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# Developing Socially Responsible Behaviour in Managers

Experimental Evidence of the Effectiveness of Different Approaches to Management Education\*

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Most of the discussion by academics and practitioners regarding CSR (corporate social responsibility) pertains to the organisation. Little research has explored how to develop socially responsible behaviour (SRB) at the individual level. As part of a large-scale research project, RESPONSE,<sup>†</sup> four companies took part in randomised controlled experiments to test the effectiveness of different approaches to management education designed to develop such socially responsible behaviour. The data provides evidence that traditional approaches to management education are not effective in changing decisions made regarding CSR dilemmas. Approaches aimed at personal development, such as training techniques of relaxation and mental silence meditation, even without explicit reference to CSR, show strong impact on changes in the decisions made (SRB) and specific psychological characteristics of managers (affect, values and cognitive reasoning, referred to as 'social consciousness') that enhance the emergence of socially responsible behaviour. Implications are drawn for a better understanding of learning processes connected to CSR, as well as for the design of management education in this specific domain.

- Corporate social responsibility
- Socially responsible behaviour
- Training
- Management development
- Meditation

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**T**HERE IS A GROWING DEMAND (as well as supply) for courses designed to address topics such as ethics or corporate social responsibility in business schools and company universities. However, the evidence on the actual impact of such courses on changes in decision-making or on leadership behaviour has yet to be demonstrated (Mirvis 2008). Furthermore, despite the growing trend in management education towards personal development (e.g. via coaching) and explicitly addressing corporate as well as personal values (values-based management), empirical validation of the effectiveness of these approaches is lacking.

In a special issue addressing ethics and social responsibility in management education (*Academy of Management Learning & Education* 2006), the editors Giacalone and Thompson argue for an approach that reflects a more human-centred (HCWV) rather than organisation-centred world-view (OCWV). Based in positive psychology (Snyder and Lopez 2002) and positive organisational scholarship (Cameron *et al.* 2003), there is a growing belief among management scholars and practitioners in the need to focus on values and traits that are associated with authentic leadership (Luthans 2002) and improving the human condition: forgiveness, hope, altruism, gratitude, transcendence as well as concern for community, quality of life and social problems (post-materialistic values, Inglehart 1997; see also Giacalone and Thompson 2006: 270).

In the same issue, Kim Cameron (2006: 318) argues that discussion in ethics (and, more generally, management theory) primarily addresses avoiding harm (risk reduction). He argues that standards that avoid harm are not the same as standards that lead to doing good and therefore need to be supplemented with standards for virtuousness. Moreover, he notes that there is 'almost total negligence' in addressing topics of virtue, compassion and integrity in management education. Moberg (2006) argues that ethics can be considered (as did the ancient Greeks) to be an expression of personal virtue rather than application of principles (see also Solomon 1992). This implies that management education, especially regarding difficult ('touchy') subjects such as ethics and social responsibility, needs to focus more on personal development and to find ways to include innovative and even aspirational ideas (Waddock 2006).

To answer the question of how to develop socially responsible behaviour in managers, the key distinction seems to be between building **social awareness** and developing **social consciousness**.

Social awareness can be accomplished through experiential learning: for example, community involvement projects (Mirvis 2008). Building awareness can also be developed in classroom lectures, via declarative knowledge ('know-that': e.g. 'this is the definition of corporate social responsibility and this is what firms should be doing to be considered "socially responsible"'). More difficult, but still feasible, is the transfer of procedural knowledge on socially responsible behaviour ('know-how': e.g. 'let us discuss how one could deal with these ethical dilemma situations, what procedures might be helpful, how one should approach the decision process', for example via the case method).

What is missing, however, is the integration of the so-called 'know-why', the (often implicit and deeper) understanding of the impact of specific events or courses of action, in the design and execution of educational interventions. For this reason, management education needs to explicitly address personal traits and values (social consciousness) to foster a better understanding of why and how specific decisions and actions (i.e. socially responsible behaviour, SRB) emerge. In this way 'who we are' determines 'what we do', or in the words of Jim March (1994) 'what would a person like me do in a situation like this?' (The logic of appropriateness versus the logic of consequences.) In other words, what we do not know is how SRB becomes embedded in one's identity, and in that way becomes the *reflexive* response (moral habit, Haidt 2001).

The fundamental problem, we argue, lies in the assessment of the relative effectiveness of the various existing pedagogical approaches in developing socially responsible behaviour. Given the continuing spate of corporate scandals, business schools and management education have come under increasing attack for promoting assumptions regarding the nature of mankind (*Homo economicus*) and free market ideologies (Ghoshal 2005; Mintzberg 2005). Research conducted by the Aspen Institute (2001, 2003) has shown, for example, that, while MBA students in the US believe that corporate values are essential for effective performance, their own values become less idealistic (e.g. reduced sensitivity towards social and environmental issues) by the second year of their MBA programme.<sup>1</sup>

In-company programmes do not fare any better. Data from the RESPONSE project survey of about 800 managers indicates that having attended in-company corporate social responsibility (CSR) training programmes produces little impact on decisions taken in scenarios involving social responsibility. This result points to an acute need for academic research to address the relative effectiveness of different approaches to management education with regard to developing SRB: the more traditional, classroom-based approach or that devoted to personal development, using introspective techniques.

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## Socially responsible behaviour

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CSR has been primarily discussed at the organisational level of analysis. As defined by the European Commission: 'Corporate social responsibility is a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis' (CEC 2006).

