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# The Myth of Endless Accumulation: A Feminist Inquiry Into Globalization, Growth, and Social Change

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# THE MYTH OF ENDLESS ACCUMULATION

A Feminist Inquiry Into Globalization,  
Growth, and Social Change

Martha Freymann Miser

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Ph.D. in Leadership and Change Program

of Antioch University

in partial fulfillment

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This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled:

THE MYTH OF ENDLESS ACCUMULATION:  
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CHANGE

prepared by

Martha Freymann Miser

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy in Leadership and Change.

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## **Abstract**

This theoretical dissertation examines the concept of growth and its core assumption—that the continual accumulation of wealth is both socially wise and ecologically sustainable. The study challenges and offers alternatives to the myth of endless accumulation, suggesting new directions for leadership and social change. The central question posed in this inquiry: Can we craft a more ethical form of capitalism? To answer this question, the study examines conventional and critical globalization studies; feminist scholarship on standpoint, political economy, and power; and the Enlightenment notions of progress and modernism, drawing on a number of works, including Aristotle on the three intelligences, Thomas Aquinas on human need and value, and Karl Marx on capitalism. From this broad disciplinary and historical perspective, a compelling narrative emerges, one that describes how the idea of growth has intersected with power and privilege to create an overarching global imperative that threatens the viability of our species and planet. The closing sections explore potential responses to that threat, introducing consciousness, wisdom, and caring to our understanding of growth, and emphasizing the importance of relational practice to effect real social and institutional change. The electronic version of this dissertation is at OhioLINK ETD Center ([www.ohiolink.edu/etd](http://www.ohiolink.edu/etd)).

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## Chapter I: Introduction

*One morning in the fall of 1992, I walked through the door of a venerable insurance company, a newly minted member of the corporate leadership education team. A neophyte in the world of business, I was stunned by all the alien concepts, behaviors, and terminologies I encountered. After many years in the public sector, what I found most puzzling was the notion that the entire corporate enterprise seemed to revolve around a single purpose: making money. Alternately amused and horrified by this foreign concept, I could not get over the idea that thousands of intelligent and well-meaning people would get out of bed every morning for the single purpose of growing profit. When I voiced my surprise, friends and colleagues generally reacted with good humor, but it was clear that I was going to have to accept this premise and move on. And move on I did. Fourteen years later, after weathering numerous market fluctuations, strategies, restructurings, leadership changes, mergers, and acquisitions, I found myself at the pinnacle of my corporate career. I had worked my way up to a leadership position in the company's global human resource function; and one of my primary responsibilities was developing and implementing practices to ensure that our employees were aggressively pursuing the company's very straightforward business strategy—to grow faster than our competitors. Despite some lingering reservations, I had become fluent in the language of business, a leader in the relentlessly competitive world of capitalism.*

## A Practitioner's Learning Journey

“Reflective examination of practice . . . is itself an exercise in practical philosophy.”

—Schwandt, 1996, p. 64

Jarvis (1999) says that “all learning begins with an experience of disjuncture” (pp. 38-39), with an event that disrupts our life and challenges our worldview. In this sense, my learning journey is a series of experiences that have shaped my personal and professional identity. As a backdrop, I grew up in the 1950s and 1960s in middle-class New England suburbs that cared for and sheltered me in my formative years. Still, no community was immune to the intrusion of the events of those decades, including the Bay of Pigs, the assassinations of John and Robert Kennedy and of Martin Luther King, Vietnam, the civil rights movement, feminism, the sexual revolution, and the Apollo space missions. My childhood and early adulthood were a mixture, then, of a strong grounding in family and community, and a sense of disequilibrium as the world changed rapidly around me.

The intervening years have been a time of unequalled social, political, economic, and technological change. While this was happening, I married, raised three children, and worked at a challenging career. Although I always had been interested in social and intellectual change, the requirements of daily life rarely gave me the time to study, reflect on, and make sense of complex world events. For this reason, I welcomed the chance to develop myself as a scholar-practitioner, seizing the opportunity both to expand my knowledge and to share it. This dissertation is the outcome of that journey, a confluence of my lifelong commitment to learning and my 35 years of experience as a practitioner.

