 3). Conscious leaders act based on the top three levels. Serving can, therefore, be considered as the ultimate stage of psychological development in a conscious leader, which will raise an organisational consciousness for serving humanity and the planet.

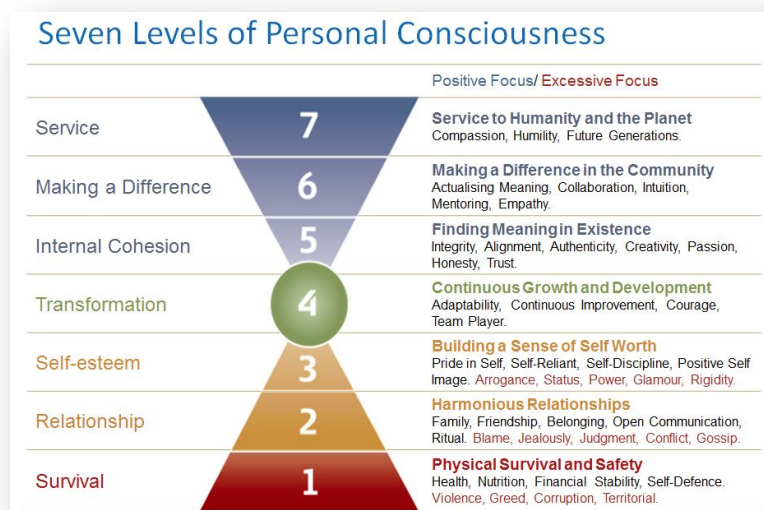


Figure 3: Seven levels of personal consciousness (Barrett, 2018b)

Determinants of Raised Consciousness

Mackey and Sisodia (2014) proposed these steps to become a conscious leader: Following one's heart and finding purpose, finding role models, having a coach or mentor, cultivating higher virtues, developing emotional and systems intelligences, and evolving to higher levels of consciousness. The authors also explained that crises can be an opportunity for personal growth, and that it is a choice to begin the journey for raising consciousness. To become a social entrepreneur, there are two main motivations: Content and background—the first relating to how the person was raised and socialised; and the second provides the milieu in which the social entrepreneur's background interacts with the social sector (Kickul & Lyons, 2016). However, it is worth noting, the literature on the determinants of conscious leadership is somewhat limited. In view of the foregoing, this research will approach the determinants for raising consciousness in the existing literature to understand the raise of consciousness in leadership. Based on related topics and leadership styles, there are several potential triggers for raising consciousness, as considered below:

Education

Education can be a potential determinant for raising consciousness. Freire (1973) stated that pedagogy is central to a formative culture that makes both critical consciousness and social action possible, as it can reshape our perceptions and interactions with one another and the world. Pedagogy can be a path to connect learning to social change—if it is a project and provocation that challenges students to critically engage with the world, and act on it (Darder, 2017).

Peace education programs have successfully used transformative learning to involve youth into something that can make a difference (Dahl, 2009). Transformative learning is a kind of learning that does not just change what students know, but changes who they are, through motivating experiences, reflection, exploration, and experimentation (Mezirow, 2000). The constructs of beliefs, attitudes and values seem to have a strong influence in achieving transformative learning goals (Dahl, 2009). This reinforces the key role of schools by fostering not only students' cognitive development, but also their social and emotional development (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger, 2011). Chawla's study (1999) stated that educators need not only to understand how to prepare people for a general level of conscious citizenship, but also to produce leaders who can mobilise others to take action.

Experiential learning

Scholars and educators have also identified that experiential learning, when it stretches people's boundaries, and takes them to the edge of their comfort zones, can also be a potential determinant to raise consciousness (McCauley, Moxley, & Van Velsor, 1998). An exemplar of this kind of experience is service learning, both for students and business leaders. Service experiences, above other consciousness raising experiences, seems to be

more effective (Mirvis, 2008). Service learning experiences are a powerful tool to develop social responsibility in people, both for their own, and their employer's actions (Kolenko, Porter, Wheatley, & Colby, 1996).

Thus, transformative learning theory explains how experiences help adults to develop the thoughts, attitudes, values, feelings, and behaviours, which involve the understanding of who they are or wish to be, and how they grow accordingly (Dahl, 2009). It is about emancipating themselves from taken-for-granted assumptions about social being, and bringing that into critical awareness, so that appropriate action—including social action—can be taken (Mezirow, 1998).

Crisis

Many authors describe a crisis as another potential determinant for raising consciousness. Grof (2000) suggested that a crisis is also an opportunity to "emerge"; that is, to rise to a higher level of psychological functioning and spiritual awareness. There seems to be a connection between turmoil and spiritual experiences, pointing to the possibility of transformation as frequently triggered by a traumatic emotional experience, such as losing “an important relationship, death of a child or another close relative, divorce, or the end of a love affair, [...] a series of failures or loss of a job or property” (Grof, 2000, p.137). Maslow also recognised that “Nadir” experiences, such as crisis, death, tragedy, and trauma, could boost the process of self-actualisation (Taylor, 2013). These experiences may bring permanent changes to a person’s outlook and character, transforming the individual from deficiency motives such as feelings of lack in the individual; towards “being” motives - that is, higher values such as truth, beauty, and justice (Harung, Heato, & Alexander, 1995).

Family and early years

Barrett (2018b) relates individuals' values to the level of consciousness in which they operate from, describing them as energetic drivers of people's aspirations and intentions. The most important way values are taught to children are by the models that their parents and other adults provide—but the influence of age-peers, school, child-rearing practices and orientation are also critical in shaping the values, and behaviours of future citizens (Dermond, 2007; Nobles, 2007). People who give time and money to improve their community are likely to have had a family member or other adult who set an example of helping others, and also to have belonged to a church or civic organisation in childhood or adolescence (Hodgkinson, 1995). Families experiences appear to contribute to a general predisposition to community participation, and altruism (Chawla, 1999).

Barrett (2018b) stated a person's ability to master the first three stages of development significantly affects the ability to master the later stages (Figure 3); and how well they master the first three stages of development will depend on the degree and nature (positive and negative) of the parental programming, and cultural conditioning they experienced during their infant, childhood, and teenage years. If a person is brought up by self-actualised parents, in a community or culture where freedom and independence are celebrated, where higher education is easily available, where men and women are treated equally, and where they are encouraged from a young age to express and think for themselves, the transition from the differentiating to the individuating stage, and then to the self-actualising stage of development will be relatively easy (Barrett, 2018a).

Other potential determinants

Hardy (1979) showed that nature, despair or depression, music, prayer, and quiet reflection can also lead to higher states of consciousness. Based on his analysis of thousands of

experiences collected by his Religious Experience Research Unit, he found that the most frequent trigger was depression and despair (18%), and conscious spiritual practice such as prayer or meditation (13.6%). Taylor's (2013) analysis similarly found that the most frequent trigger for raised consciousness were psychological turmoil (23.6%), contact with nature (18%), and meditation (13%).

Specifically trying to understand what motivates people to be aware of environmental challenges and take action to protect the environment, Chawla (1999) determined as main sources: Experience of natural areas, family organisations, negative experiences, habitat destruction, educational, influence of friends, vocation, sense of social justice, book or author, and principles or religion.

Spiritual Intelligence or Development

Putting together ideas from Freud, Piaget, Darwin, and Buddhism, (Irwin, 2002) explained the rise of consciousness by proposing a theory of "the progression of the soul". This theory suggests that, later in life, consciousness can transcend the limitations of conventional self or ego development to become spiritual development, which is required for us to be conscious citizens. The word spiritual comes originally from the Latin *spiritus*, which means "that which gives life or vitality to a system". Wigglesworth (2014, p. 8) defined spirituality as "the innate human need to be connected to something larger than ourselves, something we consider to be divine or of exceptional nobility". It is about becoming aware of why we do what we do and seeking a better way of doing it—one which contributes to the entire system. Therefore, entering a journey of spiritual development is about getting in touch with our inner selves and growing as human beings, doing things that enrich our self-awareness, our

qualities of compassion, service, humility, and gratitude, and making a difference in society (Marshall & Zohar, 2004).

Spiritual intelligence, as defined by Marshall and Zohar (2004), is the intelligence with which people access their deepest meanings, values, purposes, and higher motivations. It allows people to discover their own higher purposes, both in work and their lives, and with which they develop goodness, truth, beauty, and compassion. Wigglesworth (2014) offered a set of 21 skills, called Spiritual Intelligence (SQ), as a way to raise consciousness and become a fully human. Fully becoming human is what Maslow (1943, 1954) proposed, decades ago, as self-actualisation - the ultimate need of human beings. Maslow suggested a hierarchy of six needs (psychological, safety, love/belonging, esteem, and self-actualisation), assuming they must be satisfied in order of importance, as the persistent non-satisfaction of one category of need will prevent an individual graduating to the next level (Dodds, 1997). However, Tay and Diener (2011) demonstrated that the ordering of the needs within the hierarchy was not correct, and regardless of whether other needs are met, each need will enhance well-being to some extent when it is fulfilled.

Finally, it seems that the individual's readiness for inner transformation plays a very important role to trigger the raise of consciousness. One of the most important catalysts seems to be deep involvement in various forms of meditation and spiritual practice (Grof, 2000). The triggers and experiences themselves do not engage participants, stretch, or change them. The potential of transforming activities into mind-expanding, heart-rending, and soul-stirring encounters is based on the participants previous experiences, and stage of spiritual development (Mirvis, 2008).

In summary, the existing literature explains that business can be a very powerful force of change towards a sustainable society, but for that to happen, leaders in charge of these

companies must have higher levels of consciousness. There is a gap in the existing literature regarding the understanding on how experiences may have a lasting impact, causing leaders to shift to a higher stage of psychological development (Barrett, 2008b). Conscious leadership is one of the leadership models proposed to address our current global challenges using the force of businesses. It is still an emerging concept that aggregates skills from different existing leadership styles, and we lack empirical studies that understand the determinants that make these leaders become more conscious, and to operate from a higher level of consciousness.

Therefore, the main objective of this research is to understand conscious leaders' life stories, in order to understand the underlying process, and what conditions make leaders develop greater consciousness. Based on interviews with conscious leaders, this qualitative study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the determinants for conscious leadership?
2. What are the triggers for raising consciousness?
3. What supports conscious leaders' process of transformation?
4. What are conscious leaders' spiritual intelligence?

CHAPTER 3 - Methodology

This chapter details the research methodology utilised to answer the aforementioned research questions. The general research design and epistemological framework are reviewed first, followed by the rationale for a qualitative methodology, and delineate the processes of participant selection, data collection, and analysis. This research focuses on the determinants of conscious leadership. It explores how leaders become more conscious, and start driving businesses for the benefit of all stakeholders, contributing to solving global challenges.

Epistemological Framework

This study is based on the epistemological framework of social constructivism – specifically based in relativism. The qualitative research method employs semi-structured, open-ended interviews. Study leaders are selected according to theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2000), and on the Conscious Capitalism framework (Mackey & Sisodia, 2014).