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<sup>1</sup> Although more recent surveys show some signs of improvement and other studies find no differences between business and other students.

Nevertheless this is only achieved through the decisions made by individuals within these organisations, be they managers or employees. However, little research has been conducted at the individual level of analysis. Crilly *et al.* (2008) have defined socially responsible behaviour as: ‘discretionary decisions and actions taken by individuals in organisations to enhance *societal* well-being (*do good*) or to avoid harmful consequences for society (*do no harm*)’ (see also Schneider *et al.* 2004).

This notion is linked to other forms of pro-social behaviour in organisations (Brief and Motowidlo 1986), organisation citizenship behaviour (Organ 1988), ethical and moral managers (Trevino 1986), but remains distinctive in its focus on the benefit to constituents external to the conventional boundaries of the organisation, such as local communities, special interest groups or broader global concerns (e.g. environment, health). Based on the received literature and on the proposed definition of SRB, Crilly *et al.* (2008) identified psychological antecedents that are considered likely to encourage socially responsible behaviour. These antecedents—cognition, values and affect—are thus considered to be the core elements of **social consciousness**.

## Cognition

Much of the research on the characteristics of ethical and moral managers has focused on cognitive aspects such as moral reasoning (Trevino 1986). Kohlberg (1984) proposed a five-stage model of moral development in children which has subsequently been applied to managers. According to this stage model, moral reasoning progresses from concern for rewards or punishment, promoting self-interest, social and professional norms (reputation), to higher order principles, such as fairness and justice. In taking decisions when faced with moral dilemmas, what is considered to be important is the reasoning and not the decision *per se*. Thus the decisions taken regarding CSR can be based on legal, economic, reputation or moral rationale (Carroll 1979), or on economic versus social decision criteria (Inglehart 1997).

The emphasis on moral reasoning has been criticised for not including other principles such as caring and compassion (Gilligan 1982), for being weakly related to behaviour (Ryan 2001) and as an overly rational process (i.e. conscious or controlled). More recently emphasis has been placed on the role of moral intuition such that decisions are taken in a more automatic or reflexive manner, based on values and feelings (Haidt 2007; Sonenshein 2007). A meta-analysis indicates that ethical behaviour rather than intention is more strongly related to personality, organisational and issue characteristics supporting the notion of automatic versus controlled, or ‘ethical impulse’ rather than ‘ethical calculations’ (Kish-Gephart *et al.* 2010).

## Values

Values are preferences indicating what is considered to be important (Rokeach 1973). A famous study by England (1975) revealed different values (pragmatic versus moral) in managers across many countries. Schwartz (1992) has identified a set of values reflecting two core dimensions: self-transcendence versus self-enhancement and openness to change versus conservatism. Self-transcendence includes benevolence and universalism (concern for others both near and far) and is specifically relevant to SRB compared with self-enhancement, which includes achievement, power and hedonism (focus on self-interest). Prior research has demonstrated self-transcendence to be related to environmentally responsible behaviour (Egri and Herman 2000).

## Affect

There is an extensive literature on the impact of positive affect on well-being, decision-making (Isen 2001), organisation citizenship (George and Brief 1992) and pro-social behaviour (Brief and Motowidlo 1986). Indeed much of the emphasis on positive psychology and positive organisational scholarship evolved from this research. Fredrickson (2001), in line with her 'broaden and build theory', has demonstrated empirically that positive affect broadens the scope of attention, cognition and action and thus builds physical and social resources. In this way, positive affect would likely facilitate SRB as it would provide encouragement to pay attention to larger concerns (reduce tunnel vision), engage in helping behaviour and develop creative solutions.

Positive and negative affect are considered to be psychological traits (dispositional) and distinguished from emotions which are considered to be time-limited reactions to specific events. Negative affect, such as shame and guilt (or so-called moral emotions; see Tangney 1991), are also considered to be linked to socially responsible behaviour. Feelings of guilt may be related to not living up to internal standards and may lead to efforts to make restitutions for wrongdoing (Tangney 1998). Feelings of shame are more related to not living up to external standards, and subsequent concern for reputation (Eisenberg 2000).

Empirical evidence from the RESPONSE project web-survey data has validated the relationship of social consciousness and SRB (Crilly *et al.* 2008). The survey of 643 middle managers in five multinational corporations demonstrated the relationship of cognition, values and affect on decisions taken in SRB-related scenarios. In particular, self-transcendence values (universalism and benevolence) and positive affect increase the propensity to engage in SRB, as do moral and reputation-based rationale. Furthermore, values and affect appear to shape cognitive reasoning, supporting the notion of SRB as an 'impulse' rather than 'calculation'. Despite these encouraging results, this analysis is cross-sectional and does not directly measure the impact of training techniques on the development of *social consciousness* (SC) and *socially responsible behaviour* (SRB). That is what we aim to do in the present study, focusing on a limited subset of the training approaches available.

