

Socially Conscious Leadership



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Our acknowledgements go to Professor Adil Khan (Academic Advisor), and the United Nations Office Of Disaster Risk Reduction (Industry Partner), specifically to Mr. Numayr Chowdhury and Mr. Marco Toscano-Rivalta, whom are both based in Geneva

Background

On the global scale, corporate and political leaders place greater prioritization on economic growth, and overshadow issues of social justice in their communities. As a result, both inequality and the wealth gap increase, and those at the bottom of the ladder continue to suffer (Khan, 2015). There has been a significant need for change, and a shift in leadership influences and structural inequalities, as the fate of entire communities and nations can often rely on such leadership influences. There has been a call for the reconceptualization of leadership to form a new model that will create long term sustainable changes that benefit the wellbeing of society as a whole.

Research Aims

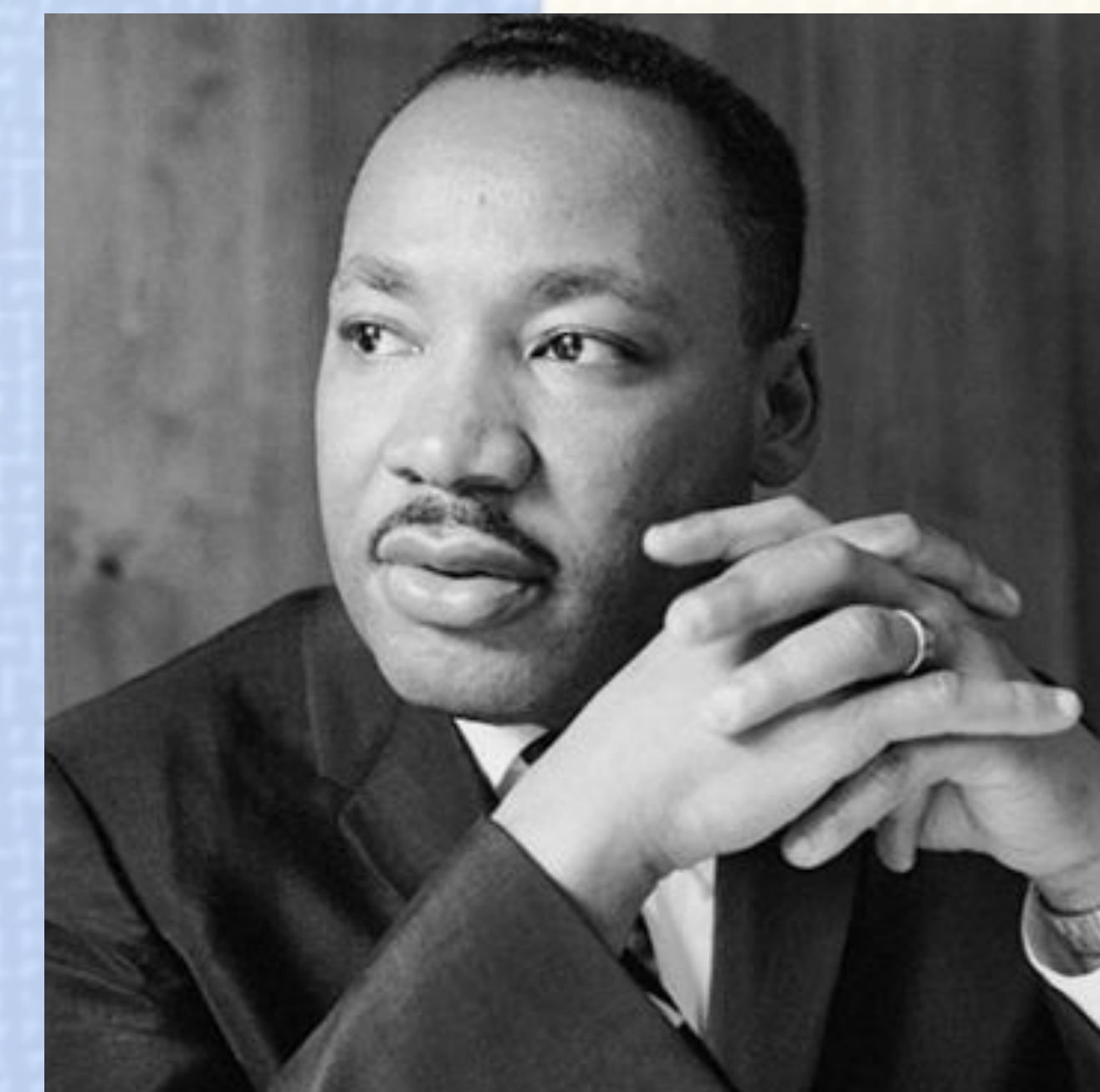
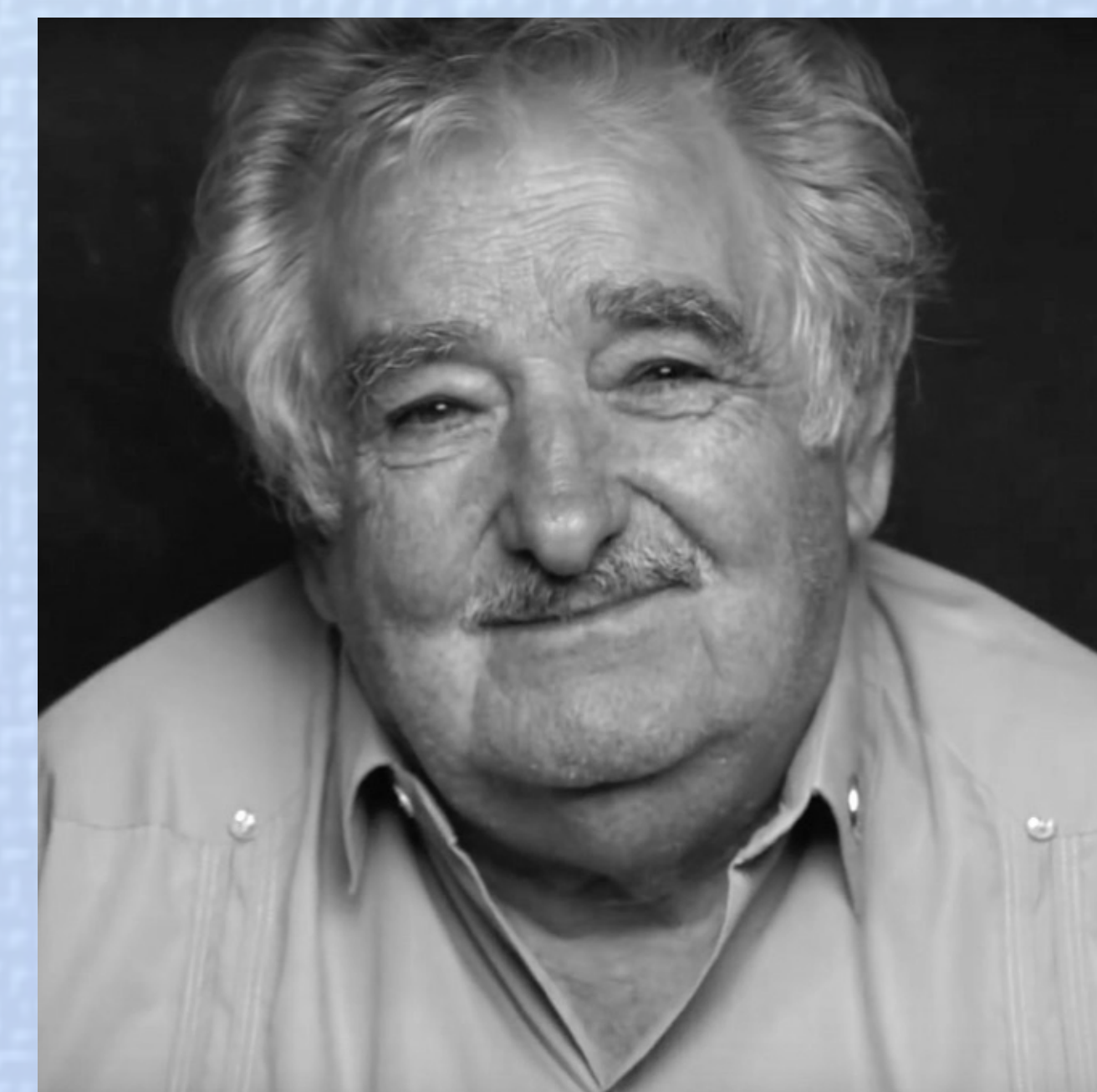
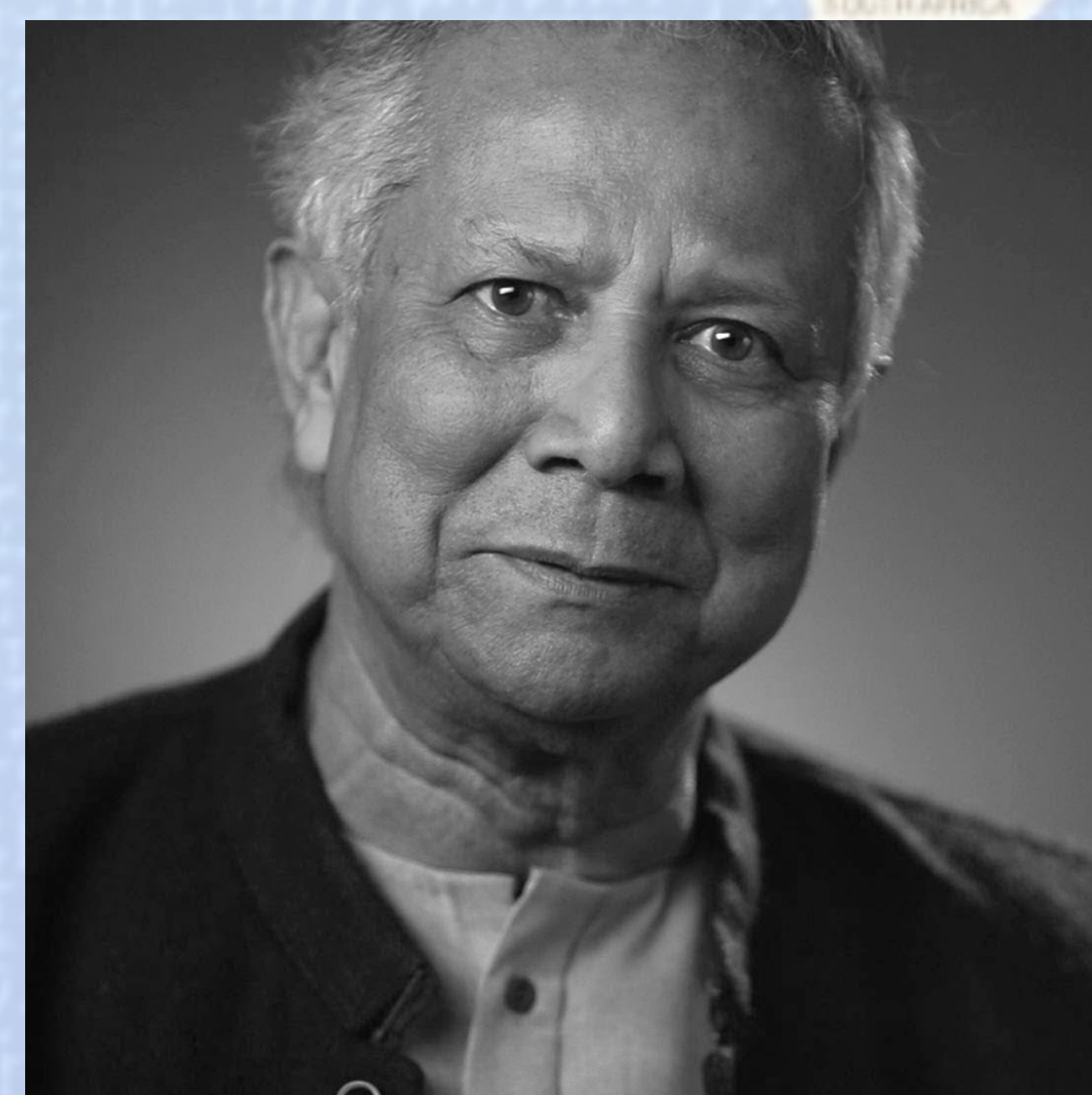
There is an evident shift in values and attitudes from upholding ethical and social standards, to profit maximization and economic growth in leadership. Additionally, very little research has been conducted to link social and ethical considerations to the community as a whole within leadership.