To answer our research questions, we apply qualitative research methods. All qualitative researchers have their own beliefs and assumptions, a theoretical sensitivity that indicates an awareness of the subtleties of meaning of data, which impact the way they see the world, and act in it (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As researchers are always interpretive, these different worldviews will influence the way researchers guide and interpret their studies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The set of beliefs that guide researchers, which includes their epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises, construct their paradigm (Guba, 1990).

A constructivist paradigm assumes there are multiple realities, instead of one single truth, and therefore reality needs to be interpreted. It also states that the knower and

respondent end up co-creating understandings of the natural world. Through interactions between people and their environment, individuals develop objective meanings of their experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The goal of social constructivist research is to rely as much as possible on the participants' point of view, which demands from the researcher a broad understanding of the complexity of the situation (Creswell, 2007).

Social constructivism paradigm was selected for this inquiry because individuals—including conscious leaders—experience life events in diverse ways, depending on the environment they live and work in, their background, and previous experiences. In order to understand conscious leadership and its determinants, I had to deeply understand the way each of the interviewed leaders attached meaning to their experiences, and which experiences were relevant for their raise of consciousness. A relativist perspective was considered in order to focus on how participants construct meaning from a particular event or experience. Researchers with a relativist perspective do not claim that their research truthfully captures some aspect of the real world—they focus on how individuals who participate in particular experiences construct meaning (Gorvine, Rosengren, Stein, & Biolsi, 2018).

Furthermore, Gorvine et al. (2018) pointed that working in understudied areas requires the use of exploratory methods that will enable the researcher to come up with an emergent theory. Creswell (2007) stated that, when a problem or an issue needs to be explored, a qualitative research is most appropriate. In this research, the decision for a qualitative method lies in the absence of knowledge about the process of becoming a conscious leader and, how later on, this sustains this process of operating from a higher level of consciousness. Therefore, it would be premature to use a quantitative approach since this field is in an exploratory phase.

Another aim of this research that contributed for the selection of a qualitative method was to fill the gaps in the literature based on better understanding conscious leaders' stories and experiences. As stated by Gorvine et al. (2018), a qualitative method enables access to the leaders' subjective experiences and allows new knowledge to emerge. As such, it is indispensable to empower people and give them voice to tell their stories in order to understand the complexity of becoming a conscious leader and find patterns among them.

A qualitative research aims to understand the way the participants experience events, and the meaning of that experience to them (Willig, 2012). It starts with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2007). For this purpose, researchers use a variety of empirical materials that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Qualitative researchers focus on capturing the quality and texture of the experiences, while understanding the implications, and consequences of those experiences (Willig, 2012). Nelson, Treicheler and Grossberg (1992) defined qualitative research practitioners as committed to a naturalistic perspective, and to the interpretive understanding of human experience. Qualitative research does not set out to test hypotheses derived from existing theories. On the contrary, most qualitative research deliberately brackets the researcher's theoretical knowledge to allow novel insights and understandings to emerge from the data (Willig, 2012). The conclusive results of a qualitative research always include—besides the voices of participants—the reflexivity of the researcher (Creswell, 2007). So, special attention was given to capture and consider the meaning the participants had about their experiences, instead of the researcher's view.

Process and Instrument

A grounded theory approach was used to move beyond description and generate a theory, since there was none available (Creswell, 2007). It has a bottom-up approach because the data helps to create the theory that organises ideas. Bottom-up approaches generally involve induction, a process where novel ideas and concepts emerges from exploration of data (Gorvine et al., 2018). Straus and Corbin (1990) explained that grounded theory is a qualitative design that enables the researcher to generate a general explanation (a theory) of a process, action, or interaction shaped by the views from the participants who have experienced the process. In this case, the existing literature only presented complementary concepts regarding new leadership models defined as: Sustainable leadership, conscious leadership, social entrepreneurs, among others—and mainly focused on these leaders' drivers and main traits. However, almost no data was found regarding the determinants of conscious leadership, and maintaining this new way of leading, even in the face of challenges. In this context, the use of grounded theory enabled the creation of a general explanation of the process in becoming a conscious leader by organising the ideas and developing a model. (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Heath & Cowley, 2004).

In a grounded theory study, interviews play a vital role in collecting data (Creswell, 2007). Semi-structure and in-depth interviews were conducted to collect conscious leaders' stories and information, as it gives freedom to guide the interview differently in each case, but in a structured format (Gorvine et al., 2018). Based on Folta, Seguin, Ackerman, and Nelson (2012), interviews allow the consideration of comparable qualitative data, and examine leaders' behaviours and practices, their experiences as leaders, and their perceptions of leadership. In-depth interviews were used to explore individuals' experiences and perceptions in rich detail. The main goal was to uncover the meaning of leaders' experiences,

taking a more interpretative view, and trying to go beyond the words and descriptions to find hidden or nonobvious meanings derived from the experience (Gorvine et al., 2018).

During the interviews, there was a balance between directed and free-flowing conversation (Lee, 1999), guided by open-ended questions, while building a space of trust and openness to access these leaders' deep experiences. For this purpose, an interview guide was developed with a short dialogue in the beginning that explained the context of the research, followed by an 'ice-breaker'. The questions addressed three topics: Conscious leadership; triggers; and understanding leaders' spiritual intelligence in business. The leaders comfortably shared their stories, and the interviews were recorded for further interpretation. Some participants were interviewed in person and others using Skype. The interviewer paid a lot of attention to avoid influencing responses by not asking leading questions or conveying own views or moving too quickly from one topic to the next, or interrupting the informant.

Theoretical Sampling

In grounded theory methodology, theoretical sampling is a pivotal strategy for developing a new theory (Charmaz, 2000), as it tests the emergent theory (Draucker, Martsolf, Ross, & Rusk, 2007). Theoretical sampling was used to select a group of people who could help us to understand conscious leadership, and thus contribute to the development of the model.

Theoretical sampling is a process of initially sampling homogeneous individuals to build the opening and axial coding of the theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In this inquiry, I used the conscious leadership framework to select the leaders to be interviewed.

A total of 23 conscious leaders, from Australia and Brazil, were selected from both multinational businesses, and social enterprises. Australia was chosen because it provides a clear example of a developed country with higher levels of Corporate Social responsibility

(CSR) (Thirarungrueang, 2013). Brazil was also selected as an example of a developing country with benchmarking in both the global corporate sustainability, and social business movements (Brito, 2018; MSL, 2016), as well as the prevalence of a strong social network. Twenty-three participants were contacted via email. As a result of busy schedules and time constraints, and the urgency of this research, ten participants were interviewed: Five conscious leaders from Australia, and five from Brazil. The interviews occurred between June and September 2018.

The sample included four Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and Vice Presidents (VPs) of multinational and national companies (two from Brazil, and two from Australia). Selection of these business leaders was based on the conscious leadership framework (Mackey & Sisodia, 2014). As such, the sample included leaders who were identified as high impact visionaries, who drive positive change and transformation, while also achieving superior financial performance, and long-term value creation for all stakeholders. The selection process was based on academic and media articles, case studies, award lists, LinkedIn profiles, and corporate webpages. Sustainability and corporate responsibility award lists were also examined, such as *The Australian Business Awards for Sustainability*, and *The AHRI Corporate Social Responsibility Award* - in Australia; and the *Guia Exame de Sustentabilidade* (Exame Sustainability guide) and *Prêmio Época Empresa Verde* (Época Green Company Award) - in Brazil. The selection was based on a mixture of recognition of the companies from the media and important actors in the field, and their leaders' reputation on social media and news.

In addition, the sample included six founders of social enterprises (three from Brazil and three from Australia), as they are considered conscious leaders (see literature review). To find social entrepreneurs, we used the criteria of being driven by a higher purpose to address

social and environmental issues, as well as businesses success (Brooks, 2009; Peredo & McLean, 2006). Media articles and news, as well as social entrepreneurs' awards (such as Skoll awardee), and personal networks to select the most successful social entrepreneurs for this study were also considered.

Careful attention was given to gender balance, and the sample included four women and six men. Important actors in the field were also consulted, such as the CEO of Conscious Capitalism Inc. After the consent of the interviewees, interviews were booked and conducted, preferentially in person, or by Skype, when not possible. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The interviews in Portuguese were translated, and transcribed to English, by the researcher.

The analysis is very special part in developing a grounded theory, as the theory is derived from empirical data (Draucker et al., 2007). The process of analysis, including the role of theoretical sampling, is described brilliantly by Schwandt (2001, pp. 110-111):

Grounded theory requires a concept-indicator model of analysis, which in turn employs the method of constant comparison. Empirical indicators from the data (actions and events observed, recorded, or described in documents in the words of interviewees and respondents) are compared, searching for similarities and differences. From this process, the analyst identifies underlying uniformities in the indicators and produces a coded category or concept. Concepts are compared with more empirical indicators and with each other to sharpen the definition of the concept and to define its properties. Theories are formed from proposing plausible relationships among concepts and sets of concepts.

Grounded theory analysis is composed of three major types of coding: a) open coding; b) axial coding; and c) selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In this research, all three were used to analyse the data, as explained below:

a) Open coding is the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising, and categorising the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). An Excel sheet was used for this purpose, capturing the main themes from each case (interview) together with the associated quotes from the interviewee.

b) Axial coding is a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). All themes were put together on one sheet, and main themes were defined and categorised for each interviewee.

c) Selective coding is the process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Putting all main themes together in one sheet, colours were used to refine all themes and group them into four, organising the information, and finding the synergies between the interviewees.

Once data are collected and coding begins, the researcher is led in “all directions which seem relevant and work” (Glaser, 1978, p. 46), and the process of writing the findings starts.

CHAPTER 4 - Findings

Our research aimed to examine the determinants of conscious leadership, or what makes a conscious leader. Based on the interviews and the theme analysis, we identified four main groups of determinants, namely: Early formative years, impactful experiences, role models and spiritual intelligence. For each of these groups, other subgroups were identified in order to better classify the determinants for conscious leadership.

Early Formative Years

The first main group of determinants points to experiences that these leaders had in their early formative years. These experiences involved huge influence from their parents, from their ways of raising their child to their values, as well as social and environmental awareness, and the schools they attended. Entrepreneurial examples from family were also determinant to raise consciousness in these people.