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## Different approaches to developing social consciousness

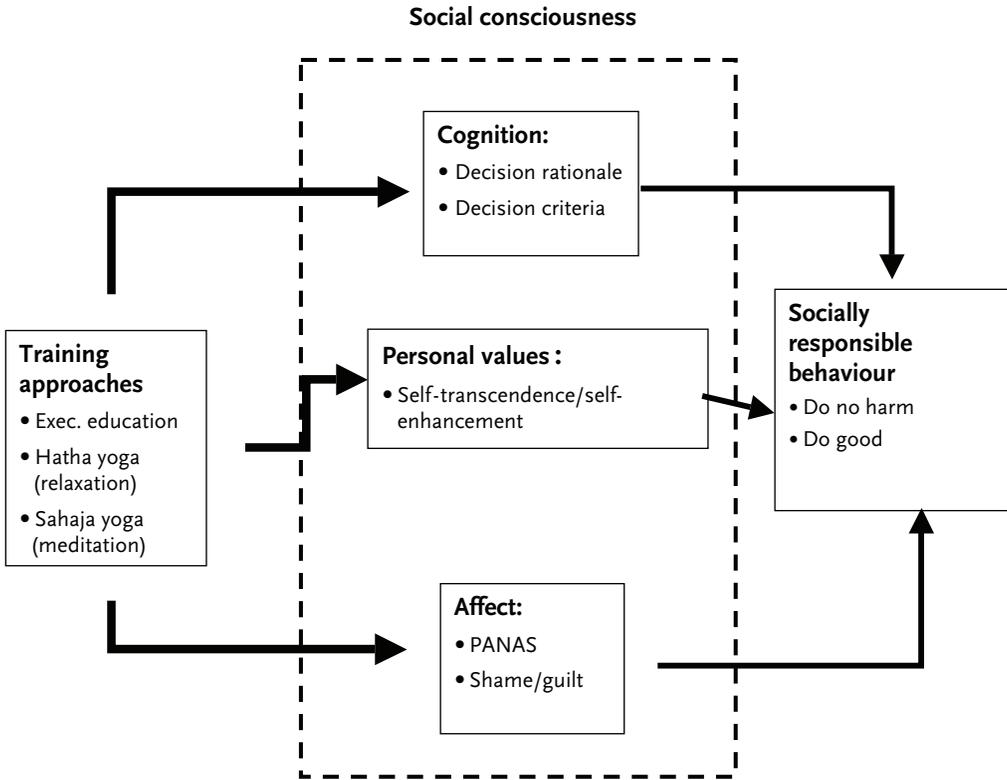
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Different approaches to training are likely to have different impact on levels of social consciousness as shown in Figure 1.

As mentioned above, most standard executive programmes aim to raise awareness of CSR. **Social awareness** arises from deliberate knowledge transfer and translates into behaviour through deliberate action. **Social consciousness**, we argue, is fundamentally different from awareness, even though the two terms are often used interchangeably in normal parlance. Developing social consciousness is thought to enhance socially responsible behaviour in a more reflexive rather than reflective manner.

Social awareness is most often achieved through cognitive training (typically classroom experience) by raising the issues related to CSR and discussion of possible responses. Such training is usually delivered through standard pedagogical approaches in the context of management development programmes, and relies on a wide variety of techniques ranging from reading and lecturing (at one extreme of lower engagement levels) to case analyses, group discussions, games and computer simulations (at the other extreme).

**Figure 1** DIFFERENT TRAINING APPROACHES TO DEVELOPING SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOUR



Community involvement programmes may also raise social awareness (Mirvis 2008). These types of activity also appear to promote team building and strengthen organisational identification. For example, IBM’s corporate citizenship group sends teams of employees to Ghana to help local businesses or to Turkey to help entrepreneurs as a management development exercise for high potentials (Deutsch 2008). However, the extent to which exposure to the negative consequences of corporate behaviour, or to social maladies in general, can affect the psychological antecedents (cognition, values and affect) and thus the enactment of SRB in a consistent manner, is not clear. Experience alone, without deeper introspection, might have limited impact on developing social consciousness and SRB.

Even introspective and personal development approaches, such as coaching or 360 degree feedback processes, designed to encourage managers to become more in touch with their own ways of being and their relationships with others through *reflection*, or conscious cognitive understanding, may be limited. We argue that the development of social consciousness involves changes in more deeply rooted psychological characteristics, and a complex interaction of cognition, values and affect, such that socially responsible behaviour becomes more ‘automatic’ (reflexive) rather than deliberate or controlled. For this reason we suggest that training in techniques of meditation may have a more lasting impact.

## Why meditation?

In its traditional form, meditation is designed to reach a state where (conscious) cognitive activity is significantly reduced, approaching the experience of mental silence or 'thoughtless awareness' (Neki 1975). The neurophysiological and clinical consequences of meditation practice have been studied with increased interest and frequency in the medical literature, with increasing consensus on a few fundamental results (Rubia 2009). First, the neural activation patterns during meditation are distinguished from simple relaxation as well as from sleep or drowsiness, in that the individual is highly aware of his or her surrounding conditions, yet the undesired internal mental dialogue (thoughts arising and dissipating) is significantly reduced.

Second, meditative states have been shown to elicit distinctive activation patterns in brain-imaging studies (as well as subjective experience) of positive emotions such as joy, compassion and bliss (Aftanas and Golocheikin 2001). Third, meditation practice produces a pattern of increased capacity to shift sustained attention to internal emotions or thoughts such that concentration and decision-making processes are enhanced (Hoelzel *et al.* 2007). Lastly, long-term changes in (presumably stable) traits, such as heightened resilience to extreme emotional stimuli (both positive and negative) have been documented in studies comparing neural activation patterns between experienced and novice meditators (Aftanas and Golocheikin 2005). Also indicative is the finding that experienced meditators show 'short-circuit' (i.e. instinctive) connections for positive emotions, even before they started meditating (Cahn and Polich 2006). Furthermore, long-time meditators have been found to have high and stable levels of neurochemicals, which play an important role in inducing positive affect (dopamine, see Kjaer *et al.* 2002), in mood stabilisation and resistance to stress (serotonin and melatonin, see Solberg *et al.* 2000, 2004a, b) and in lower levels of negative affect and depression. Together with inducing positive affect and enhancing the capacity to instinctively monitor internal thoughts and emotions, meditation can strengthen emotional resilience and produce stable, long-term, evolutionary changes in cognition, affect and values (Schwartz and Begley 2002).

