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Sitting in the Hoop of the People: Linking Lakota Values and Business Ethics

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“When one sits in the Hoop of the People, one must be responsible, because all of Creation is related, and the hurt of one is the hurt of all, and the honor of one is the honor of all, and whatever we do affects everything in the Universe.”

*Lakota Instructions for Living
Passed down from White Buffalo Calf Woman*

INTRODUCTION

For the native American Lakota, each person's acts are often measured in terms of their impact on the entire social unit (*i.e.*, *tiyospaye* or extended family), and people within the *tiyospaye* align together and cooperate for the good of all of its members. There is a sense of equality among all people and resources are shared freely in both good times and bad. Moreover, the sharing is not just limited to possessions; it also extends to the sharing of emotions such as sympathy, compassion, understanding, kindness, and the sharing of personal time. The Lakota believe that their generous acts and support for each other will make them better people, and also help them build communal harmony. Their spirituality and culture are based on the *circle*, in which all of life is connected and the actions of individuals ultimately affect the well-being of the connected whole and future generations. The main idea is that we are part of the all and the all is part of us. In short, the Lakota represent a time, place, and a society that has been, and continues to be, intensely characterized by individual and collective responsibility.

Similarly, our modern world represents a *circle of life*--a spherical *biosphere* connected by elements of nature, air, water, plant, animal; the *marketplace* and commerce, with its circular flow of goods and services; *travel*, now virtually unlimited in space and time; *information*, prolific and increasingly enabled by technology; and each other, our *care* for the human condition. As with the Lakota *tiyospaye*, our modern global society is increasingly interconnected and interdependent with many shared concerns regarding humanity and preservation of the planet for future generations. Yet, it is a fact that we live in an era of pressing social problems, many of which are global in scope, dramatic in their consequences, and seemingly intractable in terms of institutional or collective resolution. In this current world of increasing awareness and concern regarding human rights offenses, environmental degradation, and a myriad of social concerns, the call for individual and collective responsibility has reached new heights. An unfettered, global free market system with few regulations or constraints has produced an alarming number of ethical,

humanitarian, and ecological challenges, demanding a new sense of global community with which to moderate, interpret, and ground it.¹

Deck frames the challenge: “When we hold at risk a treasure not our own, we may be stewards, or wastrels, or thieves.”² Truly, in our interconnected global marketplace and society, “There is little of which any participant can say, ‘This is mine alone.’”³ While the free market itself cannot correct certain errors, and without a global agency that has sufficient authority or trust to enact, monitor, and enforce areas of concern, the macro-ethical imperative entreats us to forge new approaches toward solutions.

Realistically though, collective action is clearly needed to address the significance and the scope of the market failures and social ills we are experiencing today. Personal responsibility must ultimately be translated into institutional or global action. Indeed, most attention has been focused on the role of the larger institutional player – government, business corporations, international agencies and agreements, etc. – with increasing criticism regarding the inaction, inability, and/or failures of the more powerful players to effectively attend to social concerns. Nonetheless, institutions can have a large, influential impact on social issues. They are made up of individuals who, through personal responsibility, can influence the values and behaviors of the larger institutional player. Indeed, a number of researchers have recently explored the role that individuals can play in initiating, sharing, and propelling more responsible behavior with the end result of impacting collective pro-social behavior.⁴

¹ Cavanagh, Gerald F. 2000. “Political Counterbalance and Personal Values: Ethics and Responsibility in a Global Economy.” *Business Ethics Quarterly* 10(1): 43-51.

² Deck, Michael C. 1999. “Stewards, Wastrels, or Thieves.” *Business and Society*, 38(1): 7-8.

³ Deck, 1999, 7.

⁴ See Harland, Paul, Staats, Henk and Henk A.M. Wilke. 2007. “Situational and Personality Factors as Direct or Personal Norm Mediated Predictors of Pro-environmental Behavior: Questions Derived from Norm-activation Theory.” *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 29(4): 323-334; Hibbert, Neil. 2010. “Exchange and Social Justice.” *Theoria* 57(122):26-50; Steg, Linda and Judith de Groot. 2010. “Explaining Prosocial Intentions: Testing Causal Relationships in the Norm Activation Model.” *British Journal of Social Psychology* 49:725-743; Stern, Paul C., Thomas Dietz, Troy Abel, Gregory A. Guagnano, and Linda Kalof. 1999. “A Value-Belief-Norm Theory of Support for Social Movements: The Case of Environmentalism.” *Human Ecology Review* 6(2): 81-97.