Family Values: “Using money to make other people's lives better”

Our study shows that parents had an immense impact on the development of conscious leaders. Based on our interviews, it appears that when the leader’s personality was based on family values, it shapes everything they do. This includes the kind of leader they became, as well as building a company based on positive values that are aligned with the leader’s personal values. One of the leaders explained that some of these personal values were taught by his parents:

[...] The values they talked about, their honesty, integrity, respect, respect for individuals, humility – that sort of stuff. My mom, I always saw her as an individual that was very selfless, very generous, even to this day, in her old age and not good

health, she worries more about others than she worries for herself [...] I think all those were shaping sort of, defining things to growing up as a child, because she is a very gentle person, not aggressive. Sort of things that shaped me as a child. (VP of a multinational Australian company)

Parents' awareness

In the case of the participants of this study, when parents were aware of social and/or environmental problems, it helped to raise consciousness in their children, awakening empathy and compassion. In most cases, parents led by example by doing something to help others, or to contribute to society. The interviews verified that 'being the change' is even more powerful when you have children, as it is an important driver of influence in the constitution of their behaviours and values. One leader experienced his mother's efforts on building the non-profit sector in Chile, and her work as an activist for many environmental and social causes:

My mother and I are the first case of mother and son Ashoka fellows in the world. She became Ashoka fellow when I was 16, and it was very important for me to see all the preparation of the Earth Summit 92 and the creation of the non-profit sector in Chile (all environmental NGOs). (CEO of a multinational social business)

The same leader shared his memories about his mother's decision to leave a job that she did not feel comfortable with in regard to its negative impact on children:

My mother had a similar crisis as mine - of leaving her soul at home: she had a publicity agency, and she used to advertise products that were forbidden for her children". (CEO of a multinational B company)

Another leader described an impactful experience with her father, listening to his indignation and concerns regarding human impact on nature, in a way that awakened her to do something in order to mitigate climate change:

My parents were very socially aware [...] And for me, I have this vivid memory of my dad, who is really stoic, one day, kind of looking at all those coal ships out there and saying: they are going to ruin our paradise. And I kind of knew about climate change and, around that time, there was the Inconvenient Truth and all of those types of things, and I thought – oh my God, the enemy is right there, and I can see it! I was going to go into medicine, but I decided to change. (Founder of an Australian social business)

A couple of the leaders interviewed spoke about their parents' compassion and empathy for others, in a way that inspired them:

Daughter of doctors and that says a lot about me in many ways. First, the profession of medicine is a profession of solidarity, and my parents always attended the low-income population. My father was gaining goats, milks, roasted lambs because he operated people for free. (Founder of a Brazilian social enterprise)

My mom is probably the most empathy person I know, she feels other people's pain, and really – she can empathise with a football player, a new born child. It is really beautiful to watch. (Founder of an Australian social enterprise)

Religious values

Even though five of the leaders came from Catholic families, none of them were practicing Catholics. However, many of the leaders understood that the Christian values they received from their parents, based on their beliefs, were important to build their own personality:

My paternal family was very Catholic - values were very strong, of Christ [...] During my childhood and youth, two super-relevant elements hung on my wall: 1. The Golden Rule - is the phrase that is present in every spiritual book in the world: Do unto others as you would have others do unto you. (CEO of a multinational social business)

If I look at my parents, [...] we were born on the Catholic faith. We won't call ourselves religious in a very extreme sense, but I always find that religion defines clearly for us the values system. If you asked me – has religion shaped how I am? Yes, but finally it is the values that are aligned with what religion or spirituality proclaims. (VP of an Australian multinational company)

One leader explained that Christian values were important for him to understand his responsibility in improving other people's lives, and in sharing part of his earnings with the community:

I was raised as Christian and I was very used to know that whenever you make money, you always took some of that money and give it back to the church or even doing good things. Part of the responsibility of that money that you are earning is to make other people's lives better. (Founder and CEO of an Australian social business)

Buddhist philosophy also influenced one of the leaders interviewed, regarding self-empowerment, and confidence to be capable to do anything. This leader described the importance of understanding that God (the power) is inside each of us:

And in Thailand, I realised that here in Brazil, we always prayed asking, as if the responsibility to deliver something to us was from the father of heaven, and not ours, for him to do for you. And in Thailand - no, Buddhism is different, you demand strength, enlightenment so that you can conquer. So, you do not delegate your wish to anyone. [...] I began to realise this, that I have God inside me, that I do not need to seek God anywhere. So, whenever I can, I connect. (Founder of a Brazilian social enterprise)

Contribution to the community

Our study showed that some of these leaders' parents presented a positive example of giving back to the community, and sharing their resources—by volunteering and by giving a percentage of their earnings to support social organisations:

My mom and dad have always been very community minded. There was always this sense of volunteering your time. My dad did a lot of developing projects in Pacific, he built a lot of schools, clinics... every single year he would go away between two to three weeks to build. They would put all these skills together - plumber, electrician, builders and they would all fly to Vanuatu and build things. And my parents always

gave for the three of us kids a sense of your role of being a human is to make the world a better place. So, there was always a sense of responsibility, community contribution. [...] Part of the responsibility of that money that you are earning is to make other people's lives better. (CEO of an Australian social business)

My mom in particular is very socially aware, sort of always volunteered, like 10 percent of your income you always give away and make sure that you also volunteer in the organisation. (Founder of an Australian social business)

Entrepreneurial Skills: “If they were able to do it fifty years ago, I can do this!”

All the leaders interviewed, had an entrepreneurial attitude: That is, with the courage and creativity to propose new ways of doing things, and persistence to make them happen. Most interviewees seem to be born with these skills, but they could also have been learnt from their parents, as more clearly explained below.

Entrepreneurial soul

Seven leaders shared stories that suggest they were born with an “entrepreneurial soul”. As such, they have always demonstrated entrepreneurial traits, like creativity, innovation, and the courage to consider innovative ideas and implement them:

I like to solve problems, complex problems. (Founder of a Brazilian multinational company)

I enjoy challenges, I enjoy learning. (VP of a multinational business in Australia)

A couple of the leaders interviewed remembered this exhibiting leadership behaviour since school:

I was incredibly entrepreneurial. Always had to start from scratch, with nothing actually. Have an idea, get a bunch of people together and convince that the idea was a

good idea, and then organise that group of people into a project team and always go and find resources. (Founder and CEO of an Australian social business)

Our study also showed that, the decision to become an entrepreneur, could be a result of a strong will to be free, and to have the power to implement their own ideas:

I developed a quick career, but I always wanted to be my own boss, to do things my own way and become an entrepreneur. What has always boosted me was the possibility to put my ideas into practice. And, regardless of how differentiated, creative or daring my ideas were, I sometimes would not have the opportunity to put into practice in more formed structures, I would have to ask permission and approval for many people, I wanted to do it my way and that's what got me to be an entrepreneur. (Founder of a Brazilian company)

Parents as entrepreneurs

Our study revealed that most of the conscious leaders interviewed who became entrepreneurs had entrepreneur's parents, and/or entrepreneurs in their family. Among the ten leaders interviewed, six had a mother and/or father as entrepreneurs, and sometimes also other member/s of their family. One of the leaders, whose both parents were entrepreneurs, reported how natural the business environment was for him:

I was raised in an environment where it was very natural to understand what business was, and there was no doubt about that being something natural and good. (CEO of a multinational social business)

A female leader explained how inspiring it was to have business women in the family. She also described that, having memories of her entrepreneurial family members' experiences, supported her to keep going during challenging moments:

My mum, my grandma, both of them grabbed big businesses. I think I was always inspired by them. I remember one day I was in India, and it was just too hard, and I wanted to give up, and I think I went to Delhi and I thought it is so difficult. [...] My

grandmother and grandfather had started a [...] cookie franchise, and that was one of those franchises in the airport in Bangalore, and I just thought – if they were able to do it fifty years ago, I can do this. So, I think there was a very entrepreneurial vein in my family. [...] That sort of courage and knowledge has been quite powerful, that women are the ones that lead business. (Founder of an Australian social business)

Even great-grandparents' stories of entrepreneurship inspired some of the leaders interviewed:

I grew up listening to my grandmother telling me stories of my great-grandfather, who was super enterprising. My great-grandfather had a farm inside and he planted rice, coffee, and he was always known as a very adventurous guy. [...] And I've always been very delighted with his stories. It turned out that my father is an entrepreneur - he is a doctor and has been a partner in 2 radiology clinics. (CEO of a Brazilian social enterprise)

Teaching “how to fish”

Two of the leaders we interviewed were taught the value of money as children, in a way so they understood the value of work, and the logic of being rewarded for their effort. They learnt early on to work in order to have their own money, and the pleasure of doing that:

My grandpa picked me up at school and, at the age of 8, I used to sell a box of fruits that he brought from his farm to ours neighbours. For me, there was always this sense, logic that my work was worth X\$ [...] if I buy something for a price, I will have to sell for a higher price. (CEO of a multinational B company).

Myself and my brothers helped my dad for pocket money, we never had pocket money just for doing nothing. We earned our own money very, very young. Even when I was 5, I earned money by loading wood into the back of his trailer. I was getting a sense that, if you worked, you could get money. (Founder and CEO of an Australian social business)

These leaders learnt the logic of capitalism very early in their lives, as well as the value of being rewarded for their work.

School Influence: “I knew I could be anything I wanted to be”

Results revealed that some of the leaders interviewed studied in schools where volunteering work was part of the curriculum and engaged students in collaborative actions to support underprivileged people. There was also one conscious leader who attended a training course, after finishing school, which empowered her to become an entrepreneur. So, education would seem to be another significant vehicle to raise consciousness in people, empowering students, showing the reality of society and their role of contributing to community.

Contribution to the community

One of the leaders explained how her school was focused on social justice:

I had a school that was very socially conscious. It is sort of a Catholic school, that had a lot of social justice focus. I was the captain of social justice [...] I always volunteered since I was little. Everyone had to volunteer (in the school), everyone had to work in unprivileged communities and old people. (Founder of an Australian social business)

Another leader shared the profound impact that helping old people as part of the school activities had on her:

I studied in a very small school that every year did collaborative actions. We had to visit an organisation called House of the Poor that cared for the mentally disabled, the elderly, and all kinds of people. So, since I was 8 years old I was going to this institution talking with the old ladies that were there, and all this was creating in me something different. (Founder of a Brazilian social enterprise)

Emotional and spiritual intelligence

For one of the leaders, it was essential the way the school empowered her to believe in herself to do whatever she wanted to: Developing students emotional and spiritual intelligence, besides the common curriculum:

[It was] quite a privilege high school where we were all women. And we were taught from a really young age that women could do anything if they put their minds to a particularly topic and if they had education behind them. So, I knew I could be anything I wanted to be, I just needed to decide what that was. (Founder of an Australian social enterprise)

“Conscious” higher education

One of the leaders interviewed also found being part of a leadership program which focused on sustainable leadership was a game changer. She described how the program empowered her to become an entrepreneur, bringing a lot of knowledge on how impactful building a network, and collaborating can be to promote change:

In Australia, I did a program called – the Centre for Sustainable Leadership (CSL) [...] And it was a life changer for me as well. It was better than my university, it was better than any studies I have ever done. It totally transformed my network and the understanding of an ecosystem that could affect change and it made me way more ambitious. I think if I had not gone to the CSL, I wouldn't have even started a business. I kind of realised – oh, I can do all these things, I know I am not good in lots of things, but I can find great people, I only need to be good at one bit of that and be inspiring for people to come with me. So that was a real game changer for me. (Founder of an Australian social enterprise)

Impactful Experiences

Our study shows that experiencing tough times and disappointments in life were also determinants for these leaders to choose a different path in life and their career and become a

conscious leader. The impactful experiences related during the interviews were subcategorised in this chapter as: Crisis and resilience, exposure to reality and disappointment with businesses.