According to the subjective experience of practitioners, meditation results in a meta-cognitive shift wherein one's own thoughts, feelings and actions are observed as a detached witness and can thus be dealt with in a more effective manner. When this state is routinised and integrated with normal mental and physical activity, practitioners report not only a deeper understanding of one's own 'way of being', but also the emergence of significant and lasting behavioural changes. The heightened positive affect contributes to more instinctive caring and compassionate behaviour even towards people outside their immediate circle of relations. Moreover, the higher levels of resilience to stressful events and emotionally charged stimuli might also afford a better appreciation of the long-term consequences of external events and of one's own eventual responses, thereby improving the 'sustainability' of individual decisions and behaviours.

Finally, the self-monitoring capacity developed via meditation practice might be particularly useful in complex ethical dilemma situations or when faced with strong pressures to act in ways that are not aligned with one's own values and even identity. It is precisely in those circumstances, so frequent in organisational contexts, that managers practising meditation might react differently in making decisions involving difficult trade-offs and conflicting stakeholder demands. If these decisions are informed by greater care and compassion, by a better appreciation of long-term consequences to themselves and to others, and by stronger alignment with one's own espoused values and beliefs, then one could expect more socially responsible behaviour to occur.

More and more top quality business schools and organisations all over the world are developing management training approaches which integrate, to varying degrees, learning one or more types of introspective and/or meditation practice. For instance, INSEAD's executive education has been offering, since 2000, an executive development programme (Managing Your Self) centred on meditative practices. The same year, the Academy of Management's newly created division on Management of Spirituality and Religion brought together instructors and scholars from all over the world who have been experimenting with the integration, in a wide variety of management courses at all levels, of different types of meditative practice. More recently, the Wharton school's MBA programme has started to offer a non-credit course for incoming first-year students on personal development, based, among others, on introspective and meditative techniques.

At the same time, many corporations (e.g. Microsoft, IBM, Shell and Unilever, to name a few) and institutions (e.g. the World Bank) have also been experimenting with internal management development programmes based on introspective and meditative practice. McKinsey & Co., the leading strategy consulting firm, has been investing in the development of leadership coaching processes based on the impact of meditative practice on the mental effectiveness of corporate leaders.

Altogether, the considerations made above appear to offer sufficient support for the hypothesis that we are interested in testing through appropriate experimental designs. In the next section, we describe the research experiments we conducted to test the hypothesised effect and assess the robustness of meditation *vis-à-vis* other training interventions. The experiments follow established research design procedures in medical science and leverage a range of approaches from purely cognitive to deeply introspective practices, such as meditation.

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## Methodology

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Four in-company 'learning' experiments were designed and executed to assess the effectiveness of different training approaches on the development of social consciousness (SC) and socially responsible behaviour (SRB). In this section, we present the measurements conducted before and after each training intervention, the nature of the settings and of the interventions, and the design executed in each setting.

## Measurements

The assessment of the effectiveness of the training interventions was carried out via a web-based questionnaire, which assembled several existing scales (in part or in total) that have been validated to test the theoretical variables in the model described above. Table 1 summarises the theoretical constructs and the scales utilised for their operationalisation. The 63-item survey took about 30 minutes to complete.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The questionnaire itself is available for consultation. Please send request to Maurizio.Zollo@unibocconi.it.

**Table 1** MEASUREMENTS OF SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOUR

Construct	Components	Test	Psychological scales
Socially responsible behaviour		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decision dilemma scenarios</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multidimensional ethics scale (MES) (Reidenbach and Robin 1991)</li> </ul>
Social consciousness	Cognitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rationales for choice on decision dilemmas</li> <li>Criteria for daily decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MES (see above)</li> <li>World Values Survey (WVS) (Inglehart and Baker 2000)</li> </ul>
	Personal values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-transcendence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schwartz 1992</li> </ul>
	Affect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive and negative affect</li> <li>Moral emotions (guilt, shame)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) (Watson <i>et al.</i> 1988)</li> </ul>
Control		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anxiety and stress levels</li> <li>Demographics: age, gender, religion, culture, job, previous training, company culture, geography</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State trait anxiety inventory (STAI) (Spielberger 1970)</li> </ul>

Socially responsible behaviour was measured by responses to four decision scenarios adopted from the MES (multidimensional ethics scale developed by Reidenbach and Robin (1990); see Appendix). Respondents were presented with a scenario involving, for example, the promotion of a kitchen appliance that had not been thoroughly tested, and were informed regarding the decision taken. They were then asked what they would have done and why, and what their boss and peers would do. In addition, the different rationales to motivate their decision were also adopted from the MES (e.g. economic, legal, reputational, moral). Furthermore, managers were asked to indicate their criteria for making decisions in their day-to-day activities (e.g. social welfare vs. economic profit, short term vs. long term, internal vs. external constituents, taken from World Values Survey, Inglehart and Baker 2000).