Conversely, institutions can have a significant impact on individuals—employees, customers, investors, members of communities, and the general public.⁵ Further, institutions influence *other* institutions.⁶ Best practices are emulated and often become common practice. In a world characterized by very large corporate institutions of enormous reach, resource control, and power, the possibilities for harm or for good are considerable. Indeed, many contemporary theorists have suggested that the viability of the entire global economic system relies upon the ethical standards and behavior of market participants.⁷

A theoretical argument is developed in this paper that a sense of personal responsibility can be restored as new social norms are emerging. The case is further made that personal and individual responsibility is inherently tied to collective responsibility and thus, plays an important role in motivating and contributing to the more pro-social decisions and behaviors needed in order to meaningfully address the concerns of a larger society. What follows is a conceptual rendering that first, considers the concept of personal responsibility and its connection to collective responsibility through the values and practices of the Lakota. And secondly, this discussion reflects on how, as we have gotten out of balance with our earth, as we struggle with global social issues of hunger, genocide, poverty, and human exploitation, as we confront a world crying out for help, we can learn by listening to the echoes from our land, the wisdom and teaching of our own ancestors, the native American people, and draw practical applications for both individuals and organizations. Theoretically, this is done by exploring a number of approaches, most particularly Schwartz's Norm Activation Model (NAM)⁸ in order to link current personal norms and situational imperatives to moral obligations, and subsequently, pro-social personal and collective action.

⁵ See Marcus, Joel. 2012. "Human Values and Corporate Actions Propensity: Examining the Behavioural Roots of Societal Sustainability." *Business and Society* 51(4): 677-689; Nattrass, Brian and Mary Altomare. 2002. *Dancing with the Tiger: Learning Sustainability Step by Natural Step*. Gabriola Island, BC, Canada: New Society Publishers; Waddock, Sandra. 2002. *Leading Corporate Citizens: Visions, Values, Value Added*. Boston: McGraw-Hill Irwin.

⁶ Dimaggio, P.J. & W. Powell. 1983. "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields." *American Sociological Review* 48: 147-160; Meyer, John W. 2008. "Reflections on Institutional Theories of Organizations." *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*, edited by Royston Greenwood, Christine Oliver, Kerstin Sahlin & Roy Suddaby, 788-808. London: Sage Publications. 788-808.

⁷ Emerson, Tisha L.N., and Joseph A. Mckinney. 2010. "Religious Faith and Ethical Attitudes." *Journal of Religion and Business Ethics* 1(2): 1-15.

⁸ Schwartz, Shalom H. 1977. "Normative Influences on Altruism." In *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, edited by L. Berkowitz, 221-279. New York: Academic Press.

THE LAKOTA: VALUES, CULTURE & WISDOM

As self-described, the Lakota (or Teton Sioux) are a group of Native Americans characterized by their emphasis on ideals such as community, affinity, generosity, cooperation, and strength. The term Lakota roughly translates to "an alliance of people." Traditionally, they are a people strongly motivated by personal responsibility to the whole of society and philosophically wedded to the notion of "affinity," which involves living in harmony with others, having a sense of belonging to one's community, valuing interpersonal relationships, and trusting one another. This manner of living has allowed them to synergize efforts through teamwork and cooperation and achieve great benefits for both the community and its individuals. For the Lakota, each person's acts are often measured in terms of their impact on the entire social unit, the *tiyospaye*, and people within the *tiyospaye* align together and cooperate for the good of all of its members.

Their spirituality and culture are based on the *circle*, in which all of life is connected and the actions of individuals ultimately affect the well-being of the connected. There is a sense of equality among all people and resources are shared freely in both good times and bad. Moreover, the sharing is not just limited to possessions; it also extends to the sharing of emotions such as sympathy, compassion, understanding, kindness, and the sharing of personal time. The Lakota believe that their generous acts and support for each other will make them better people, and also help them build communal harmony. Understanding the significance of the *circle*, one of the most profound symbols in the Lakota culture, is essential to appreciating their shared sense of norms and responsibility.

Lakota Holy Man, Lame Deer, explains that the circle stands for the togetherness of people who sit with one another around a fire, relatives and friends united in peace.⁹ It is for this seemingly endless circle of life that the Lakota sometimes call their existence "the hoop."¹⁰ Even further, the people realize that the circle appears on many things no matter where you look in the world and beyond. The circle is found everywhere --the sun, the moon, the Earth. The seasons follow each other in a perpetual circle, and life itself is a circle, from birth to childhood to adulthood to old age to death, only to have another born to take the place of the one gone.

The symbol of the circle also suggests the concept of family. The traditional Lakota family encompasses virtually all interrelated beings. It includes

⁹ Lame Deer, John (Fire) and Richard Erdoes. 1994. *Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions*, New York: Pocket Books.

¹⁰ The Wild West. 2013. "Native Americans, Lakota: The Circle," <http://thewildwest.org/nativeamericans/nativeamericanreligion/98-lakotaindiansthecircle.html> (accessed February 21, 2014).

extended family - aunts, uncles, grandfathers, grandmothers, cousins and friends that were "made family." So, one is a member of an immediate family, a broader circle of family and the entire nation. Beyond that is the circle of the universe, which includes plants, animals, rocks, stars and all things, which also are considered "family". This circle can be seen as one cohesive, harmonious organism that can be summed up as "life." The phrase "all my relatives" is common and heard often, and explains simply but profoundly the concept of interrelated being. The inclusiveness suggested here represents the known world, particularly the known *connected* world. To couch this concept in a modern day institutional context, the circle would seemingly represent a connected global economy and marketplace. In other words, a world of connected and interdependent relationships that extends far beyond the immediate or near.