Crisis and Resilience: “The best and the worst of humanity”

Seven of the ten leaders interviewed had some form of crisis as the catalyst for becoming a more conscious person and leader. In most cases, going through a crisis taught these leaders to be more compassionate and aware of societal problems. It is not just the crisis they faced—everyone faces crises—but the way they faced adversity, which helped them become the leaders they are.

Domestic violence

One of the leaders experienced domestic violence from his father to his mother which appears to have influenced him to become intolerant about inequalities:

In these very early formative years, I saw the best and the worst of humanity. My father taught me how not to treat people, how not to abuse power, how that it can be such a strong gender imbalance, that can be used for bad and destructive behaviours [...] One of the things I hate is inequalities – I think we are all equal as human beings. I hate power being abused and usurping the rights of others. (CEO of a multinational company in Australia)

Another leader pointed to failure as a catalyst for change in life. As described during the interview, it was not only about overcoming the failure, but the support from friends and teachers, that made the whole difference in the way this leader would build relationships with others and lead teams to succeed:

I had challenges not being the most intelligent person – being kicked out of high school and making it back successful, doing quite well in university [...]. Failing early has

taught me that everything is possible. When I was kicked out [...]. What I decided to do was to study on my own and sit for my equivalent of HSE on my own. But it was the journey that defined a lot of learnings and who I am. (VP of a multinational business in Australia)

Sickness and death

Illness was also a driver to raise consciousness in these leaders. One participant almost died which was when the leader realised the need to change the way of living life, including work. Doctors had declared the illness terminal, with no hope of recovery. The leader chose a different treatment path – one of using natural remedies, based on floral essences. The leader was completely healed, which led to the decision to start supporting other people to heal, in other words, to bring positive impact to society:

I had six ulcers at the same time. At that moment, not even the most potent remedy resolved, and I could not even operate, because they had already taken all my stomach out. One day, I was at a meeting, and two ulcers started to be haemorrhagic. The blood began to flow underneath, but I could disguise it - I bought feminine absorbent and I went to the meeting spouting blood... and at that meeting, I coughed and blew blood on the table, over the contracts [...] There was a cinematographic silence, and at that moment, I went to the bathroom and thought, 'I think I'm sick. The doctor said I was going to die.' (Brazilian social entrepreneur)

For another leader, who became very sick, an important moment was to recognise how people can be compassionate, and give their blood to save your life, even without knowing you well:

In India, I got dengue fever and needed a blood transfusion, and in India they don't have a blood bank. So, you need to find a donor who is your blood type, and within a day I had like hundreds of people from our team, my landlord, my husband's boss just a community around you – and that kind of thing, when someone wants to give you their blood, it's like, you would do anything for them. (Founder of an Australian social enterprise)

There was also a leader who had a serious case of sickness in the family, which followed by a friend's death, made this person realise how fragile life is and understand the moment to do things we love and believe in is now, and not in the future.

My daughter got cancer. Perception that life is too short and fragile. Many times, you live your life waiting for the perfect conditions to do what you think you should do somewhere during your life. So you are always fooling yourself, thinking that life is eternal and that it is going to offer you the perfect moment - and it is very likely that it will never come. I also started to increase my concern regarding the logic of businesses, question its purpose [...] I was having this discussion regarding businesses' purpose with a very close friend, that was supporting me with my daughter's cancer, and he died. That time, that we were discussing how fragile life can be and how long we should wait to do things [...] I thought it was time to do so! (CEO of a multinational social business)

Parents' divorce

Parents' divorce was also an indicator by one of the leaders as a catalyst for making changes in life:

I was 14 and my parents were the perfect couple for society. Everyone saw them as the ideal couple, and I experienced their divorce process. I heard my mother talking to her lover on the phone [...] the process was very difficult. And then I freaked out and decided that I could not stay there. So, I went to do an exam for an exchange program and I ended up living 1 year in Thailand. (Founder of a Brazilian social enterprise)

Exposure to Harsh Reality: "Injustices in the world that shocked me"

Experiencing a different reality and being close to other people's suffering or disadvantages raised compassion in many of the leaders interviewed, promoting a shift in the way they understood the reality, as well as their role in society.

Field experience

For five of the ten leaders interviewed, it was very impactful to have a field experience in a developing country where they had to profoundly acknowledge the reality that disadvantaged people face. For one of them, this experience was during a trip to a developing country, where the leader experienced a sad reality that he was not aware of:

I went to Cambodia and for the first time in my life I met children who had just been free from slavery. But there is a lot of slavery in the world – but these young kids (the youngest was 3) had just been rescued [...]. I don't think for a reasonable human being, it is possible to meet a 3-year-old form of sex slave, who had been raped multiple times a day for a long period of time, and not decide that you want to do something about it. (CEO of a multinational company in Australia)

Another leader explained that being sent to the Philippines to work allowed him to deeply experience another reality, as he was exposed to poverty and many other social problems. What made it even more powerful was bringing his whole family to live in this country with him as well:

I was sent across to Philippines as a Chief Operating Officer of mobile venture Philippines exposed me to poverty, low income, social issues, political unrest, a lot of social and environmental issues [...] they had low income, unemployment, issues of terrorism in the South, Communism in the East, also economic, social and political instability. Those years were quite defining [...] when I brought all my family there, from my 3-month-old daughter to my 7-year-old daughter [...] it was a good eye opener for the whole family. (VP of a multinational business in Australia)

Indeed, having such a field experience as a family unit can be very influential for the children as well, in a way that can raise consciousness in the whole family. One of the leaders described her experience spending three months in a developing country as a kid with her whole family as fundamental for her to understand that happiness had no relation with money and possessions:

The very pivotal moment for me was when I was 16 and my Dad took our whole family to Vanuatu for three months while he was building - this time, instead of taking a bunch of men. A really big thing kind of clicked in my brain, I had this enormous realisation that money and possessions didn't bring happiness and wellbeing. I remember coming back from that time with this really profound understanding that happiness didn't equal things. (CEO of an Australian social business)

Furthermore, going on an international experience alone in a developing country, during the adolescence years, was another very important life event to raise consciousness and empower leaders, as one of them explained:

And this year in Thailand was very important to me in terms of constitution of my personality. I was 15 when I went, I spent one year there, I learned to speak the language, the culture [...] then you forget who you are and will absorb the culture of the other. I lived in a little town of 3000 inhabitants, in a family house in the middle of a rice plantation. And I kind of learned to turn around and learned that I am capable. So, this thing of being able was born there. (Founder of a Brazilian social enterprise)

It appears that the experience of travelling to a developing country can also be an opportunity to understand better the community and develop business ideas. One of the leaders decided to create her social enterprise after a trip to India, and an intense experience with poor communities there:

We went to visit several organisations with income generation in India, with crafts. And I fell completely in love with that [...] Then one day I told [name of the partner]: let's work with this business of selling and generating income for poor. (Founder of a Brazilian social enterprise)

Leaders who lived in Brazil, a developing country, did not necessarily have to travel to have this kind of experiences. One of them described a situation that happened at his front door, when he empathised with another child, almost his age, who was all wet, working in the

rain. For some reason, meeting a child his age who should have been playing but was not—in other words, facing a reality he was not aware of, awoke an interest to better understand the way disadvantage people live and raised compassion in this leader:

When I was 7 or 8 years old, I was not in need. And one day a boy knocked on the door of our house, and he brought flowers, for my mother's birthday. And it was raining, and he was all wet, and that struck me a lot, a child doing it, going through those difficulties. So, I went to get a job at the flower shop to experience what he lived. And I went to visit the houses as if I were a flower delivery - I was 7-8 years old. (Founder of a Brazilian company)

Another Brazilian leader described her experience, while working in a non-profit organisation, which also allowed her to face the sad reality of disadvantaged children. The organisation worked to give opportunities and new possibilities to children living in poverty; but, with no food at home, these children ended up selling drugs on the street to survive:

[While working at a non-profit organisation] I was very critical, and I began to see the role of the woman. A boy would come to [the organisation's] workshops, where he could play a lot of [instruments], learn a lot of cool things. And when he got home, his mother would say: There's no food. Then, what did the kid do? He was very excited about everything he could have. He had to go out, sell drugs and put food on the table. And then, I started to look more at this mother – [organisation name] was always a very macho, very masculine organisation. It did not have that look for the woman. I tried to bring this view to the organisation, and I did not succeed for several issues, but I started getting it in my head: It's the woman whom we have to work with. (Founder of a Brazilian social enterprise)

People can also be exposed to realities and be deeply touched by the media, not only by physical experiences. One of the leaders explained that, finding out in the news about “the stolen generation” of Aboriginal Peoples in Australia was very powerful for her to face reality, and start seeing things from another angle:

Even though I had such a great upbringing and such a great education, that was a lot of things I didn't know, and lots of injustices in the world that just shocked me. And it shocked me that I hadn't been exposed to them, made aware. And I kind of felt powerless to do anything about it. One issue in particular, that time, that was a lot in the media, was the treatment of aboriginal people in Australia, and the fact that there was this thing that was called the Stolen Generation. And it was something that I had never heard of it, even though I had this great education. And I think that brought me to some type of consciousness or realisation that things should be looked at more deeply, from different angles. (Founder of an Australian social enterprise)

Disappointment with the Business Sector: “A successful man without soul”

Several leaders interviewed were deeply disappointed with the ‘business as usual’ approach and its negative impact in society. This made them rethink the kind of work environment they wanted, with the result that most of them ended up opening their own business that would create positive value to society:

I also loved fashion, but I began learning more about what was happening in the fashion industry – people were laterally dying in the work places because the condition was so unsafe. Women and children were often victims of abuse in global supply chain and let along huge environmental impacts. I was thinking more and more on ‘how can I do something?’. I wasn't feeling comfortable, it is about how they were made. (Founder of an Australian social enterprise)

One of these leaders, when a CEO of a large company, described the feeling of leaving his soul at home when going to work, as he had to take so many actions that were not aligned to his values and beliefs:

How many times I have seen companies not accomplishing the laws because it was cheaper to pay the fines, or because no one was inspecting. I had mentors to teach me on how not to comply with rules, and at the same time, I would watch these people go to masses on Sundays [...] There was this moment that I had to divide myself in two: one that stayed at home with my soul and the other that went to work without my soul,

only focused in numbers. So, when I realised that I became a successful man without soul, I resigned. (CEO of a multinational social enterprise)

Another leader described her disappointment when her father lost a lot of money from his investments, and had no support from the bank, as if they did not care for their clients, who were treated really badly. Her understanding was that the bank directors were getting a lot of money, while the small investor was losing everything:

I thought big businesses were bad and small businesses were good. And that probably came about because of my Dad's attitude towards big business. My dad invested money, he is such a hard worker. We come from a very poor family and my dad was just determined that his children wouldn't live in poverty as well. So, he worked a lot. But then, in the 1980s there was a recession in Australia, and he lost a huge amount of money, his investments, savings. He had investments and he was treated very bad and lost all his money. And, even though all the directors were getting large salaries, the small investors lost all their money. (CEO of an Australian social business)

The experience of working in a company, and understanding the disparity in profit sharing among the employees was another catalyst moment for one of the leaders interviewed, who decided that she did not want her knowledge and effort to enrich only a few people:

I had the experience of working in a multinational family company and it was obvious to me that all the money was for the director. There was a social inequality in that company that bothered me a lot [...]. Am I going to use everything I've learned in life [...], I had the great opportunity to go to a university, who has this opportunity? I have money - my family gives me support, has money. And I'm going to use what I have to enrich few people? Why do not I use this to change this status quo? I did not want to go back to a place where I knew that all my effort was going to be to generate money for one person. (Founder of a Brazilian social enterprise)

Role Models

Role models also influenced these leaders by showing there were alternative ways of running a business, interacting with people and living their lives—different from the status quo—that would benefit society, and bring personal fulfilment and satisfaction. These role models came from different actors, as detailed below.