Values of self-transcendence and self-enhancement were measured using Schwartz 1992. Affect was measured by items adopted from the PANAS standardised scale (Watson *et al.* 1988) on the basis of the extent to which each emotion has been experienced during the previous three weeks. As emotions are considered to be specific to events or situations and time limited, the three-week period indication was designed to measure affect, which is more diffused and considered dispositional.

## Research settings

Four companies from three sectors—natural resources, information technology and pharmaceuticals—participated in different, independent, experimental designs. Three of the companies were also participants in the larger RESPONSE project, whereas a fourth joined the study specifically to participate in the experiments. Employees in each setting were first introduced to the project and the terms of involvement. Participation in the experiment was voluntary and those who opted to participate were asked to commit to a six-week training programme. The group assignment (intervention or control groups) was randomised to control for individual differences and attenuate self-selection biases. Each company was supplied with aggregate results of the tests; individual results were strictly confidential and not disclosed to the company.

Table 2 summarises the characteristics of the four settings, the logic of each design and the number of participants that completed both the pre- and post-intervention measurements.

**Table 2** RATIONALE AND SCOPE OF THE FOUR EXPERIMENTAL SETTINGS

Industry	Type of intervention	Scope of intervention	Objective	No. of participants
Pharma	1 shot controlled	1 country: managers across all functions	Pilot: control for cultural differences and test for different functional background	10
IT #1	1 shot controlled	6 countries worldwide: all CSR professionals	Pilot: control for professional profile and test for cultural differences	8
IT #2	2 samples, 2 step (crossover) between them	10 European countries: learning professionals	Control for professional profile; test for cultural differences and different group size	44
Natural resources	3 samples, 1 shot Passive and active control	1 country: young 'high-potential' managers	Control for country; all alumni of company training on CSR; control for relaxation training (hatha yoga)	31
Total				93

## Experimental protocols

Each experiment was conducted under a controlled but different design in order to test for various conditions, such as cultural differences and the professional and functional background of participants, and to accommodate the particular circumstances of each company.

### Pharma and IT#1

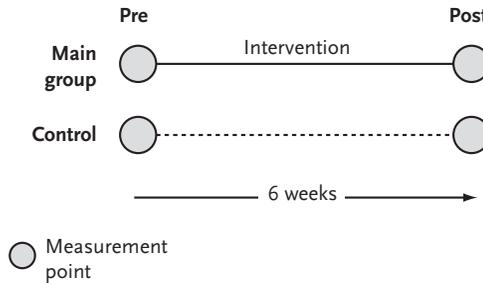
Participants from the Pharma company were based in one country but came from different professional backgrounds and underwent the intervention as a group. Participants from the IT#1 company were based in six countries worldwide (Brazil, Costa Rica, Malaysia, Romania, Belgium, France) and attended the meditation training programme either as individuals or in small groups of two or three individuals. The IT#1 participants were all CSR professionals, most likely starting with a greater awareness and understanding of the issue, making it even more unlikely to observe shifts in decision before and after the training interventions.

A 'one-shot' design was used at both the Pharma and IT#1 companies as shown in Figure 2. Participants were randomly put into one of two groups, of which the main group completed a programme of meditation training over a period of six weeks. The six-week programme was based on a 'mental silence' mediation technique called Sahaja Yoga, adapted for the corporate environment.<sup>3</sup> The programme called for two 45-minute

<sup>3</sup> These specialised trainings were developed and delivered by Impact ([www.impact-training.at](http://www.impact-training.at), accessed 29 September 2010), one of the consortium members of the RESPONSE research project.

sessions per week at the office, for a total of nine contact hours, plus recommended daily home practice. The sessions aimed at developing social consciousness thought to be conducive to socially responsible behaviour, but without explicit, cognitive awareness of doing so. In fact, *no discussion of CSR was allowed* in the intervention group. The second group was put on a 'waiting list', asked nonetheless to complete the pre- and the post-intervention measurements, and thus acted as a 'passive' control group.

**Figure 2** 'ONE-SHOT' EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN (PHARMA AND IT#1 COMPANIES)



## IT#2

Participants from the IT#2 company were based in ten countries in Europe and were all internal coaches to managers in this large multinational company.<sup>4</sup> Participants in each location were randomly assigned to one of two groups. Both groups completed the measurement survey and then attended a one-day CSR training session presented in the form of a discussion and lecture provided by one of the most reputable executive education instructors in the CSR field in Europe.

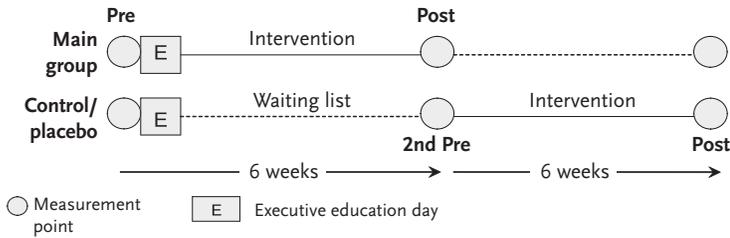
Participants in the first group then completed the same type of meditation training described for the first experiment design (see above) while the second group acted as the passive ('waiting room') control. After the intervention in group 1 ended, and a second round of measurement took place for both groups, the second group underwent the meditation-based intervention as shown in Figure 3. At the end of the intervention in the second group, a final round of measurement took place for both groups. Each participant, thus, completed three measurement surveys. The experimental design thus controls for the differential impact of the meditation training *vis-à-vis* standard executive education training.