Lakota craftsman, teacher and historian Joseph Marshall speaks to the power of identity in the Lakota culture.¹¹ He emphasizes that who and what we are as individuals, as a community, as a society, and as a nation, are the strengths and weaknesses with which we face and live life. And what we contribute to the identity of the whole begins with each of us individually. Our journey toward wisdom begins the moment we are born. Every experience and the consequences we suffer or the rewards we reap shape us into who and what we are. Life itself is a process of curing and hardening. Mothers and fathers and grandparents and everyone who comes into our lives help make us into who and what we become. Marshall describes an upbringing that taught him to pay attention to everyone and everything around him, to experience the tangible in nature, and to understand the journeys we take and the footprints we leave, and the importance of gradually attaining wisdom.

Many feel that Lakota values can apply valuably to anyone.¹² Although these values are fairly extensive, and have been variously articulated, they generally include bravery, generosity, fortitude, wisdom, courage, respect, and others. For example, the recently announced 2013 Artist in Business Leadership award was presented to Gerald Cournoyer, an artist, entrepreneur, trainer and leader.¹³ Cournoyer practices the Lakota values of respect, generosity, wisdom and courage daily and incorporates these values into his work in Studio 35 in South Dakota. Cournoyer acknowledges that respect for the natural laws of

¹¹ Marshall, Joseph M. III. 2005. *Walking with Grandfather: The Wisdom of Lakota Elders*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True, Inc.

¹² Kent, Jim. 2010. "Lakota Values Can Apply to Everyone." *Rapid City Journal*, January 21, 2010.

¹³ First Peoples Fund. 2013. "Walking the Walk: Artist Profile on Gerald Cournoyer," <http://www.firstpeoplesfund.org/news/e-spirit/1212-cournoyer.html> (accessed February 21, 2014).

spirituality goes into all of his created pieces; generosity is lived out by helping emerging artists and training others; wisdom is emphasized in all planning and in training others; and courage encourages artists to take risks and put their work out there. Verbos, Gladstone, and Kennedy present the argument that management education might be enhanced by focusing on four traditional Lakota values (bravery, generosity, fortitude, and wisdom).¹⁴ As some critics have asserted, prevailing values in management education perpetuate self-interested and unethical behaviors, thus becoming complicit in the challenges facing humanity such as environmental degradation, human rights violations, and corruption, among others. Native American values such as generosity, modesty, a spiritual respect for the earth, greater egalitarianism (the circle) all have potential to move management away from rational self-interest and personal achievement to a more virtuous and inclusive circle. These authors suggest that management education could be enriched by increasing cultural intelligence, fostering more citizen entrepreneurship, creating greater respect for diversity, and providing a basis for creating wiser organizational structures and management practices.

Thus, what has served the Lakota well as a society are well accepted personal norms and values, ultimately reflected in an extended set of pro-social behaviors that are reliably predictive, as described in Table 1. In truth, although these values and approach to living in community continue to characterize the North American Lakota, their people struggle today with capitalizing on economic opportunities, resisting damage to their community identity and becoming marginalized in the larger society. Extreme poverty, reliance on the federal government and NGOs, and internal conflict and debate present almost insurmountable challenges to a people whose values seem to contradict all that is required by the mandates of a world economy.¹⁵ Nonetheless, there are successes, as evidenced by educational developments and Lakota business ventures.¹⁶

TABLE 1

¹⁴ Verbos, Amy Klemm, Gladstone, Joe S., and Deanna M. Kennedy. 2011. "Native American Values and Management Education: Envisioning an Inclusive Virtuous circle." *Journal of Management Education* 35(1): 10-26.

¹⁵ Pickering, Kathleen and Benjamin Jewell. 2008. "Nature is Relative: Religious Affiliation, Environmental Attitudes, and Political Constraints on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation." *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture* 2(1): 135-158.

¹⁶ Waldorf Today. 2013. "The Lakota Waldorf School: Our Children Must Walk with the Lakota Language and Lakota Way of Life," <http://www.waldorftoday.com/2012/01/the-lakota-waldorf-school/> (accessed February 21, 2014); Lakota Funds: Investing in the Oyate. 2013. "Our Clients' Success is Our Success," <http://www.lakotafunds.org/success.htm> (accessed February 21, 2014).