Inspired by Conscious Leaders: “Understanding that I had the capacity to impact”

Our study revealed how conscious leaders who empower people to promote positive change can be a catalyst for the life change of others. Being aware of new ways of doing businesses and understanding it as a force for good was described by seven of the ten leaders interviewed as a fundamental step to promote the shift in their professional lives. These leaders obtained this knowledge in diverse ways.

Another leaders’ awareness

One interviewee described how impactful it is to have a business leader who is aware of the company’s responsibility for shaping society. This, added to the experience of volunteering as part of his work in the company, awakened his desire to help people, and brought an understanding about the role of businesses:

My CEO [...] had a very rational of the role of business shaping society, and also him and I had the same kind of values and used to work to mobilise the business. He put me in a mentoring program – mentor teachers who were working in schools in Western Sydney, they were dealing with immigration refugees. (VP of a multinational company in Australia)

Social entrepreneurs

Discovering the concept of social entrepreneurship was enlightening for several leaders, as they realised the possibility of using their skills to do business in a way that would create value to society. Moreover, many of the participants understood that social businesses were the best vehicle to scale up positive impact in society:

What made me become an entrepreneur was the understanding that I had the capacity to impact, from my expertise in business, not only the shareholders, but creating much more value to society. (CEO of a multinational social enterprise)

But it wasn't until I ended up doing some volunteering working at Vietnam, in a social enterprise - and I had never heard of social enterprises before. [...] It wasn't until I discovered social enterprise that the thing that connected in my mind was the ability for a purpose driven activity to have its own revenue strength. It was realising that you could make products or services in the service of doing good that you had within a business structure. (CEO of an Australian social enterprise)

Between making money and making a difference, stay with both! (Brazilian social entrepreneur)

Inspired by Business Partners: “We bound a partnership to try to make it all happen”

For a couple of the leaders interviewed, being exposed to an opportunity to become partner in a business with a social purpose—and realising that this could be a reality—was a push for them to become social entrepreneurs:

We had a friend who was living in India who was building a school and we raised money for the school. They built the school and then the kids were not studying because they didn't have any light [...] and he knew I worked with renewable energy, and he said – ‘Can you come over just to see if you can make something that work?’. (Founder of an Australian social enterprise)

Someone Who Believes in You: “There are people who will see the potential and continue to bet”

Having someone in your life who believes in you when no one else does—mainly during challenging moments in your life—can raise compassion and empathy in people that will shape a conscious leader later on. It impacts the way the leader builds relationships with people, including employees.

One of the leaders interviewed was kicked out from school, but with teachers and friends who were open to help him to finish his studies—this was a very impactful experience for him, which has influenced his way of leading, and managing a team. As a result, he is always aware of people’s potential, and how to support them to develop and succeed:

There were teachers who followed the rule books, but there were teachers who were prepared to take the risk and allowed me to quietly attend their lectures. So, one or two bet on me. In that, I learnt that there are people who will keep them falling down, and there are people who will see the potential and continue to bet. So, I learnt, it is about the potential of people, even for challenges, of difficulties, of lack of certain knowledge and skills. Because the teachers recognised certain capability, even as I was not very good in certain results. [...] That shapes, because certain circumstances can put people in a disadvantage, and it is where a lot of poverty, inequality exists. What is my responsibility to those who may have the potential to really make a difference and contribute to society but do to sense and common senses don’t have that opportunity?
(VP of a multinational company in Australia)

Spiritual Intelligence

A very strong and reoccurring theme that emerged was the spiritual intelligence of the conscious leaders. Our study shows that all conscious leaders interviewed have, somehow, developed their spiritual intelligence during their lifetime. In other words, they have put effort to improve self-awareness, reflecting on their values, and their life’s meaning. This

awareness gave these leaders the privilege to work and live aligned with their higher purposes.

Being True to the Self: “I found comfort in my vulnerabilities”

Seven of the ten leaders interviewed were, in some way, aware of their emotions and needs, and have invested part of their lifetime to gain self-knowledge in order to be true to themselves. This resulted in a better way of understanding and interacting with others in a more compassionate manner. One of these leaders is very conscious of his *dharma*³, and his decision of returning to business—and becoming a leader who would work to bring stillness to the business world— was a result of his guru’s guidance, who told him:

Because that is your dharma, that is where you will go quicker. Your lesson in life is not be in either extreme – completely immersed on the business world, it is not to run away from the business world and live in a cave and meditate all day long. [...] Your lesson in life is integrating the two – how do you bring stillness to the business world, for yourself and others. So, go back and get a job. (CEO of a multinational company in Australia)

Another leader understood that for his work to have purpose it is connected with his will to prove to himself that we can make changes in our lives. He correlates this to his strategy of always having hope in order to stay far from the risk of committing suicide, as that is a trauma in his family:

³ Dharma: The Hindu usage of the word, as in the phrase *sanatana dharma*, is often translated as the “eternal truth,” heard (*shruti*) by the ancient sages (*rishis*) and transmitted in human language through the Vedas and associated sacred texts (cf. Piano, 1996, pp. 17–36). In these texts, *dharma* can be shown to have, as it were, two dimensions: first, the order (truth, law, etc.) that governs cosmic realities and human life, and second, the dynamic ordering of existence that points towards the Ultimate and transcends all cosmic and human contingencies. By living in accordance with the first, a person succeeds in fulfilling the proximate ends of life, which are bodily enjoyment and fruition (*kama*), profit earned through honest labour and economic affairs (*artha*), and the fulfillment of the social duties of one’s caste (*dharma* in the narrow sense of “royal law”). When one enters into the second dimension of dharma, one transcends the need to fulfil proximate ends and commits one’s total existence to the one, ultimate end, liberation (*moksha*) (Matus, 2013, cf. Piano, 1996, p. 24).

I don't live without hope. The desire for committing suicide is not present in my life. I believe I was able to get over it during my life time and work, and so many good things that happened in my life. I keep doing things and accumulating more reasons to believe that we can make changes in our lives, we can make changes in the life of the community. [My father] did not believe, but I believe. (Founder of a Brazilian multinational company)

Another described, using examples from nature, that he is aware of his essence, and of who he is. In other words, he understood that he is totally aligned with his purpose and mission in life, and keeps working to help people to achieve this discovery as well:

And that is respecting your nature, because that's how nature works. If you have an orchid, you planted the orchid, if you give all the conditions of the ecosystem around it, everything works out. That essence that is of an orchid foot will manifest in fullness and will give an orchid foot. We are an artefact of nature, and inside each one has an essence, and what attention each one is giving: first to discover its essence, to see if you are orchid, pitanga, tangerine ..., recognise this. And in recognising this, what is the best ecosystem around that to manifest. So that was very clear to me. (Brazilian social entrepreneur)

One leader also described her feelings and sensations of being aligned to her mission and purpose in life:

It's in my body, it's in my soul - I could not imagine myself doing anything other than what we are doing. That's right, that's right! It's my soul, I had to do it. People spend their whole life trying to find their purpose. When you find, everything flows. (Founder of a Brazilian social enterprise).

While another leader spoke about her comprehension that her power is inside her, and how she can accomplish anything she wants by her own effort and merit:

I started to look a lot more at me, understanding my ability and understanding that deep down I am my own Goddess. (Founder of a Brazilian social enterprise).

Another leader showed deep self-knowledge regarding his weaknesses, and how he turned them into strengths. He also shared his comprehension of reaching a stage where he can be exactly the same person wherever and whoever he is—in all his roles and identities—as a leader, a father, a husband, or a friend:

I found comfort in my vulnerabilities because I have grown myself in my values. Because I am clear what are my values, that guides me. That is how I have grown myself, vulnerable. [...] Of my set of values, of what are important values to me, I found ways to externalise them, in a very harmonious way, in personal life, as a leader, through the business, through multi-facets of my identity. [...] How do I apply that into each one of my identities? And, I felt I am closer to that nirvana of holistic values applied to many things. Because then you are just who you are, and you don't need to be anyone different, because who you are is very grounded in the right values, as an individual, as a friend, with your wife and kids, as a leader, as in business and society.
(VP of a multinational company in Australia)

Tools that Support Self-Consciousness

Some of the leaders interviewed periodically follow practices that support their process of understanding themselves better, raising self-consciousness, and externalising all their learning. These include yoga, meditation, mindfulness to sessions with psychologists and counsellors.

Although six leaders reported to undertake meditative practices, they each used different meditation styles. One of these leaders, as previously cited in this research, was a meditation teacher for 12 years, and has a very strict daily practice of transcendental meditation:

At the age of 19, I became a teacher of transcendental meditation, and for about 12 years full time. That was what I did as my profession. [...] I do my daily meditation and yoga practice, but I also seek to do other things. I go to retreats, next holidays I will go to Abud in Bali, for an Ayurvedic clinic with my daughter. (CEO of a multinational company in Australia)

Other leaders preferred doing active meditation, and to focus on practicing on being present in everything that they do. Yoga asanas (postures) and other kind of exercises were also mentioned as practices that bring presence:

Presence. Active meditation. What I practice today is presence! I'm talking to you and I want to take off my sweater because I'm sweating. I'm present in everything I do.