## Natural resources

Participants from this company in the natural resources sector were drawn from a uniform professional profile of young managers who had attended the company's internal management development programme within the previous two years; this included a full day of standard executive education training on CSR/sustainable development. These 31 managers were all based in the same country. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three groups. The first group attended the same meditation training as in the other experiments. The second group attended a parallel training of Hatha Yoga, which focused on relaxation and stress-release techniques. This group functioned

<sup>4</sup> Participants were therefore starting with a better understanding of the process, although not necessarily the content, of the learning programmes proposed. This works against the hypothesis that a meditation-based coaching programme could be effective in shifting participants' decision patterns and (even more so) psychological profiles.

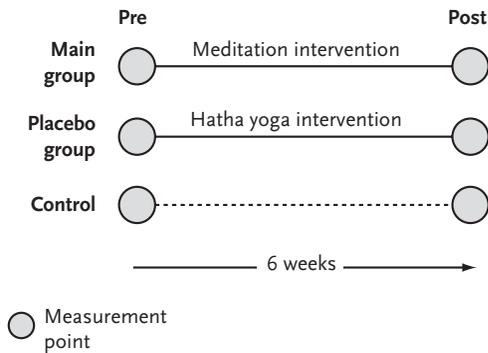
**Figure 3** 'CROSS-OVER' EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN (IT#2)



as the 'active control', to control for 'placebo' or 'Hawthorne' effects, since the two 'yoga' programmes were non-distinguishable from the participants' point of view and produced the same perception of being part of a scientific study and observed in their behaviour. A third group acted as a passive (waiting list) control and provided a baseline measure of pre- and post-experiment tests without experiencing any intervention.<sup>5</sup> The Hatha Yoga training was delivered by the president of the national association of specialised instructors.

This three-arm, randomised, controlled design (as shown in Figure 4) with both a passive and active control is considered to be capable of generating the highest quality of scientific evidence of change in human subjects, since it acts as a control for any type of intervention effect.

**Figure 4** THREE-ARM, RANDOMISED, DOUBLE-CONTROL EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN



## Impact of training on social consciousness and socially responsible behaviour

The previous sections set out the theoretical basis and methodology for the experimental designs. This section presents the results of the different interventions on social consciousness (SC) and socially responsible behaviour (SRB). The first order of priority was to look at the pre–post variations of SRB in the executive education training sample. Here we found that there was actually an increase in the likelihood of taking decisions violating 'do no harm' principles. In both the product liability (promoting products that

<sup>5</sup> This group was given the opportunity to attend the mediation training after their post-intervention test in order to fulfil the obligation to the volunteers to provide a six-week training programme.

had not been completely tested) and the process liability (outsourcing decision) scenarios, the change in the decisions made before and after the intervention although not statistically significant indicated a trend (81% confidence level). For the 'do good' scenarios, the product access scenario (developing unprofitable drugs for Africa) is also somewhat negative while the process scenario (concerning community involvement) is only marginally positive.

In contrast, interventions based on meditation show statistically significant, positive changes in decisions made (SRB) as well as in the dimensions of social consciousness. For example, there was a positive and significant impact ( $p < 0.05$ ) on the decision to 'do good' (community involvement). Thus the comparison of the two types of training intervention on the basis of their impact on social consciousness is no longer relevant. The comparison would only matter in the case that we expected would be easily verified, that the two interventions had a similarly positive impact on socially responsible behaviour, at least as measured by the variations in the responses to the four adopted scenarios. Since that is not the case, a formal comparison on the basis of the impacts that the two training approaches produce on the managers' social consciousness appears inappropriate.

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## Impact of meditation training on developing social consciousness

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The impact of meditation (Sahaja Yoga) training on psychological dimensions underlying the development of SRB is statistically significant on a large number of dimensions across the three domains of social consciousness (cognition, affect and values, see Table 3).

In terms of cognition, the rationale to justify decisions taken shifted from broadly self-interested (firm profit, reputation, personal interests) towards relational ('shows caring and compassion') and ethical ('breach of an implicit social contract'). Also, the criteria for day-to-day decision-making shifted towards greater concern for social and environmental impacts: from economic profit to social welfare; from interests of internal towards the interests of external constituents; and from concerns regarding productivity towards the impact on the natural environment.

Managers in the meditation intervention groups also reported significant changes in personal values generally related to the enhancement of 'self-transcendence' ('wisdom', 'forgiving', 'inner harmony', 'unity with nature', 'a world of beauty' and 'mature love'). Also important was a significant reduction in the importance attributed to 'preserve my public image' (i.e. reputation). Finally, given the content matter of this study, it was nice to find that being 'responsible' as a guiding principle in the managers' life increased in salience.

Regarding affect, managers in the meditation intervention groups experienced changes in: positive affect (happiness increased while anger, dissatisfaction with self and sadness decreased); physical and mental well-being (feeling tired and nervous decreased); self-confidence (increased); inspiration (increased); authenticity (increased; a less 'disguised' identity at work); and most importantly, the overall stress and anxiety level (as measured by the STAI index) decreased significantly.