With this, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction has acknowledged the importance of social consciousness in leaders. This study was intended to address the lack of including social consciousness in leadership models.

The main aim of this research is to conduct a systematic study of social consciousness in leadership, and use this to create a conceptual framework of Socially Conscious Leadership (SCL). Additionally, this research aims to develop a clear definition of SCL, aims to identify key attributes of SCL's, and aims to develop guidelines for building capacity in future SCL's.

Research Questions

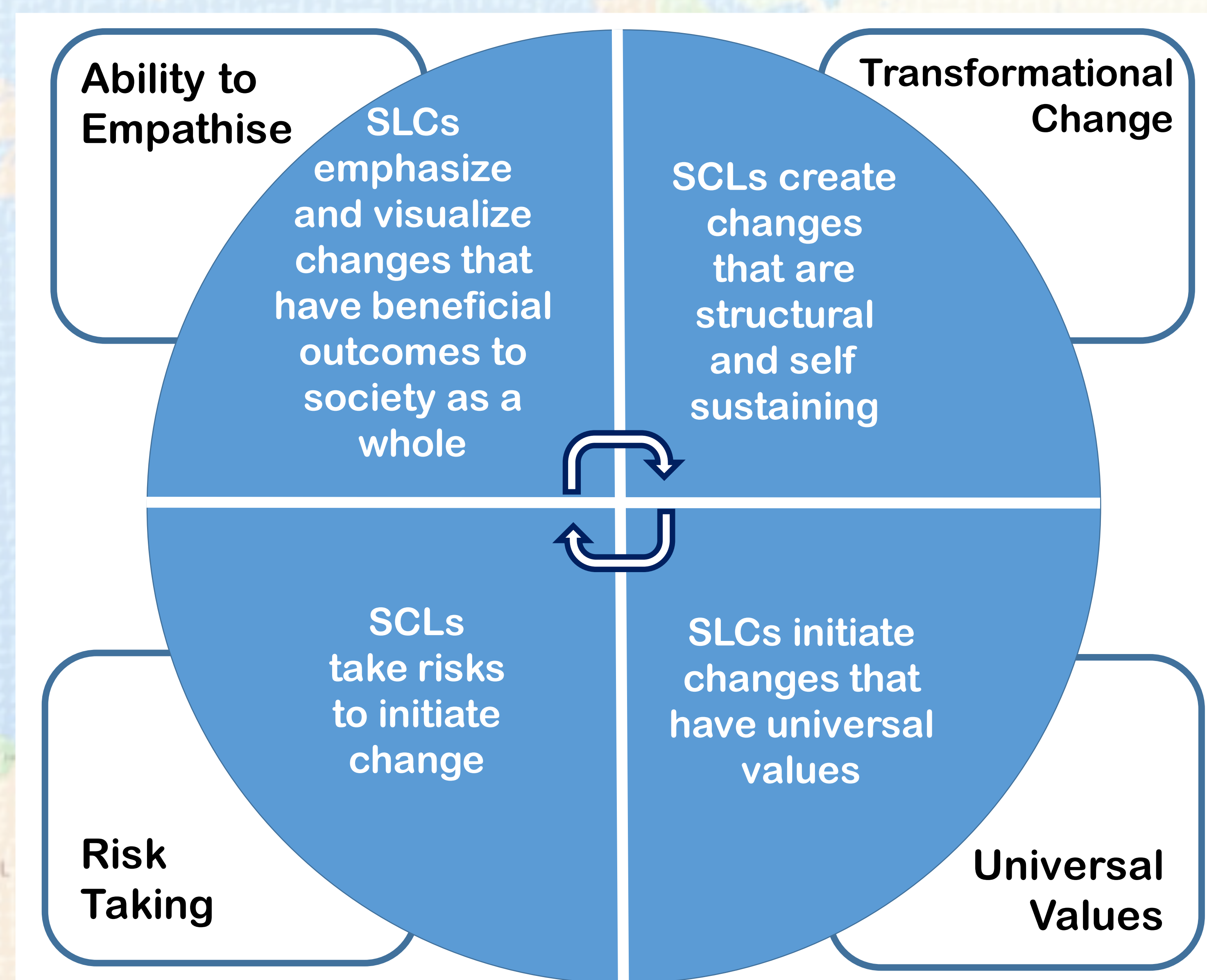
1. What is a Socially Conscious Leader?
2. What are the different socially conscious leadership styles and approaches?
3. What are the individual (motivations, ambitions, characteristics, qualities, challenges) and structural (socio-political-economic) elements that leads to the emergence of a socially conscious leader?
4. Based on the lessons learnt from Socially Conscious Leaders, what key features need to be highlighted to undertake capacity building in the values of SCL in the community?