**Public service and political entrepreneurship.** I spent the first 15 years of my career in the field of city management. As an undergraduate I developed an interest in

the social and intellectual roots of urbanization in the United States. This led to an MA in public administration and my first professional position in the fall of 1977 as an entry-level analyst with the budget office of a midsized New England city. By the late 1970s the city already had the distinction of being one of the poorest in the nation; and the inherent problems of urban life—unemployment, poor education, inadequate housing, substance abuse, and violence—were woven into the fabric of its culture both inside and outside City Hall. Central to each of these problems were race and ethnicity, and one of my first lessons as a young white woman raised in the suburbs and fresh out of graduate school was to begin to confront my own identity in these terms. In their landmark study of white and black women professionals, Bell and Nkomo (2001) discuss the “flat ethnicity” of white women who, unlike their black counterparts, have no sense of their racial identity (p. 85). This was an accurate description of me when I entered public service. In time, as I became more aware of my whiteness, I felt an unaccustomed sense of disorientation and vulnerability. Uncomfortable as that was, this confrontation with reality helped me respect and navigate the choppy waters of race and difference that characterize urban government.

At age 34, I reached my most senior position in city government: assistant city manager, responsible for the city’s administrative functions, including finance, information technology, and human resources. By that time I had developed a knack for organizational change, honed over years of determination to make things happen in a change-resistant bureaucratic system. As a profession, city management derives from the principles espoused by Max Weber (1919/1946), who advised that “the genuine official . . . not engage in politics [but] in impartial ‘administration’” (p. 95). In practice,

however, my experience was much closer to Hargrove and Glidewell's (1990) observation that public administrators, to cope with their virtually impossible jobs, become highly sophisticated and discerning "professional-political entrepreneurs" (p. 35). Fortunately I had the support of a few key mentors who instilled in me a profound belief in the integrity of public service, and an explicit professional code of ethics that calls for a "deep sense of social responsibility as a trusted public servant" (ICMA, 2004, para. 2). These strong core values helped me survive, even flourish, as a public official.

**Corporate radar: The self as instrument of change.** Despite the rewards of a successful career, my years in city government were draining, and by the early 1990s I was ready for something new. Drawn by my interest in organizational development, I took a position as an educator in the executive-education arm of a well-known New England insurance company, the first step in what would become a 14-year career in corporate human resources. Although the move from public to private sector was not easy, I was able to draw on my government experience and transfer many of the lessons I'd learned. In the process I became an accomplished facilitator and discovered a talent for leadership, organization, and team development. Within a few years I moved from the education arm of the company to its financial services business, where in time I assumed responsibility for organizational effectiveness and leadership development.

I found the corporate world very different from City Hall, softer and gentler, and I was blessed with many outstanding managers. A number of the government leaders I'd encountered were deeply dedicated; but toughened by the culture, they were often blunt and sometimes brutal in their approach. The corporate environment was simply more privileged. Although it bred its share of tyrants and bad managers, it also attracted good,

courageous, and thoughtful leaders. And it was fertile ground for my continuing learning journey. I acquired a new interest in corporate strategy and the emerging field of organizational change that I was able to apply in a period of rapid business growth. During this time, my manager made an astute observation about the role I had begun to play for the organization. “You are our organization’s radar,” he said. “You see what’s on the horizon and help us prepare before it hits.” This metaphor was a great gift to me because it clarified the approach I had come to value as a practitioner. Curran and Welp (1996) call this intuitive capability the “self as an instrument of change,” saying that our “level of *awareness* [is] perhaps the most powerful instrument we have in helping our clients navigate change” (p. 1). Awareness, I learned, sharpened by multiple experiences of disruption, was perhaps my greatest asset in my practice of leadership and change.