Managers who went through the meditation programme report a significantly larger improvement ( $p < 0.001$ ) in the extent to which they 'make decisions easily', compared with the same pre-post variation in the Hatha yoga group. Also, decision criterion shifts towards 'ethics vs. economic profit' ( $p < 0.10$ ) as well as 'protecting the environment vs. productivity' ( $p < 0.15$ , a statistical trend only) to a larger extent in the meditation group. The difference regarding the impact of affect indicates that meditation compared with

**Table 3** IMPACT OF (SAHAJA) MEDITATION ON THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF MANAGERS (STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF PRE-POST INTERVENTION VARIATIONS IN COGNITIVE REASONING, AFFECT AND VALUES OF MANAGERS WHO ATTENDED MEDITATION PROGRAMME, T-TEST, N = 51)

<b>Cognitive reasoning: Why did you decide this in scenario X?</b>	<b>P-value (%)</b>
'because it enhances and protects the company economic results' ( <i>decreased</i> )	5
'because it shows compassion and caring' ( <i>increased</i> )	3
<b>Prioritisation of decision criteria</b>	
'Social welfare vs. economic profit' a shift towards social welfare	7
'Internal vs. external audiences' shift towards external audiences	10
'Productivity vs. protection of natural environment' shift towards protection of natural environment (statistical trend)	17
<b>Positive affect (increase)</b>	
Happiness	0.8
Fearlessness	1.6
Feeling inspired	10
<b>Negative affect (decrease)</b>	
Sadness	0.1
Fatigue	0.1
Upset	0.3
Anger	0.3
Nervous	0.9
Lack of authenticity (integrity)	9
Dissatisfaction with self	10
<b>Personal values ('to what extent are the following values important principles in my life')</b>	
Forgiving (increase)	0.1
A world of beauty (increase)	0.9
Unity with nature (increase)	3
Preserve my public image (decrease)	5
Wisdom (increase)	8
Inner harmony (increase)	10
Responsibility (increase)	10

Hatha yoga showed less sadness ( $p < 0.10$ ), more happiness ( $p < 0.01$ ), inspiration ( $p < 0.01$ ) and courage ( $p < 0.05$ ). In terms of shifts in personal values, the importance of 'mature love' as a guiding principle increases ( $p < 0.10$ ) in the meditation group, compared with the same variation in the Hatha yoga group.

Although initially intended as an 'active' control, Hatha yoga training (stress reduction, relaxation) does show important positive impacts on the likelihood of enacting socially responsible behaviour, particularly of the 'do no harm' kind, related to the outsourcing decision, and positive on the 'do good' community involvement decision (although not as strongly as the meditation training group).<sup>6</sup> There are also pre-post shifts in the decisions taken and some of their antecedents (primarily personal values) recorded by the Hatha yoga group which are significantly larger than those reported by the meditation group: SRB—the likelihood of a 'do no harm' (outsourcing) decision ( $p < 0.05$ ); cognitive rationale—'it is morally right' ( $p < 0.10$ ); and personal values such as 'social justice' ( $p < 0.05$ ) and 'protection of the environment' ( $p < 0.10$ ).

The first conclusion that one might draw from this evidence is that forms of 'non-orthodox' training interventions exhibit a significant influence on both SRB and on psychological antecedents that impact on SRB. The standard executive education design, focused on declarative and procedural knowledge transfer, fails to influence the likelihood of socially responsible behaviour in managers. This might be explained by the fact that both relaxation and meditation rely on stress-reduction processes, which reduce a 'tunnel vision' problem that might characterise decision-making under stress. Stress reduces, in fact, care for others' well-being, the consideration for the long-term consequences of one's own decisions (and the excessive consideration of short-term ones), and the willingness/ability to search for creative solutions to decisional dilemmas (cf. Fredrickson 1998, 2001).

On a finer level of detail, one identifies some important differences in the impact that the relaxation and meditation-based learning approaches produce on the likelihood of socially responsible behaviour and the development of social consciousness. This might be explained by the fact that meditation-based training goes deeper in producing neuroplasticity effects<sup>7</sup> than the reduction of stress and anxiety levels can do, especially as it relates to the emotional well-being of individuals, which might potentially produce more enduring effects on socially responsible behaviour.

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## A cautionary note

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A few words of caution are necessary in the interpretation of the results of these experiments. First, although the aggregate number of participants is sufficiently large to draw statistical inference, it remains a relatively small sample. Second, the experiments have only looked at a few different learning approaches, a lot more needs to be scrutinised and scientifically assessed before meaningful conclusions can be drawn on the overall effectiveness of CSR training programmes. Third, the post-intervention measures are taken immediately after the end of each experiment, therefore missing any possibility to assess the duration or longevity of the impacts on managerial behaviour and profiles.

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6 Most of the effects are still valid and maintain statistical significance even with a much smaller sample (11 managers participating in the meditation programme vs. 10 managers in the Hatha yoga programme) and in terms of difference *vis-à-vis* the pre-post variation of the Hatha yoga training. We replicated the analysis with non-parametric tests (Mann-Whitney), required here because of the small sample size. The confidence levels reported are those related to non-parametric tests.

7 See the section above, 'Why meditation?' for a brief review of the scientific evidence of the physiological and therapeutic effects of meditation practice.

Future researchers are thus warmly encouraged to probe these findings with larger samples of practising managers, with longer-term post-intervention measurements and across different learning methodologies.