Lakota Values and Pro-social Behaviors

Lakota Personal Norms/Values	Lakota Pro-social Behaviors
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Generosity	Resources are taken only as needed and shared liberally.
Courage	Even in combat and warfare, calmness and good judgment in difficult circumstances are earmarks of courage and strong leadership.
Respect	Modesty & restraint are practiced.
Wisdom	Life's gift is wisdom. The Lakota earnestly seek it from the time they are born.
Family	Extended family is cherished. Elderly are respected.
Giving/Sharing	Group accomplishment is emphasized and sharing is liberally extended.
Living in balance with Nature	Nature and its elements are sought to be understood, revered, protected, and learned from. Man coexists with nature and has an equal place in the circle of life.
Spirituality	Faith is understood as a way of life.

Pickering has spent much time with the Lakota of Rosebud and the Pine Ridge Reservations in South Dakota in efforts to better understand this society's resilience and ability to sustain themselves in the face of severe poverty, dramatic changes, and marginalization by the modern economy.¹⁷ Her extensive work with the Lakota and chronicles of their individual and collective stories provide validity to the above stated values and behaviors, but they also point to the disabling effect of modern societal/governmental structural encumbrances, many of which effectively work to make practical application of historical values and traditions difficult, if not impossible. A particular problem has to do with the ecology of the natural world. For the Lakota, spiritual beliefs play a critical role in shaping their modern livelihood which includes their conceptualization of natural resources and their connection to nature. Lakota cultural philosophies define nature as an all-encompassing set of relationships between humans and every other animate and inanimate feature of the surrounding environment, including plants, animals, rocks, and stars. As such, mutual respect and

¹⁷ Pickering & Jewell, 2008.

obligations toward each other are to be observed, even to the point of sacrifice. As Pickering describes, Lakota households have become disconnected from the land through political events, tribal government, and the conflicts that emerge between federal government, the tribal government, and the reservation community. This is only one example of the challenges to Lakota spirituality, belief and life that colonization and politicization have engendered.

Although the Lakota have endured many years of profound change and serious challenges to their faith and lifestyle, these values continue to endure and to guide them philosophically and culturally. Although it must be acknowledged that some Lakota behaviors in modern times deviate from the prescribed cultural norms, particularly given the serious challenges they have faced, nonetheless, much evidence suggests that remarkable individual and collective action that is dedicated to the common good and all of society (“our relations”) springs from the Lakota community of those dedicated through belief and action to common faith and values.¹⁸

PREDICTING PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: THEORETICAL APPROACHES

That personal norms or values, as expressed by religion or spirituality, influence ethical attitudes has long been supported. Emerson & Mckinney suggest that those with intrinsic religious orientation view their faith/religion as central to their existence and this is reflected in all areas of their lives.¹⁹ Weaver and Agle argue that religion affects ethical sensitivity and actions through religious role expectations that have been internalized as a part of one’s self-identity.²⁰ Role expectations become internalized through repeated social interaction and contribute to a person’s self-identity as an adherent of that specific religion. According to Bonhoeffer, the Christian business person chooses right over wrong not because it merits reward, but because it is in the Christian’s *nature* to do so.²¹ Bonhoeffer emphasizes the opportunities for real discipleship that present themselves in a challenging business environment. In a comparable sense, it is

¹⁸ First Peoples Fund. 2013; Kent, 2010; Pickering & Jewell, 2008.

¹⁹ Emerson & Mckinney, 2008.

²⁰ Weaver, G.R. and B. Agle. 2002. “Religiosity and Ethical Behavior in Organizations: A Symbolic Interactionist Perspective.” *Academy of Management Review* 27: 77-97.

²¹ Padelford, Walton. 2011. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Business Ethics*. Mountain Home, Ark: Borderstone Press.

the social and cultural inculcation of spirituality that represents an imbedded nature that influences Lakota beliefs, values, and behaviors.

Others who have addressed this connection include Palmer, who describes personal ethics as an expression of a “hidden wholeness” between a reflective self and the “Other” through dialogic encounters.²² In recognizing and embracing this, personal responsibility is shared with others for creating the external world. Kohlberg suggested that moral development occurs incrementally through levels of achievement, ultimately resulting in self-actualization through autonomous, principled values and behavior.²³ Addressing the influence of dialogue and inquiry, William Isaacs proposed that a “sense of the whole” could be appreciated and reflected upon through an unfolding process of generative dialogue that enables learning together.²⁴ By identifying and removing face-to-face obstacles, and inviting inquiry into the underlying shared field, new interactions and conversations emerge. Adler, the famed Austrian physician and psychotherapist, believed humans to be an indivisible whole, with each person seeing himself connected or associated with the surrounding world.²⁵ He viewed social interest as the measure of personal and communal well-being and emphasized individual contribution to community via cooperation, compassion, and mutual respect.²⁶ Similarly to the Lakota concept of the circle, Adler conceptualized “social feeling” as a community feeling, whereby one feels he or she belongs with others and also has an ecological connection with nature (plants, animals, the crust of the earth) and the cosmos as a whole. While admittedly idealistic, he viewed social interest as the final form of humanity, an imagined state in which all the problems of life are solved and all our relations to the external world rightly adjusted. Some believe these interrelated concepts may have a rebirth as individuals and institutions are responding in greater numbers, in newer ways, and in greater depth to the concept of social responsibility and a shared concern for human

²² Palmer, Parker J. 2000. *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

²³ Kohlberg, Lawrence. 1969. “Stage and Sequence: The Cognitive-Developmental Approach to Socialization.” *Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research*, edited by D.A. Goslin, 347-480. Chicago: Rand McNally.