Findings

This research has enabled us to develop a clear definition of Socially Conscious Leadership. It can be defined as 'an ethically based leadership model that integrates values and outcomes by creating sustainable and structural long-term changes that benefit those affected. Additionally, socially conscious leaders attempt to honor and uphold the moral duties owed to the people affected by their changes' (Caldwell et. al. 2012).

Through this research, we have developed a conceptual framework of SCL, which encompasses four key elements, including Universal Values, Ability To Empathise, Transformational Change and Risk Taking.



Collaborating our conceptual framework and definition of SCL, we chose five case study examples of socially conscious leaders, of whom their actions are represented in both. These Socially Conscious Leaders are Nelson Mandela, Wangari Maathai, Muhammad Yunus, Jose Mujica, and Martin Luther King Jr.- all key figures in their respective right, whom have created sustainable and structural changes within their communities and nations.

Methods

PHASE ONE

- To conduct a literature review and application of previous leadership theories and examine other leadership approaches, styles and workable theories.

- Use this literature to develop a practical definition of social consciousness, and create a conceptual framework that identifies the key characteristics of a SCL.

PHASE TWO

- Use the developed conceptual framework and identify socially conscious leaders, of whom their actions are represented within the framework.

- Identify specific characteristic, motivations, behaviors and attitudes, that are consistent with socially conscious actions, and use this to identify political, economic and environmental leaders, whom have contributed to positive structural changes throughout the world.

Benefits of the Research

This developed framework and definition of socially conscious leadership has the ability to affect communities and nations, both directly and indirectly through an entirely new and refined perspective of looking at the world, and acting in accordance to ethics, morality and values of the whole community. The primary groups that will benefit from this research include:

Current Leaders can refine their attitudes and approaches to the way they lead communities and societies through additional knowledge that would be beneficial in their current roles.

Future Leaders will be inspired to adopt leadership characteristics that follow with the framework, and this will enable these leaders to make future decisions based on these benefits.

Disadvantaged Minorities will benefit most from this research, as the entirety of social consciousness aims to create sustainable and structural changes for those whom are disadvantaged, oppressed or limited in their capacity to make change themselves.

General Public will be instilled with a new perspective of both leading and living through social consciousness, as this framework has the capacity to revolutionize leadership in the educational system, political arena and corporate world, at local, national and global levels.