On the other hand, this study is the first to use randomised, controlled trial design in a field experiment context (rather than in the lab) to measure the effect of training interventions on the psychological profile and behaviour of managers. Conducting this rather intrusive design with practising managers in their own normal working environment on a sensitive subject such as CSR and with some non-orthodox intervention techniques (such as meditation practices) presented serious implementation challenges. The fact that the study was successfully conducted might offer comfort to future scholars on the possibility of running sophisticated experimental designs, conducive to the highest quality of knowledge (comparable to that published in natural science journals) in this area of social science research.

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## Recommendations for management education

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The learning experiments discussed in this paper were designed specifically to assess the relative effectiveness of different approaches to executive education in encouraging socially responsible behaviour (SRB). In particular, the experiments focused on developing social consciousness in managers that would encourage SRB in their day-to-day decision-making. As such, there is a need to reconsider the approach taken in dealing with the core issue of developing managerial sensitivities towards the impact of their decisions and actions on the social context in which companies operate.

The pedagogical designs currently implemented in business schools, corporate universities and executive training centres might suffice in raising managerial awareness of the multiplicity and complexity of the issues at stake. But they may fall short in developing a deep consciousness of the social role and responsibilities that managers carry in their daily activities. The likelihood of seeing socially responsible behaviour (particularly of a proactive, 'do good' nature) emerge and become a 'natural' reaction, depends on how effectively the evolution of social consciousness is facilitated during the education process. To this end, an appropriate mix between traditional and more innovative pedagogical approaches might be advisable for programmes at all levels of experience, but especially for senior executive development.

As such, this study offers several points of reflection for business schools and corporate universities in terms of both the process and the content of their programmes.

1. Different pedagogical approaches might be most appropriate, and thus should be utilised specifically, for different learning needs. For example, approaches based on cognitive engagement through case discussion and knowledge sharing might be highly effective when the objective is to build awareness of the many issues related to CSR. If, however, the objective is to develop social consciousness in managers, one might consider approaches based on personal development, specifically directed at the cognition, values and affect found to support SRB
2. Given the positive results of the statistical analyses related to the impact of training approaches, one indication to draw from this study is the encouragement to experiment with different pedagogical approaches. The two 'non-orthodox' methodologies studied should be compared with other, more traditional as well as innovative, ones

3. The evidence of the impact of meditation in developing social consciousness also lends support to the current trends in leading business schools and multinational corporations for the diffusion of introspective and meditative approaches to leadership development. If the impact of these approaches is validated by larger sample studies, then an important indication from this line of work points to legitimating these approaches
4. Longer-term, post-intervention measurements as well as ongoing concrete evidence of SRB is needed to evaluate the actual learning outcomes and thus assess the real 'impact' of training programmes (beyond satisfaction ratings). The learning experiments offer an example of how to develop a methodology to measure the participants' behavioural and psychological changes consequent to the programme attendance

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### **CSR as 'who we are' (identity based) at the organisational level**

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Whereas the learning experiments have shown the feasibility and the importance of different approaches to developing social consciousness in managers, this study has not been able to evaluate the impact of CSR training interventions at the organisational level. The question remains as to how socially responsible behaviour becomes a reflection of 'who we are' versus 'what we do' not only for individuals but for the organisation as well. In this way, CSR becomes based in identity, embedded in the corporate culture (see Whetten and Mackey 2004). This shift might be necessary for the move from an instrumental approach ('good business is good business') to an integrated approach wherein CSR becomes inherent in both organisational strategy and practice.

Furthermore, the successful implementation of CSR training programmes can promote at the organisational level a process of moral development, similar to that of individuals. As described by Reidenbach and Robin (1991), this means moving from being an amoral organisation driven by greed and short-term orientation ('Don't get caught'); to a legalistic organisation driven by concerns for economic performance ('Don't do harm'; 'Obey the law'); to being responsive in an instrumental way ('good business is good business', or more cynically a 'public relations' approach); and ultimately towards becoming an ethical organisation demonstrating a proactive approach to 'Do the right thing'. Encouraging socially responsible behaviour, therefore, can promote individual and organisational development as, according to Aristotle (1962, trans.), 'what we do' becomes 'who we are', creating a virtuous evolutionary cycle between behaviour and identity, for the greater good of individuals, organisations and societies.

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## Appendix: Decision scenarios

Scenario	Action
1. A company has just introduced a highly successful new kitchen appliance. The sales manager, who is paid partly on a commission basis, discovers that there has been insufficient product testing to meet government guidelines. These tests so far indicate no likelihood of a safety problem	The sales manager continues to promote and sell the product
2. A large manufacturer is considering the outsourcing of production of their main product to a supplier in a low-cost, third-world country. The move will significantly improve the cost structure of the company through lower labour costs. It will also increase the risks of violating the company's socially advanced principles for labour practices, as it will be difficult to monitor the work conditions at the supplier's plant	The CEO decides to proceed with the outsourcing arrangement
3. The CEO of a small pharmaceutical company specialising in developing medicine for infectious diseases has been told by the head of R&D that the lab has just found, by accident, a treatment that may cure a serious debilitating illness that affects millions of people in Africa. Developing and distributing this drug will prove extremely costly, however. Given the increasingly competitive business environment, the company is under growing pressure to improve financial performance	The CEO gives the go ahead to develop and distribute the drug to African countries at a small fraction of the full price
4. The plant manager of a precision instruments company is concerned about increasing productivity and cost control. The HR manager has just proposed a programme which would pay workers for spending one day a month providing community service (e.g. helping disabled children, visits to elderly people)	The plant manager agrees with the plan