**The Netherlands: Going global.** I always thought I would return to the public sector, but I found that the corporate arena held innumerable opportunities to nourish my interest in the complexities, contradictions, and processes of change. In 2000 my company was bought by a large Dutch multinational corporation. Two years later I was offered a four-year assignment at the company’s headquarters, and my family and I moved to Amsterdam. It was an exciting time. In addition to providing an invaluable insider’s look at a multinational corporation, the experience gave me a new perspective—a truly global perspective—from which to view the critical historical events of the first decade of the 21st century. From that viewpoint, the aftermath of 9/11, the war in Iraq, the growing ethnic and cultural conflict within European nations, and the successes and failures of global and regional bodies like the United Nations and the European Union

gave the notions of impossible jobs, social change, and public service a fresh significance.

Living and working in Europe also exposed me to a new series of disruptions. Despite my previous experience in multicultural environments, I discovered a profoundly unsettling deficiency: my American naiveté about other cultures, manifested in the default assumption that “we’re all the same.” It was humbling to learn another lesson in the blindness of privilege, and I set myself the task of understanding difference in this new context. This realization also led me to reexamine many of my assumptions as a practitioner. I began to ask new questions: What if American theories of leadership are not universal truths? How can I balance wanting to contribute my knowledge and skills with a willingness to listen and learn from other cultures? What would I learn if I attempted a more global perspective?

I was given the opportunity to explore these and other questions when I assumed the role of global head of leadership and change for the company, charged with supporting the CEO’s efforts to instill a “performance culture” that would ensure the success of an aggressive corporate growth strategy. Faced with the challenge of changing the culture of a ponderous organization of more than 115,000 employees, spread over several continents, our dynamic multinational team experimented with several approaches. Eventually we concluded that we had to balance the strong sponsorship of credible senior leaders with bottom-up change initiatives across the company. A year later we had fostered a number of what Gratton (2007) calls “hot spots” of change within the organization, and there was evidence of growing curiosity and commitment to developing a strong performance culture across the company. By the time I returned to



the United States shortly after launching these initiatives, we had achieved a momentum that has continued to produce significant organizational change since my departure.

### **Origins of the Study**

“A scholarly practitioner is someone who mediates between her professional practice and the universe of scholarly, scientific, and academic knowledge and discourse.”

—Bentz and Shapiro, 1998, p. 66

One of the side effects of an expatriate experience is an increased appetite for risk; and by the end of our adventure abroad, my husband and I were ready for a new challenge. Throwing caution to the wind, we decided I should resign my corporate job so that we could move to Boston to establish our own businesses. For me, this decision was particularly exciting because it also gave me the flexibility to pursue a doctorate, a process I initiated simultaneously with my consulting practice in leadership and change. Not surprisingly, this combination of scholarly and entrepreneurial endeavors, together with my recently expanded global perspective, has provided fertile ground for my development as a reflective scholar-practitioner, leading me to new insights and the questions I explore in this study.

**An expert in a bankrupt paradigm.** I spent 35 years becoming a management expert. Over that time I was responsible for hundreds of people, created a myriad of strategies, implemented innumerable programs, and wrestled with problems ranging from snow plowing to multinational human capital strategies. But it wasn't until I embarked on my doctoral studies that I began to confront many of the troublesome questions that I previously had pushed aside in the interest of solving the next problem or meeting the next deadline. In particular, I always had wondered about the deeper purpose of our organizations, especially our corporations, which are enmeshed in an economic system

that inexorably drives them to focus on growing quarterly profit. I also had been puzzled and disturbed by the sense that few of us who have dedicated our careers to professional management have contributed significantly to solving the serious problems that threaten our societies and our planet.

Now, several years into this learning journey, I have come to understand that these questions touch only the surface of the vast and intricate set of interconnected beliefs and assumptions about who we are individually and collectively, and about our relationship to Earth and the wider cosmos. These beliefs, widely held in the West and now being actively exported to the broader global community, are so embedded in the collective psyche that we cannot see them—they are “to us as water to a fish” (Spretnak, 1999, p. 217). Even more striking is the fact that the robust and important dialogue on these beliefs that has been under way within the academy for decades has excluded many of our most important institutions, despite its potentially transformative impact on those institutions.