²⁴ Isaacs, William N. 2001. “Toward an Action Theory of Dialogue.” *International Journal of Public Administration* 24(7-8): 709-748.

²⁵ Orgler, Hertha 1976. “Alfred Adler.” *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 22(1): 67-68.

²⁶ Adler, Alfred, 1938. *Social Interest: A Challenge to Mankind*. London: Faber & Faber; Ansbacher, H.L. 1978. “The Development of Adler’s Concept of Social Interest: A Critical Study.” *The Journal of Individual Psychology* 34:118-151.

values, preservation of the planet for future generations, and creating solutions to social problems.

It thus follows that to some degree, pro-social behavior can be predicted by, or connected to, strongly held values and beliefs. But how can Lakota (or similar) values be linked to modern concepts of business ethics? The argument presented here relies upon Schwartz's norm activation model (NAM) which posits that pro-social behaviors will follow from personal norms, or values, and that these personal norms are activated by key situational variables.²⁷ Moreover, these variables can be conceptualized in modern terms as individuals are moved to adopt new perspectives, become better educated and motivated to action through the institutions they are a part of, as they are influenced by knowledge, media, and inspirational leaders, as the call for citizenship is resonated, as they are compelled by persuasive social movements and recognize opportunities for collective action and solution building, and as modern day heroes are celebrated. This theory has frequently been used to explain helping (or altruistically motivated) behaviors, at both individual and corporate levels.²⁸ Empirical evidence has most often been shown in the context of responsibility toward environmental issues, and others such as blood or bone marrow donations, volunteering, and helping in emergency situations, with a fair amount of empirical support in both environmental and social domains.²⁹

THE NORM ACTIVATION MODEL (NAM)

²⁷ Schwartz, 1977;

²⁸ Steg & de Groot, 2010; Uccello, 2009.

²⁹ Harland, et al., 2007; Liebe, Ulf, Preisendörfer, Peter and Jürgen Meyerhoff. 2011. "To Pay or Not to Pay: Competing Theories to Explain Individuals' Willingness to Pay for Public Environmental Goods." *Environment and Behavior* 43(1): 106-130; Stern, et al., 1999; Wall, Rob, Devine-Wright, Patrick, and Greig A. Mill. 2007. "Comparing and Combining Theories to Explain Pro-Environmental Intentions: The case of Commuting-Mode Choice." *Environment and Behavior* 39(6): 731-753; Zuckerman, M. & H. Reis. 1978. "Comparison of Three Models for Predicting Altruistic Behavior." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 36:498-510; Zuckerman, M. & H. Reis. 1978. "Comparison of Three Models for Predicting Altruistic Behavior." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 36:498-510; Schwartz, Shalom H. and Judith A. Howard. 1980. "Explanations of the Moderating Effect of Responsibility Denial on the Personal Norm-behavior Relationship." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 43:441-446; Schwartz, Shalom and Amit Ben David. 1976. "Responsibility and Helping in an Emergency: Effects of Blame, Ability and Denial of Responsibility." *Sociometry* 39: 406-415.

According to Schwartz and the norm activation model (NAM), pro-social behaviors can be explained by a combination of factors that influence personal norms and reflect individual responsibility arising from feelings of moral obligation.³⁰ The NAM describes a relationship between activators, personal norms, and behavior. Through the activation process, people construct self-expectations (“personal norms”) regarding pro-social behavior which are experienced as feelings of moral obligation. The ‘activation’ variables include: problem awareness, a feeling of responsibility for the negative outcomes of not acting pro-socially, an understanding of what actions are needed, and the recognition that one has the ability to effect a positive outcome. The theoretical model assumes that personal norms reflect moral obligations and, subsequently, personal responsibility through action. This is achieved through a decision making process involving sequential determinants that transform norm-activation into action. The literature provides differing specifications of the model but most adhere to a basic framework that includes awareness of a personal or abstract (such as the environment) need and awareness of a situational responsibility to act toward the fulfillment of that need or take action to affect the consequences of that need. Thus, this theoretical model serves as an interpretive means of linking Lakota (or similar) values to ethically motivated business practice.