(Brazilian social entrepreneur)

I do things like meditate, I practice yoga and other forms of exercise that for me are a way of resting the mind and just being. And I think that is really important not for only my personal well-being, but for me to be a little bit more perceptive of others and of the world around me. (Founder of an Australian social enterprise)

Apart from meditation, being positive and grateful by implementing a daily ritual at her home was also reported by one of the leaders as a way of raising consciousness:

There at home we have the routine to thank every night, I sit, [with my husband] and [son] and thank: what we wanted to thank for today? [My son] is five years old, and he give thanks. So, we take life very positively, you know, despite seeing what we see. I think this is our spirituality, it is trying to bring a very positive energy into our home environment, work, home - knowing that negative energy pulls negative energy. Also, meditation sometimes. (Founder of a Brazilian social enterprise)

Three of the leaders interviewed spoke about attending counselling sessions with psychologists for many years as a way of learning more about themselves and raising their self-consciousness. One of them even described that he is always trying new things, and that meditation and mindfulness do not work for him:

I did a lot of therapy, I searched in this search of understanding myself, of conniving myself, of trying to improve - that was something that always accompanied me.

(Founder of a Brazilian company)

This leader explained how he combined several methods:

I have tried many things: meditation, mindfulness, of this and that, to look at life in a more serene way, the energies. I am not a disciplined person. I am always looking for new things, I've danced. So, I've done everything, I've done therapy, a lot of things. If you say, do you meditate systematically? No. I like to walk, in recent times we have been walking. These things come and go, they are waves, I've had some very interesting experiences with indigenous, and they are coming back in the last days. I believe in these energies, energetic flows. I became vegetarian. I seek to have a healthy life, spiritually and physically. (Founder of a Brazilian multinational company)

One of the leaders, in addition to practicing mindfulness as a way to be present, also used music to shift her state of emotion. She explained that our brain waves work in different megahertz depending upon the activities we are involved in, and that she has taught herself to quickly flip these different modes using music. She explains that changing her location, and the music she is listening to, switches her into different types and modes:

I do quite a lot of mindfulness - sometimes it is a lot of active mindfulness. Another thing - I taught myself to switch kind of thought patterns through using particularly music. You know how for different types of activities that you are involved in your brain waves have different frequency – if you are in a date, sleep – your brain waves work in different megahertz. I have taught myself to flip from these different modes really fast but using the trigger of music. [...] The other thing is light – a light and space – I move a lot to work in different spaces that give me different environments - changing my location and the thing that I am hearing just switch me into different types and modes. (Founder of an Australian social enterprise)

Another leader described his practice as self-reflection, a way that he found to overcome the weaknesses in his personality and turn them into strengths:

It was just a lot of personal reflection. I am in the element of self-reflection, self-awareness. (VP of a multinational company in Australia)

Higher Purpose and Motivation: “Whatever I would be doing other than that, I'd be on the wrong track”

All the conscious leaders we interviewed were driven by a higher purpose, as a result of being true to their self, and their values. In other words, their motivation for doing business differently—and breaking the status quo—goes beyond a personal purpose, it is about achieving good for others. Nine of the ten leaders interviewed described, in some part of the conversation, their motivation for choosing a new professional path. Two of the leaders affirmed that their motivation to get out of bed every morning is to make a difference in people's life and in society:

That really takes me out of bed in the morning. Making a difference! (CEO of a multinational company in Australia)

I want to make a difference in people's lives for the courage to change patterns so that they can see new horizons, new perspectives. (Brazilian social entrepreneur)

Four other leaders had clarity about their will to use their skills to do something beyond a personal purpose, to contribute in a positive way and help to create good:

I led many initiatives like engaging teenagers to raise money to repair schools for poor children. It was always about bringing an idea, in a way that would be from all of us, we would work as volunteers and that would benefit the wellbeing of many people. I noticed the value that it had for me, using my skills to something beyond a personal purpose. (CEO of a multinational social enterprise in Brazil)

I want to contribute in a positive way. [...] the fact that there is still so much degradation in our environment, so many people that are still being harmed unnecessarily in the world and I am obviously really consumed in the fashion industry and I feel like until those issues are gone than I am constantly motivated to keep working, to kick at it. (Founder of an Australian social enterprise)

One of these leaders even described taking a downgrade in his position, reducing many of his benefits, so as to have a role that would allow him to promote more positive change in the company and, consequently, in society:

And I decided, ok, I should pursue something differently. [...] my CEO said: 'I can't give you a higher position, the biggest is a VP position. And you have to take a major downgrade.' And of course, I had to make a hard decision – Do I pursue that passion of doing what is good? [...] I think, it is the belief that there was something more than those roles could do, for people, the leadership and the organisation. [...] If it was about me, then I wouldn't be able to deal with such a big change in position, benefits and salary. But again, Maslow resonated really well – self-actualisation is about what you do to realise your potential for others. It is not about you. (VP of a multinational company in Australia)

Two of the leaders showed their indignation for people who do not act for the greater good:

You have a clean consciousness, a sense of - I could not be doing anything different from what I do today. Whatever I would be doing other than that, I'd be on the wrong track. Because I am absolutely sure that what the world wants is what I do, what the world needs is what we have been trying to do. It has almost a blind belief, I cannot argue the opposite. If anyone wants to prove to me that this is a lie, I think I'm going to laugh. (Founder of a Brazilian social enterprise)

Our study also shows that, once the leader is aware of her or his higher purpose, he, or she can start working to bring a higher purpose for the organisation as well:

If you get our beliefs, publicised in 2002, that's why I say that they are very strong because when I think about myself I end up going back to what is written there because that's me too. (Founder of a Brazilian multinational company)

So, in a way I felt there was a soul bringing into the organisation and culture, coaching and mentoring attitude and mindset for our leaders. That is my journey! [...] But it was more than thinking: what is the bigger purpose? What is that impact that you can

create, that I am: 1 - passionate for, 2 - I felt that was needed by the organisation, needed by the leaders. In a way it also defines who we are as an organisation. (VP of a multinational company in Australia)

Doing Good Feels Good: “I recommend to everyone who wants to do something to do good for people”

One recurrent reason why these leaders justify their decision for doing good was that it gives them a lot of satisfaction, and makes them feel really good:

I do that because it makes me feel good. I believe that all of us have the capacity to promote change and transformation in the micro, macro, family, neighbourhood, world. And that is good, gives satisfaction, makes me sleep really well. (Founder of a Brazilian multinational company)

I recommend to everyone who wants to do something to do good for people. It is good to try to do something for society. And the path that you walk in life, it is in this path that you will find the people that have some meaning for you. The best people in my life were met in this path. (Founder of a Brazilian company).

This same Brazilian leader even related his satisfaction to a relief from the anguish of seeing things that he does not like:

I cannot get alienated. So instead of getting distressed to see things happen, I think - so what can I do? And doing things within my means helps, relieves me because I'm not just watching, alienating myself, cooperating with the status quo, but I'm just about to do something. So, what motivated me is to relieve the anguish of seeing things that I do not like, that do not please me and try to do my part. And I feel good trying to do my part, being in the process. (Founder of a Brazilian company)

Compassion: “Every day I see someone who should have a standard of living that they don't have”

Our study clearly shows that conscious leaders, generally, have compassion for others. Most of them are affected by seeing issues related to poverty and inequalities:

Every single day when I go to work I would see a homeless person on the way, I would see someone who should have a standard of living that they don't have. Part of this is still just knowing that it is just a drop in the ocean what we are doing. (CEO of an Australian social enterprise)

Another leader described her concerns about doing something that would impact other people and the environment in a negative way:

I really care about what I am doing and the impact that I am having on the world around me. And not something that causes harm to other people and to my environment. (Founder of an Australian social enterprise)

Relationship with Nature: “There is no argument - you are nature”

Overall, most of conscious leaders interviewed, seven in total, have a strong connection to nature. For some, nature is clearly a part of who they are, and has an impact in the way they lead:

Nature absolutely has an influence in me and the way I lead. I am a water baby. My husband knows that if I am upset or whatever he just needs to throw me in the water. [...] I try to swim every other day – it is so grounding, it is like my element! Or if not that, to be in the nature, in the bush [...] I love it! It is my way I get most of my clear thinking, I call like my nature meditation, my moving meditation, it is really important to me. (Founder of an Australian social enterprise)

There is no argument - you are nature. (Brazilian social entrepreneur)

For other leaders, nature is used as a tool to be present in the moment, to connect to themselves, and meditate:

We see nature as a place where we recharge our energy, it is necessary. If we do not go, things start not to go well! (Founder of a Brazilian social enterprise)

My favourite thing is to just go and seat on the beach and sit on the sand, something that keeps you so much joy and so much grounding. (Founder of an Australian social enterprise)

One of the leaders interviewed shared a story about his connection and relationship with nature and the environment, and how as an infant and growing child, he was saved by fresh cow's milk and living in a clean environment with his parents. He sees nature as a safe place, somewhere he loves:

I love nature, I love the outdoors, I love the environment. My mom couldn't breastfeed, and I couldn't take any form of milk as an infant. So, my health wasn't very good, my Mom was afraid that I might not make it through by the time Dad finished studies and came back two years later. So, my Dad asked: why not fly up to Canada and join me in with myself and my older brother? So, six months I went to Canada – and it is a very clean environment. So, I took fresh cow milk. I couldn't consume solids, whatever I take I would just throw up, I was literally shrinking. But when I went to Canada, they used to just deliver fresh cow milk from the farm, and my mom gave it a shot and I just stuck to it. I remember my parents used to drive up to the woods, go picnic, so from a very young age I have always had that love for nature, it looked safe to me. Just the natural stuff, the goodness of nature, no preservatives, no whatever it is, just fresh cow milk, of the cow. So, I am usually outdoors, even my son and wife nature, spend time and energise in nature, go camping, go hiking, and climbing. (VP of a multinational company in Australia)

Another leader is so connected to nature that she sees everything as an ecosystem, including business:

I always talk about a business as an ecosystem. An organisation is a natural system - it is a bunch of humans that come together to do a purpose for work. But it makes no sense if we are not trying to mimic a biological system in that. It makes no sense to create more waste in the world and trash the planet. I think of the organisation as trees and the sector as an ecosystem. (Founder of an Australian social enterprise)

CHAPTER 5 - Discussion

In view of all challenges the world is facing at this current time (Dyllick & Muff, 2016; Hardoon, 2015; IPCC, 2018; STWR, 2015; UN, 2017)—and given that the effectiveness of change directly depends upon leadership (Kotter & Cohen, 2002)—it is indispensable that business leaders become more conscious about societal problems, and start using the force of for-profit organisations to drive the change towards a more sustainable society (Porter & Kramer, 2006, 2011; Zadek, 2004). Conscious leadership was therefore selected as the framework to be used in this research. Conscious leadership joins the vision of transformational leadership, the higher purpose and service from servant leadership, and the self-awareness from spiritual and authentic leadership (Haski-Leventhal, 2018). It strongly states the importance of raising consciousness in leaders to operate from higher stages of consciousness, to serve humanity and the planet (Barrett, 2018c). Conscious leadership also discusses the necessity of a new source of intelligence: spiritual intelligence, allowing people to discover their own higher purposes, both in work and life (Marshall & Zohar, 2004). However, we still do not know what the underlying process is of developing conscious leadership, and how one becomes such a leader. This research therefore aimed to shed light on the determinants of conscious leadership, in order to contribute to the rise of consciousness in business, so it can be used as a force for good.