Scholars generally agree that this Western worldview, commonly referred to as *modernism*, derives from a number of defining historical events, including the Renaissance of the 15th century, the Reformation of the 16th century, the Scientific Revolution of the 17th century, and the Enlightenment of the 18th century (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998; Spretnak, 1999). Although the literature on this topic is exhaustive (and a more extensive discussion is woven through subsequent chapters, particularly Chapters III, IV, and V), there is almost universal agreement on the defining features of modernist thought. First, the ontology that emerged from these cumulative movements is a belief in an objective external reality that exists “independent of our knowledge of it” (Hatch &

Cunliffe, 2006, p. 14). Second, the modernist view tends to place the human species in a privileged position as the “central phenomenon” of the natural world, valuing human individualism and distinguishing us from other species by our unique ability to use instrumental reasoning (Spretnak, 1999, p. 220). Third, the notion of continual progress, driven by the accumulation of knowledge, is a fundamental aspect of modernist thought (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998; Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006).

In addition, within the modernist worldview, empirical, fact-based science, using rigorous quantitative methodologies, is recognized as the most credible and legitimate approach to accumulating knowledge (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998; Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). The underlying epistemology, referred to as *positivism*, holds that “we discover Truth through valid conceptualization and reliable measurement that allows us to test knowledge against an objective world” (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006, p. 14). Critics of positivism claim that quantitative methods historically have been overrated and overused, reflecting the dominance of an ideology that “ended up in the worship of science regardless of its political, social, or human consequences” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 29). Wilber (2001) calls this the “the crime of Galileo” (p. 43), referring to the widely held belief, first articulated by Galileo, that knowledge gained from our five senses is the only valid form of knowledge. As a result, many argue, our reliance on quantitative methodology has pushed aside qualitative forms of knowledge, including philosophy and spirituality, that may well provide a better understanding of the “extremely complex and subtle features of individual behavior, which, some have argued, simply cannot be reduced to numbers” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 123).

None of these ideas are inherently right or wrong; in fact my own journey has led me well beyond the either/or thinking that often characterizes this debate. However, there seems to be wide agreement in many scholarly circles that although modernism has led to significant material and technological advances, the cost of these advances has been huge—potentially catastrophic—in terms of “ecological devastation, human and social fragmentation, and spiritual impoverishment” (Reason & Bradbury, 2006, p. 4). For this reason, many contend that we have for some time been “in revolutionary transition” from Western modernism to a yet-to-be determined postmodern worldview (Reason & Bradbury, 2006, p. 4; see also Havel, 1994). Nevertheless, despite a growing awareness of this transition in a variety of arenas such as science, art, and philosophy, it has been my experience that this vital dialogue is occurring largely outside the worlds of business and government. Furthermore, it can be argued that the modernist Western worldview not only maintains a firm grip on these institutions but is becoming increasingly ubiquitous, as technology, political institutions, and transnational corporations accelerate the process of globalization and economic expansion (D. Cohen, De la Vega, & Watson, 2001; Harding, 2008a; McMichael, 1996).

As a scholar-practitioner, it greatly concerns me that solutions to the escalating complexity, disorientation, and crises within business and government, two critical institutions, are largely limited to the worldview and “language of a departing era,” rendering us less able to imagine alternatives that may be essential to our survival (Havel, 1994, Two Transcendent Ideas section, para. 1). To move beyond this dilemma, it is necessary to ask fundamental questions about purpose and meaning. To begin, how do these deep beliefs limit our ability to explore purpose and to respond more effectively to

the urgent problems of our era? How can we, as professionals and managers, shift from tired and depleted solutions to fresh perspectives and possibilities, anchored in alternative worldviews and ways of knowing? Finally, how can we better engage our institutions in these essential questions of purpose and meaning?

My examination of these questions had to begin with the acknowledgement that much of my professional education in city management, human resources, and leadership training rests on the pervasive foundation of modernist thought. I have come to recognize that I have extensive expertise in a paradigm that is at best lacking and in many respects bankrupt. This may seem a harsh assessment, but it is hard to ignore the financial crisis, the climate-related natural disasters, and the other events unfolding on the world stage that bring the most unsustainable elements of the modernist worldview into greater focus. Within this context, it is also difficult to ignore the existence of a consistent set of beliefs that guide the thoughts and actions of management and leadership professionals and that include deeply embedded understandings about individuals and institutions, among them the broadest global systems of commerce and governance.