The Model

The movement to action process involves four variables, identified as “activators.” These situational factors include *awareness of need*, the extent to which one’s attention is focused on a need; *situational responsibility*, the extent to which one feels responsible for the consequences of that need; *efficacy*, the extent to which actions have been identified that might alleviate the problem; and *ability*, one’s own perception about his/her capability/resources required to constructively act toward the problem and, in essence, provide collective goods.³¹ The theoretical model is highly useful for better understanding personal responsibility, as norm activation depends on ascription of responsibility to self. Further, it aids in understanding the impact of personal responsibility on collective action, as social movements must build support by activating or reshaping personal norms to create feelings of obligation.³²

³⁰ Schwartz, 1977.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Stern, et. al., 1999.

It is a sequential model that describes a relationship between *activators*, *personal norms*, and *pro-social behavior*, shown below in its simplest form (Figure 1).

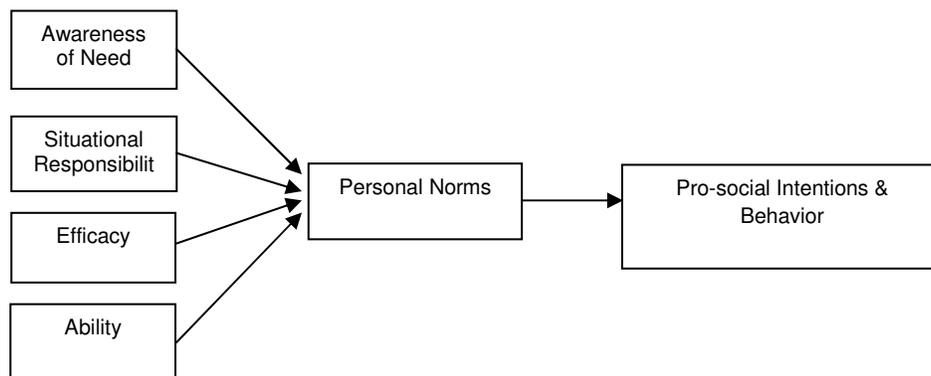


Figure 1. Schematic of the Norm Activation Model (Schwartz, 1977)

NAM Situational Variables: Linking Personal Responsibility & the Lakota

“Our journey toward wisdom begins the moment we are born. Everything and everyone around us builds the foundation for what we will be, who we will become, and how we will interact with the things and beings that will be part of that journey. Each and every experience that occurs, and the consequences we suffer or the rewards we reap, shape us into who and what we are.”

Joseph M. Marshall III

According to Schwartz, individual responsibility may, through socially interested action, ultimately impact collective, or community, action and actually relieve or reduce the scope of some social problems.³³ Schwartz further argues that pro-social behavior will follow from personal norms that reflect feelings of moral obligation to either perform or refrain from specific actions. The four key situational variables theorized to activate personal norms might easily be considered comparable to the values and motivations expressed by the Lakota.

The first variable, awareness of need, or *problem awareness*, is defined as the extent to which someone is aware of the adverse consequences of not acting pro-socially for others or for other things one values. The Lakota recognize the importance of sharing resources for common use and preserving for future

³³ Schwartz, 1977.

generations. This awareness is cultivated over a lifetime as they view the pursuit of wisdom as central to life. A remarkable attribute of the Lakota is their commitment to avoiding harm, to understanding the potential harms or problems of not acting in concert and concern for the *tiyospaye* and for the wider circle of all of life. A parallel may be drawn in today's era of concerns and increased awareness related to existing and potential harm to our biosphere, to the damaging effects of globalization on workers, cultural lifestyles, and the exploitation of humans for economic or political gain.

Second, a situational and *personal responsibility* must be felt that reflects feelings of responsibility for the negative consequences of not acting pro-socially. Lakota values and faith provide a solid identity that guides all elements of life. They also believe that when a law, principle or value is broken, the Sacred Hoop is broken, a consequence that would be destructive to the harmony and peace they enjoy. In like fashion, an increasing number of business corporations today, both large and small, global and local, are responding to the growing expectations of society for business to corroborate its self-interest with a recognition of shared humanity and a dedication to embrace and respond to collective societal concerns.³⁴ A number of efforts to achieve a unified acceptance of common responsibilities can be seen in persuasive forms today. Drafted by representatives from different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world, the United Nations International Declaration of Human Rights provides a common standard of achievements for all peoples and nations. It is a document that promotes universal peace by recognition and responsibility for the rights of all people living on the earth, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, or religion.³⁵ All member nations and global businesses are strongly encouraged to adopt and take responsibility for the rights of all. Similar provocations come from numerous sources, such as the Caux Roundtable Principles for Responsible Business and The Global Compact, all of which serve to articulate and motivate individual and collective responsibility.³⁶

³⁴ See Davis, Keith. 1960. "Can Business Afford to Ignore Social Responsibilities?" *California Management Review* 2(Spring): 70-76; Kanter, Rosabeth Moss. 2011. "How Great Companies Think Differently." *Harvard Business Review* 89(11): 66-78; Kelly, Marjorie & Allen L. White. 2009. "From Corporate Responsibility to Corporate Design: Rethinking the Purpose of the Corporation." *The Journal of Corporate Citizenship* 33: 23-28; Waddock, Sandra. 2005. "Corporate Citizens: Stepping into the Breach of Society's Broken Contracts." *The Journal of Corporate Citizenship*. Autumn: 20-24.