Based on in-depth interviews with ten conscious leaders from Australia and Brazil and the analysis of their life stories, four main groups of determinants (themes) for conscious leadership emerged (Figure 4): 1) Early formative years; 2) impactful experiences; 3) role models; and 4) spiritual intelligence. Before discussing each one of them, it is important to

highlight that the rise of consciousness in leaders appears to be a combination of different determinants, and not a result of only one of them, as will be explained later in this chapter.

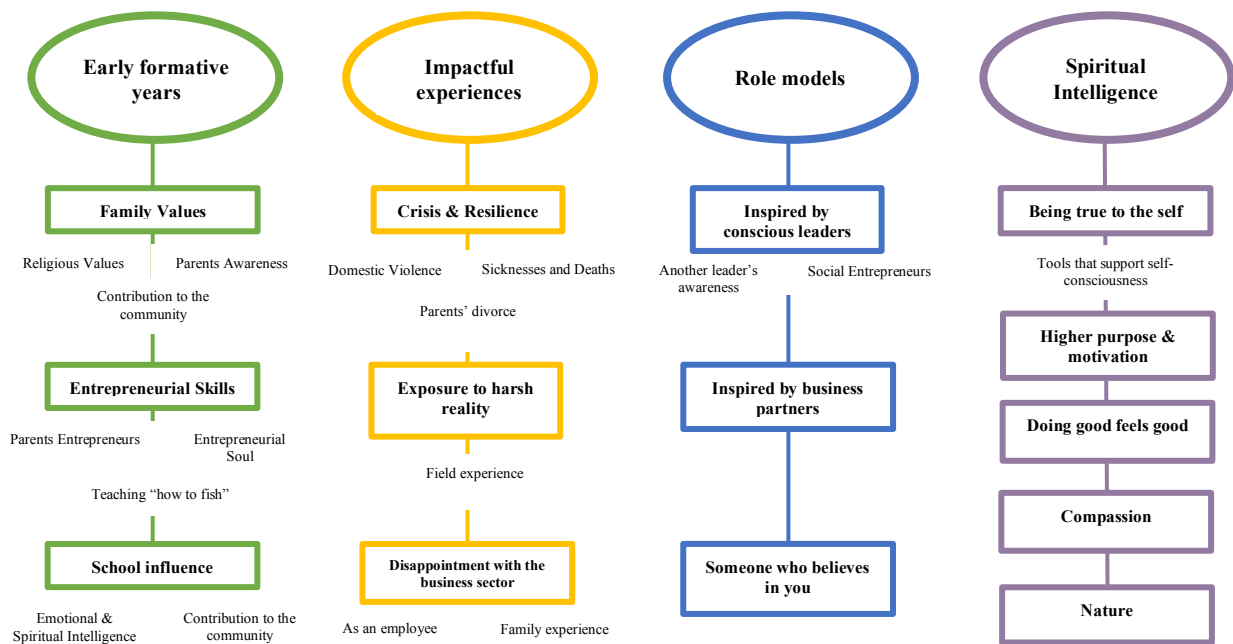


Figure 4: The conscious leadership determinants model

The determinants, described below, include all the steps cited by conscious leadership theory that can be taken to become a conscious leader, as well as the motivations described as essential to become a social entrepreneur (Table 1). Additionally, this research adds more determinants and organises all of them in a structured format.

Steps to become a conscious leader	Motivations to become a social entrepreneur
1) Follow your heart and find your purpose, find role models, have a coach or mentor, cultivate the higher virtues, develop your emotional and systems intelligences and evolve to higher levels of consciousness (SQ).	1) Content: relating to how the person was raised and socialised

2) Crisis are always a great opportunity for personal growth and raising consciousness.	2) Background: provides the environment in which the person interacts with the social sector
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Table 1: Determinants for conscious leadership found in the literature (based on Kickul & Lyons, 2016; Mackey & Sisodia, 2014)

The **early formative years** theme comprises experiences related to the influence of parents and school during childhood, and adolescence. The first determinant identified was **family values**. The values lived by these leaders’ parents were important in building the base for their conscious behaviour. According to Barrett (2018b), values are directly related to the level of consciousness in which they operate from. Although there are other sources of influence, family is usually pointed as the most important mechanism in value transmission (Dermond, 2007; Grusec, Goodnow, & Kuczynski, 2000; Nobles, 2007). Parents who “walked the talk” and were not only aware of global challenges, but also did something about it, had a positive influence on their children’s understanding of their role in society, as they were able to provide good role modelling (Chawla, 1998; Dermond, 2007). In most cases, the parents of the leaders we interviewed contributed to the community by volunteering work and/or donating money. Hodgkinson (1995) found that people who give time and money to improve their community are likely to have had a family member or other adult who set an example of helping others, and to have belonged to a church or civic organisation in childhood or adolescence. Serving and sharing were also habits cultivated in these leaders as a consequence of the religious values lived by their family. While most of the leaders interviewed were not religious, the values of these religions (Christianity or Buddhism) were incorporated in their personality and behaviour.

The second determinant in this group is related to **entrepreneurial skills**. Having parents as entrepreneurs seems to be inspirational and provided courage for people to endeavour, and to propose new ways of implementing business. Most of these leaders exhibited entrepreneurial traits, such as creativity, innovation, and courage, from a young age (Peredo & McLean, 2006). Learning how to work and earn money at early ages seems to also lead to entrepreneurial skills. The European Commission (2003) affirmed that young people should benefit from entrepreneurship education, including at least one practical entrepreneurial experience before leaving compulsory education.

School influence was another determinant for consciousness and social action (Freire, 1973) if education connected learning to social change; critically engaged students with the world, and encouraged them to act (Darder, 2017). Schools have a key role in raising conscious individuals by fostering, not only their cognitive development, but also their social and emotional development (Durlak et al., 2011). In this research we found two important school activities that could support the development of conscious leadership years later. The first was contributing to the community, to expand the understanding of individuals' role in society. It is already known that experiential learning is a potential determinant for raising consciousness (McCauley et al., 1998). The second was empowering students to believe in themselves and follow their own passion. As such, working to develop students' emotional and spiritual intelligences, to enable the integration of inner development, and outer activity (Lerner, 2000) seems to be another potential determinant to empower students to believe in themselves, be aware of their emotions, and societal challenges, and be ready to become conscious leaders.

The second group of themes is composed by **impactful experiences** that were a catalyst for change in these leaders' lives, with three subgroups. Firstly, **crisis and resilience**,

such as experiencing domestic violence, sicknesses, deaths, or parents' divorce, were determinants for these leaders to choose a new path in their lives, and to become conscious leaders. Crisis helped to raise consciousness, transform individuals, and enable a higher level of spiritual awareness (Grof, 2000; Harung, 1995; Mackey & Sisodia, 2014). Secondly, **exposure to harsh reality**, either for themselves or for others, raised compassion, and shifted an understanding about the leader's role in society. The data analysis showed that experiential learning and service experiences were determinants for raising consciousness—mainly when it pushed the participants' boundaries—and took them to the edge of their comfort zones (Chawla, 1999; McCauley et al., 1998; Mirvis, 2008). Thirdly, **disappointment with the business sector** made some participants rethink the kind of work they wanted, and what they aimed to create, and deliver to society as a result of their efforts.

The third theme group related to **role models** who helped to raise awareness about the possibility of a different path for these leaders' lives and careers. Chawla (1998) already affirmed the importance and impact of role models in raising people's awareness. The first determinant found was being **inspired by conscious leaders**, who presented different methods of doing business to some of the leaders interviewed. That happened through connecting with other conscious leaders to whom they were subordinated or by networking with social entrepreneurs. Another determinant was being **inspired by business partners** and meeting potential partners who shared new possibilities of business models. Lastly, having **someone who believed in them**, and saw their strengths—when no one else could—was a determinant that permanently changed the way leaders developed relationships with people, in both their professional and personal lives. Therefore, this group of determinants highlights the importance of having role models of conscious leaders during people's lives, both in school and work.

The fourth and last theme is **spiritual intelligence**, as all the leaders interviewed spoke about developing self-awareness, and prioritising values and purpose over materialism. A spiritual intelligence enabled them to use their impactful experiences and consider the possibility of a different path. As spiritual intelligence is how people access their deepest meanings, values, purposes, and motivations and develop goodness, truth, beauty, and compassion (Marshall & Zohar, 2004), our research shows that all conscious leaders demonstrated a spiritual intelligence which, in turn, served them in their work and in their life. Spiritual intelligence enabled the participating leaders to act with wisdom and compassion, while maintaining inner and outer peace, regardless of the situation (Wigglesworth, 2014).

Spiritual intelligence included several principal elements. Firstly, **being true to self**: Most of the leaders interviewed were aware of their emotions and needs, resulting in better social interactions, in a compassionate and collaborative way (Bhat & Sisodia, 2016). The data analysis showed that several tools and practices, such as meditation, being in contact with nature and counselling, helped to develop consciousness (Taylor, 2013). Secondly, the study found that **higher purpose and motivation** played a significant role in this leadership style. Aligned with the main attributes of a conscious leader (Mackey & Sisodia, 2014), many of the leaders we interviewed were aware of their life purpose and worked towards it. A third sub-theme was ‘**doing good feels good**’: Several leaders expressed an awareness that doing good for others was also beneficial for them. Indeed, serving society and shaping a better future through their roles are also considered as important characteristics of a conscious leader (Greenleaf, 1970; Haski-Leventhal, 2018). Fourthly, **compassion** was a prominent theme, which could have been raised by one of the determinants previously explained, such

as parents' values, school's influence, or impactful experiences. Indeed, conscious capitalism explains that when leaders become aware of their true essence, they increase the ability to love and care beyond themselves, and to become able to lead from a place of love and compassion (Mackey & Sisodia, 2014; Winston, 2002). Finally, most of the leaders interviewed had a strong relationship with **nature** and reported that it impacted the way they lead. As suggested by some authors, nature can be an important vehicle for connecting to oneself and raising consciousness (Hardy, 1979; Taylor, 2013). Also, having a more holistic view about nature, and understanding the basic systemic principles of life, usually changes the way people understand the role of organisations in society, and the need for interconnection (Capra & Jakobsen, 2017). Capra (2012) affirmed that *ecoliteracy*⁴ is a critical skill for business leaders, and that it should be the most important part of education at all levels, to shift from competition to collaboration.