**From paradigms to discourse.** Initially, then, my understanding of the practitioner's dilemma rested on the notion of *paradigms*, famously defined by Kuhn (1970) as a set of shared values and “generalizations [that] look like laws of nature,” which in turn lead us to specific beliefs and approaches to solving problems (p. 183). In retrospect, this was a natural conclusion to draw: The language of paradigms has become part of the day-to-day vocabulary of both practitioners and scholars. Accordingly, I began to focus my attention on the notion of a “paradigm shift” from modernist to

postmodern thought. Influenced by the literature that characterized the modernist paradigm as primarily Western, masculine, and white, I began to explore feminist research and theory to access the voices and perspectives of women and other historically marginalized peoples. My reading led me immediately to a new disjuncture and an important insight: Paradigms were neither a sufficient nor a suitable approach to my questions. Feminist scholar Patti Lather (1991), for example, argues that Kuhn's concept of paradigms is itself rooted in modernist concepts of rationalism and progress, in which periods of normalcy are interspersed with an "orderly succession of paradigmatic shifts" (p. 106). Similarly, Flyvbjerg (2001) argues that the concept of paradigms is more appropriate to the natural sciences, which, contrary to the social sciences, view knowledge creation as a "relatively cumulative" and sequential process (p. 26). These and other scholars challenged me to stop using concepts that imply the existence of a uniform set of ideas (e.g., modernism versus postmodernism) and to look for other constructs that would provide more nuanced perspectives on my inquiry.

Fortunately the feminist literature suggested an incredibly rich alternative—the concept of *discourse*, developed by Foucault (1972, 1982, 1984), Derrida (1976), and other poststructural scholars who have attempted to illuminate the complex relationship linking language, knowledge, and power. As Lather (1991) explains, in contrast to the "Kuhnian view of language as transparent," poststructural theory "focuses on the power of language to organize our thought and experience . . . as both carrier and creator of a culture's epistemological codes" (p. 111). In particular poststructuralists argue that rather than express an objective reality, language creates meaning and what is perceived as reality—a process that favors the voices of some groups over others. In this sense

language becomes an expression of power and competing discourses (Fletcher, 1998; Sinclair, 2007). These new distinctions challenged me to reexamine my understanding of modernism, and I began to reframe my questions from a dualistic right/wrong or past/future perspective to a more nuanced understanding of the issues. Said another way, feminist and poststructural theory steered me away from belief in uniform worldviews toward the complex dynamics of power and control that privilege some discourses, knowledges, and ideologies over others (Olesen, 2005).

**Wicked problems and the problem of growth.** As should be clear by now, I am invariably drawn by large and perplexing social problems. As Crosby and Bryson (2005) observe, public problems of this nature have a uniquely “wicked” nature:<sup>1</sup> They lack definition; they are “not solved but re-solved again and again”; they are “not true or false, but good or bad”; they may be a symptom of another problem; the effects of the solutions are not immediately apparent; and each problem “can be explained in many ways, and the choice of explanation largely determines the solution chosen” (pp. 218-219). Kahane (2004) calls these “tough” problems because they often “get stuck” or are “solved by force” (p. 1). As tough problems grow in magnitude and urgency, our sense of powerlessness increases, and so does our tendency to rely on coercion and force. Additionally, in our efforts to solve tough problems, Havel (1992) says, we tend to fall back on old ways of thinking even as we seek “new scientific recipes, new ideologies, new control systems, new institutions . . . to eliminate the dreadful consequences of our previous recipes, ideologies, control systems, institutions”; invariably, we are caught in the trap of trying to “find an objective way out of the crisis of objectivism” (para. 9).

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<sup>1</sup> Rittel and Webber (1973) were the first to define and use the term *wicked problems* to describe social problems that cannot be solved in traditional ways.