³⁵ The United Nations. 2013. "The United Nations Declaration of International Human Rights," <http://www.un.org/en/rights> (accessed February 21, 2014).

³⁶ Caux Round Table. 1994. "Caux Round Table Principles for Business," <http://www.cauxroundtable.org/index.cfm?menuid=8> (accessed February 21, 2014). ; The United

Third, efficacy, or *identification of actions* needed for positive outcomes is defined as knowing what is needed to relieve the problem or serve the things one values. The Lakota view life as a journey, with each event providing wisdom and experience to facilitate the next. Respect for elders translates into a lifelong learning experience for younger generations. The resources they now call upon come from a wide range of shared wisdom and expanded consciousness, achieved over a history of harsh experiences. Correspondingly, we live now in a world characterized by rapidly expanding knowledge, an information rich connectedness to each other, and one where opportunities for networked, collaborative partnerships are stronger than ever. In contrast to the adversarial relationships that characterized business relationships in previous periods, many are now partnering and collaborating with agencies such as NGOs and interest groups that are attendant to societal concerns and that have resources, contacts, and knowledge to address those problems and to make a positive difference.³⁷ In short, as businesses and institutions, we can learn from each other and pioneer solutions and better practices.

And fourth, *personal ability* must be felt as recognition of one's own ability to provide relief. The Lakota's reverence for the values of generosity, courage, respect, and wisdom serve to empower them in relationships, understanding, and behavior. History has shown them that by preserving the Hoop, then harmony, health, respect, spiritual peace, and positive relationships are the treasured result. Powerfully influenced by these activators, the Lakota are thus strongly motivated morally to behave in ways that are good for all, with positive implications for the social well-being of both individuals and the community. Ability springs from action. A powerful momentum is being seen in the creative efforts of huge international companies to fundamentally transform themselves, stop destruction, and affirmatively address the effects of corporate activity on the planet and its people.³⁸ Companies are finding that they can create "shared value" by combining corporate resources with entrepreneurial approaches to both solve societal problems, thus creating social value, while at the same time creating company value.³⁹

Nations. 2013. "The United Nations Global Compact," <http://www.unglobalcompact.org/> (accessed February 21, 2014).

³⁷ Van Huijstee, Mariëtte and Pieter Glasbergen. 2010. "Business-NGO Interactions in a Multi-Stakeholder Context." *Business and Society Review* 115(3): 249-366.

³⁸ Debold, E. 2005. "The Business of Saving the World." *What is Enlightenment?* 28: 60-91.

³⁹ Porter, M. & Kramer, M. 2011. "Creating Shared Value." *Harvard Business Review*. January-February: 1-17.

Lessons from the Norm Activation Model and the Lakota

Several studies have found support for the Norm Activation Model's ability to predict socially responsible behaviors with significant predictive support for personal norms, awareness of need, and situational responsibility.⁴⁰ American Lakota values and societal norms have been explored here as a way of life that is unique and inspirational, also, one that may be usefully instructive. Given the more recent emergence of a newer paradigm of social awareness and concern, the NAM model is expected to lend theoretical argument and support to this paper's premise that early American Lakota values can be conceptually linked to modern notions of personal and collective responsibility.

Schwartz's activation variables may also be considered in light of modern day situations, issues, and events. As to the first activator, *problem awareness*, modern society has achieved a remarkable connectedness with the impact of rapidly developing information technology, the networking of information and social connections, an instantaneous news cycle, and greater education and awareness of social and environmental problems that span the globe. Such awareness may generally include societal and institutional concerns regarding climate change, human trafficking, geo-political oppression, world hunger, poverty, human rights violations, racism, bullying, religious and other forms of intolerance. Many of these issues are addressed by the United Nations Millennium Development Goals that are garnering institutional and individual attention and action from diverse parties around the globe.⁴¹ Universal values become more evident as we see movement toward a consensus of concern for human rights, environmental sustainability, and concern for those impacted by disaster or geopolitical conflict.

The second activator, *personal responsibility*, is particularly influenced in modern times by the challenges to individual action that emanate from social networking, media, and group or institutional pressures. The call to respond, join with others, and participate in dialogue resounds with many today. Moreover, a wide array of institutions are showing a felt responsibility by responding with enlarged social agendas and multifaceted initiatives; these include particularly business corporations, many that are multinational, and even entire industries.

⁴⁰ Black, J. Stanley, Stern, Paul C., and Julie T. Elworth. 1985. "Personal and Contextual Influences on Energy Adaptations." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 70(1): 3-21.