Following careful consideration of the findings, it would appear that some determinants built the foundations, so these leaders were ready for the shift and transformation whenever a significant trigger or event occurred in their lives. Early formative years and developing their spiritual intelligence seem to have prepared these leaders to react differently when an impactful experience occurred, or when they met potential role models. Furthermore, our research demonstrates the importance of developing spiritual intelligence to raise leadership consciousness, with meditation being one of the tools that support this

⁴ *Ecoliteracy involves a new kind of "systemic" thinking—thinking in terms of relationships, connectedness, and context. It means seeing the living world as an integrated whole, and recognising that the major problems of our time are systemic problems—all interconnected and interdependent. They need corresponding systemic solutions—solutions that do not solve any problem in isolation but deal with it within the context of other related problems.* (Center for Ecoliteracy, 2015)

process. This aligns to Grof (2000), who stated that the individuals' readiness for inner transformation plays a very important role to trigger the raise of consciousness, and that meditation and spiritual practices seem to be the most important catalysts for that transformation. Considering that the word *spiritual* means "that gives life to the system" and that Wigglesworth's (2014, p.8) definition of spirituality puts it as "the innate human need to be connected to something larger than ourselves", it is clear why conscious leaders need to develop their spirituality so as to lead from a higher purpose. In other words, when understanding their own higher purpose and by aligning that to their work, they can give life to the business in a way that it will function as an ecosystem. This foundation enables leaders to become conscious, and to lead business as a force for positive change in society (Figure 5).

Four of the leaders interviewed suffered considerable crisis during their early formative years. Barrett (2018b) confirmed that negative childhood experiences can make the transition stage from the differentiating stage to the individuating stage, and then to the self-actualising stage be full of challenges and difficulties. This research indeed found that the strong effort and courage necessary to get over crisis can result in leaders' decision to develop their spiritual intelligence and so, become conscious leaders. Interestingly, these cases refer to the four leaders interviewed from multinational companies whereby they ended up developing a profound consciousness about themselves, and society. So, crisis can also be an opportunity for leaders to start developing spiritual intelligence - first by aiming to do the challenging work in overcoming their fears with the result of understanding who they are, and to becoming a conscious leader when other determinants appear during their lifetime.

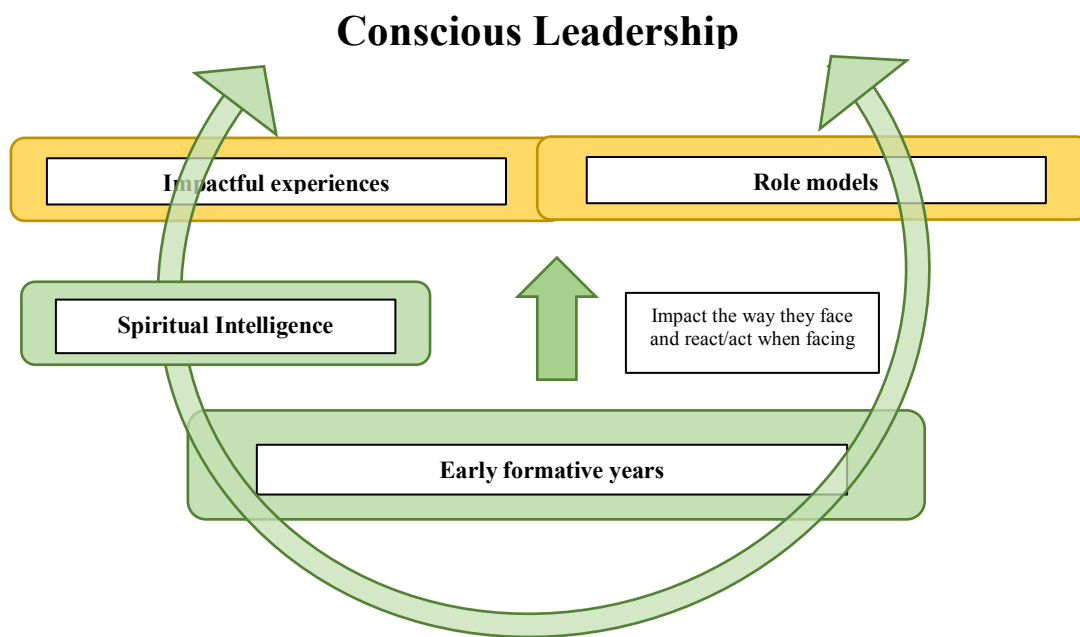


Figure 5: The foundations of conscious leadership

Implications for Business and Education

This research has several implications for business. Firstly, companies could invest in their leadership training, modelling it based on a conscious leadership model. Spiritual intelligence development could be a priority in leadership training, in order to build the necessary personal foundation for the internal transformation that is needed to become a conscious leader. Only then will leaders be able to translate this intelligence into action—and raise organisational consciousness—so business can serve humanity and the planet. As having role models is one of determinants found in this study, companies could also offer a formal mentorship for consciousness development.

Furthermore, companies could share with staff the possibility of a new pathways, namely, doing business in a conscious way. Leaders and managers can be presented to new

business models, such as social enterprises and conscious business, in workshops or field experiences, thus being challenged to bring innovation and ideas to the companies as a result.

In addition, companies could actively recruit and select leaders who act from a higher purpose, and with a higher level of consciousness. Selecting and hiring employees whose passion is aligned with the company's purpose is one of the key characteristics that help conscious companies to outperform. High level of employees' engagement reduces costs with turnover and increases efficiency, and innovation. Asking about early formative years and impactful experiences may help to assess leaders who are more compassionate than others. In the recruiting process, an alignment between candidates' values and purpose in life, and the organisational values and higher purpose, could increase the level of employee engagement, and effectiveness (Kanter, 2007). In addition to the regular IQ test, it would be beneficial for companies to also assess for spiritual intelligence.

Another way to support the rise of consciousness is by offering field experiences to existing/potential leaders, particularly in developing countries, exposing them to societal challenges. The combination of social awareness and new ways of using the force of business for good, can be a powerful trigger to raise consciousness in leadership, as it will give these leaders the opportunity to think about role of the business in society, and to understand how they can contribute to make it more purposeful.

Finally, our study also demonstrates that some of the conscious leaders were deeply disappointed by the 'business as usual' approach, and as a result, left the companies they used to work for, and decided to establish their own business. The new generation of millennials are more aware of societal problems than ever before, and have a different mindset regarding corporate responsibility and purpose (Meister & Willyerd, 2010). Therefore, if companies

want to maintain talent during the next decades, it is imperative they start having a more purposeful mission for their businesses (Bhattacharya, Sen, & Korschun, 2008).

This research has implications for the educational sector. Apart from content knowledge, schools could have emotional and spiritual intelligence development, and integrate community service as part of their curriculum. As values are transmitted mainly by families, schools could have programs to support parents in transmitting the necessary values to the raise of consciousness in their children, according to Barrett's model (Barrett, 2018b). Schools could also empower teenagers to become social entrepreneurs and/or intrapreneurs, developing their sense of creativity, and innovation for social change. This is now one of the main skills requested by companies in the recruiting process (European Commission, 2015). Moving to higher education, universities could integrate activities that aim to form conscious leaders, regardless of the area of knowledge. As transformative learning and experiential experiences are potential tools for raising consciousness in adults (Dahl, 2009; McCauley et al., 1998), community service and projects that would propose solutions for societal challenges could be part of the curriculum. Spiritual intelligence development could also be part of the curriculum to encourage the raise of consciousness, as it is one of the main skills for the 21st century (Crossman, 2011; Mitroff & Denton, 1999; Pandey et al., 2009).

The Contribution of this Research

This research has an important contribution to conscious capitalism and conscious leadership frameworks, as it brings evidence to support these concepts while capturing the voice of these leaders. Based on empirical research, it identifies for the first time several determinants for conscious leadership, and proposes a model that connects them. It ties together different

disciplines, such as psychology, sustainable development, business, education, and spirituality, to propose an impactful way of conducting business with purpose.

The study also provides a critical analysis about the leadership style needed to solve the challenges of the 21st century, and globally advance in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This research proposes that including spirituality into the sustainability agenda, and developing spiritual intelligence in business is indispensable to move society towards sustainable development. Based on this proposal, this research offers a model that complements existing frameworks and theories that aim to guide the transformation of business models, such as conscious capitalism and social business bringing an approach on how to effectively increase the number of conscious leaders in business.

Therefore, there are important implications for business management, in particular for leadership recruitment, and development. In addition, the importance of early childhood and education on conscious leadership, might also imply that a change is required in our education system to help better raise women and men who can make a difference.

Limitations and Future Directions for Research

This research was a first study to identify the determinants of conscious leadership using qualitative method, and leaders' life stories. There is almost no academic literature regarding conscious leadership, which made the literature review challenging, and we mainly rely on the work of Sisodia and his colleagues. As the literature on conscious capitalism and leadership will continue to grow, future research can incorporate it, including this study, to expand our knowledge on the subject.

The number of determinants raised from the interviews analysis was relatively large, and referred to many different areas of research, such as business, psychology, education, sustainable development, and spirituality. Future studies could focus on the distinct categories of determinants to be able to provide a deeper analysis of each field of knowledge.

In addition, the sample was relatively small (but in line with a Master thesis expectations) and only focused on two countries: Australia and Brazil. This research also lacks a control group that could determine how much these people's life stories differ from those of people who are not considered conscious leaders. In order to give credibility to the model proposed, future studies could include larger theoretical sample, a control group, and add interviewees from other countries.

Another interesting direction for future research would be to examine conscious leaders' balance on masculine and feminine energies, based on Shakti leadership assessment (Bhat & Sisodia, 2016). This would allow us to better understand conscious leaders and how to help to develop them.

As this research considered social entrepreneurs as social leaders, we also acknowledge that criticism can be made regarding their differences on the use of a companies' profit. Therefore, a comparison between social entrepreneurs, and leaders from multinational companies would be interesting to understand if there are differences in their determinants for raising consciousness.

Finally, it would be useful to employ qualitative and quantitative research to further test our proposed models, and the relationship of conscious leadership with other possible outcomes, such as leadership and organisational performance, employee engagement, trust, and positive impact in society.

Conclusion

The scale of transformation required to solve the challenges the world currently faces will undoubtedly necessitate a radical shift in consciousness, from a personal to a transpersonal perspective. Leaders need to change themselves first, before embarking on changing the world. Conscious-raising and awakening experiences can transform people's vision of the world, and their relationship to it, so they can act from a place of love and compassion, as true conscious leaders, and use business as a force for good (Mirvis, 2008; Taylor, 2012;). As early years and spiritual intelligence play a vital part in this, we need a substantial change to education and business practice to achieve this goal.

Technical and political solutions are not enough, and the world will only change when people change the way they relate to themselves, others, and nature (Brahma Kumaris, 2015). Incorporating spirituality in the agenda of sustainability—focusing on how to awaken leaders' hearts and consciousness—is the best way to make the transition to new business models that can speed the implementation of the sustainable development goals and achieving the world we want for this generation and the next ones to come.

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