Initially a myriad of wicked problems occupied my studies, but one began to crystallize for me during the financial crisis of 2008, the “worst economic slowdown since the Great Depression” (Zakaria, 2009b, p. xi). In the wake of this crisis, I started to think more deeply about the focus on economic growth and the accumulation of wealth that dominates our financial systems, our businesses, and our personal lives. I found new questions driving my learning journey: Why are we so consumed by the need to grow, and what drives this fixation? In what way has growth benefited humanity, and how has it been harmful? How is growth an expression of the modernist worldview, and how is it intertwined with issues of human survival? If companies and corporate leaders had a purpose other than growth, what would it be?

Obviously I’m not the first to ask these questions. Issues of growth, wealth, and accumulation have been debated in Western cultures for centuries. In the 19th century, Karl Marx argued that the “law of capitalistic accumulation” required unremitting price reductions and “exploitation of labour” to ensure the “continual reproduction, on an ever-enlarging scale, of the capitalist relation” (Marx, Engels, & Tucker, 1978, p. 421). In simpler terms, as Weber (1905/1992) famously observed early in the 20th century, capitalism itself is “identical with the pursuit of . . . forever *renewed* profit” (p. xxxii). *Continual* and *renewed* point to a deeper truth that often goes unstated in contemporary discussions of growth, globalization, and modern life. Weber is not questioning the human “impulse to acquisition,” which “in itself has nothing to do with capitalism”; rather he is directing our attention to the endless nature of the accumulative process that distinguishes capitalism: “In a wholly capitalistic order of society, an individual



capitalistic enterprise which did not take advantage of its opportunities for profit-making would be doomed to extinction” (pp. xxxi-xxxii).

Many contemporary scholars have continued to examine this distinguishing aspect of growth, most notably Wallerstein (2004) and other world-systems scholars, for whom the notion of endless accumulation is the centerpiece of modern life. However, because discussions of growth are inherently embedded in critiques of globalization, capitalism, macroeconomics, environmentalism, and social justice, I find that Weber’s point rarely receives the attention or critical inquiry it deserves. Furthermore, because conventional wisdom assumes that unremitting growth is “normal,” growth becomes an invisible and unquestioned component of discourse with the power to “organize our thought and experience” regardless of the consequences (Lather, 1991, p. 111). For this reason, as I argue in this study, it is important to isolate and examine the impact of the powerful and deeply embedded *idea* of endless accumulation that appears to be driving our relentless quest for growth.

### **Overview of the Study**

“My aim here is to begin a conversation about why breakdown of some kind is becoming more likely, how we can keep it from being so severe that it’s debilitating, and what we can do to exploit the opportunities it presents when it happens.”

—Homer-Dixon, 2006, p. 21

**Study purpose and goals.** The purpose of this study is to conduct a theoretical investigation of the concept of growth, and to challenge and offer alternatives to its core assumption of endless accumulation. A central goal of the study is to conduct a cross-disciplinary examination of discourses of growth, utilizing feminist and critical global studies perspectives. A second goal is to make visible and explore the assumptions, principles, and concepts underpinning the notion of endless accumulation. Third, by

contesting assumptions about growth and examining alternative definitions of progress and achievement, the study should suggest new directions for leadership and social change. Finally, the study should make both existing and emerging ways of understanding growth accessible to scholars and practitioners.

**Study focus and key questions.** Flyvbjerg (2001) argues that social inquiry should analyze and interpret “the status of values and interests in society aimed at social action” (p. 60). To do that, he suggests that social research focus on four questions: “Where are we going? Is this desirable? What should be done?” and “Who gains and who loses; by which mechanisms of power?” (p. 60). Building off the foundation of Flyvbjerg’s work, the central questions explored in this study are as follows:

- Where are we going in our endless pursuit of growth and accumulation?
- What are the consequences of unremitting growth, and in what ways are these outcomes good or bad for humans and the ecosphere?
- Who gains and who loses if we maintain or alter the discourses of growth, and by which mechanisms of power?
- What should be done, and what are the implications for practitioners committed to a just and sustainable world?

**Themes and underlying assumptions.** In addressing these study questions, a number of themes and underlying assumptions emerged that should be articulated at the outset. Like the threads in a multicolored tapestry, these themes are woven through the body of the text, adding texture, depth, and coherence to the final product.