⁴¹ The United Nations. 2013. "The United Nations Millennium Development Goals," <http://www.un.org/developmentgoals> (accessed February 21, 2014).

Third, *Actions are identified* by numerous opportunities to join non-profits, local organizations, engage in corporate or community sponsored activities, make contributions of financial, service, or in-kind donations. Increasingly, scientists, journalists, representatives of interest groups all search for solutions. Indeed, both socially and economically driven innovation is pioneering many social solutions. In business and industry, best practices are shared; good efforts are honored.

And finally, *personal ability* is empowered through participation and action. Business corporations today are motivating their workforce to give in terms of time, effort, and money, many offering such opportunities during paid workday hours. Many institutions, business and otherwise, are finding collaborative opportunities to address United Nations Millennium Development Goals; reports show that progress is being made in improving education, reducing poverty, and improving hygiene conditions in poor economic areas around the globe. Increasingly, the feeling that one can make a difference is becoming easier with opportunities for association, joining initiatives, and by following others' examples and leads.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

The Norm Activation Model provides an empirically proven framework for predicting pro-social behaviors based on activators such as problem awareness, a sense of personal responsibility, the identification of actions or opportunities, and perceived ability to act. The conceptual rendering developed here showed that the spiritual and philosophical beliefs and motivations of the Lakota could be easily overlaid and understood through this model. Moreover, as the model suggests, the ultimate outcome in terms of behavior that is pro-social can be reliably predicted by the activator variables, or conditions. Considering the Lakota in retrospect, values and beliefs have reliably (for the most part) led to personal and collective responsibility toward the whole of society and life.

Although we live in a very different day and time, and one that is characterized by great diversity, cultural, and religious differences, we may still recognize similarities and opportunities for shaping personal and collective responsibility, or pro-social behaviors and initiatives to address societal problems. While clearly philosophical and aspirational, it is suggested here that the personal norms and moral obligations that characterize the Native American Lakota may be both inspirational and instructive for today's society and institutions and that the activators identified in the NAM model can be similarly applied.

First, greater awareness of our human impact on resources and sustainability for future generations and urgency in the minds of all can be created by those with voices and influence, in order to create a common and forceful call

for problem solutions. Many business corporations through their social responsibility agendas and employee participation have targeted specific areas of need around the globe, such as poverty, hunger, education, sanitation, clean water, technology, and a host of others. In these initiatives, resources are shared, new innovations pioneered, and volunteers mounted to make significant sustainability improvements. Extraordinary empowerment and new awareness of personal ability can be achieved as employees are encouraged (and rewarded) for participation in corporate generated social/sustainable initiatives and programs. Businesses can educate employees, customers, and the general public through their social agendas, social goals, and by creating institutional agendas that bring individuals in. Workers, customers, partners can be engaged by adopting corporate codes of conduct, such as the Caux Business Roundtable Principles, or the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals⁴² Many others--some industry-specific--are also available to guide collective action toward sustainable solutions.

Personal responsibility can rapidly morph into collective responsibility at institutional levels as businesses today can find a plethora of collaborative opportunities, particularly at industry levels and with an ever-expanding network of NGOs that are already informed and dedicated to social issues. Increasingly, today's business institutions can engage in unified and collaborative action with other parties to a wide variety of ways. Companies can get on board with campaigns that defend human rights, support communities, protect our planet, and pioneer better conditions for those in the communities where they take their business.

Business institutions can subscribe to training, offer training, connect with watchdog and activist groups, and support concerted activities and organizations where research and credible voices can have powerful effects. Further, they can engineer new solutions by harnessing competitive competencies in technology and innovation that are directed to environmental, employment, and poverty problems. Finally, they can build values into corporate cultures through recruitment, hiring, human resource management, leadership example, acculturation practices, and company policies. For those in business, many suggest adopting a different logic that is social, that offers a new way of conceiving the firm with a coherent identity that comprises purpose and values.⁴³

As acknowledged, the North American Lakota today struggle to actually live and maintain their spiritual, cultural, and values-based approach to living in a world so dramatically reordered for their society. Yet, anecdotal evidence asserts that traditional values and beliefs still characterize much of Lakota society and the

⁴² cauxroundtable.org, 1994; un.org/millenniumgoals, 2013.

⁴³ Kanter, 2011; Porter & Kramer, 2011.

personal and collective efforts to manifest values through behavior. And clearly, not all business enterprise follows the path outlined above through the activator predictors of the NAM model. Nonetheless, many are so motivated and are seizing opportunities to address a myriad of social problems. The variables that precede the pro-social behaviors of modern companies may not match philosophically those of the North American Lakota but they can be shown through the NAM model to reflect some common traits. The modern dictum that corporations be good citizens and act socially responsible represents a direction that begins to analogously mirror the societal values and moral obligations of the Lakota. Perhaps this provides some hope of a sustainable path forward.