***The growth imperative.*** The central thread in this study is the concept of growth. *Growth* in the context of this study refers to economic growth, wealth accumulation,

profit, and the GDP and other economic indicators. Clearly growth is a core concept of economics, which maintains that the long-term stability of the economy depends on ongoing growth (Jackson, 2009; Tormey, 2004). Although I occasionally reference economists, the central focus of this dissertation is not on economic theory but rather on the *idea* of growth that underpins modern society and manifests in many forms, including economic theory. For this reason, this project more accurately falls within the disciplines of sociology and anthropology, and the history of ideas. My underlying premise is that we have reified the notion of growth to the extent that questioning it is “deemed to be the act of lunatics, idealists and revolutionaries” (Jackson, 2009, p. 14). Yet growth is neither inevitable nor always good; in fact, contrary to conventional wisdom, contesting the idea of unremitting growth may be essential to the survival of our species.

***The myth of endless accumulation.*** In this phrase I attempt to capture two important concepts related to growth. The first is the particular logic of the unrelenting growth that motivates today’s capitalist societies. Weber (1905/1992) wrote about “*renewed* profit” decades ago, and the issue has been discussed more recently by an array of scholars, including Wallerstein (2004) and Jackson (2009). Second, because the idea of endless accumulation is so deeply entrenched in Western and, increasingly, many non-Western societies, I argue that it has become virtually invisible, attaining the status of “myth.” As Flowers (2007) says, we tend to think of a myth as “an old fiction” or “a belief that isn’t true” (p. 5). But, she argues, a myth is not necessarily untrue; it can be a belief that we assume “uncritically” and that, as a result, becomes a “cultural story that shapes what we experience as reality” (p. 5).

***Contesting globalization.*** Because the idea of endless accumulation is woven into the fabric of modern life, I discuss it from a much broader perspective than economics, capitalism, or multinational corporations. In fact, it is my contention that only a global view can provide an adequate perspective on the historical impact of endless accumulation and the role it plays in the challenges we face today. The work of globalization scholars provides a rich multidisciplinary commentary on the issue and its implications for social justice. *Globalization* is itself a problematic term: Scholars have yet to agree on a definition (Appelbaum & Robinson, 2005). But most would agree that social change has accelerated in most regions of the world and that growth is a critical element of that change. For example, Appelbaum and Robinson (2005) insist that “to act in the world as social agents,” we must consider and critically appraise the implications of social change for both our present circumstances and future possibilities (p. xiii).

***Ethical capitalism?*** This study has implications for our current system of capitalism. As a scholar and practitioner, it has been necessary for me to consider my relationship with the global anticapitalist movement. Tormey (2004) describes that movement as an “umbrella term for myriad causes, ideologies, movements, parties and worldviews,” ranging from those who want to reform capitalism to those who are looking for revolutionary systemic change (p. 73). I agree with those who argue that today’s globalization is intertwined with an extreme and particularly virulent form of capitalism, driven by outmoded concepts of self-interest and the ideology of market efficiency (Dasgupta, 2009; Marchand & Runyan, 2011a; McMichael, 2010; Peterson, 2003; Sklair, 2005). However, although I envision far-reaching change, I don’t want to perpetuate dualisms or to demonize business or corporations. It is clear that we are engaged in an

epochal debate that is essentially a dialogue about values. One of the most intriguing questions on the table is whether we can craft a more ethical form of capitalism (Henderson, 2006; Jackson, 2009; Ridderstråle & Nordström, 2003; Sen, 1999). My intention in this study is to make a contribution to this vital and urgent inquiry.

***Progress for whom?*** The notion of progress is not neutral; it is abundant with value-laden assumptions. The dominant Western worldview assumes that reality is objective and external, and that “truth” can be discovered through empirical science, guided by human powers of instrumental reasoning. Within this context there is general agreement that “knowledge accumulates, allowing humans to progress and evolve” (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006, p. 14). This notion of progress as “a series of linear, cumulative steps toward . . . knowledge and human perfection” (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006, p. 37) continues to be one of the most powerful and motivating ideals of our time. But there is a dark side to an ideal that measures progress in terms of technological advancement and economic growth, and views nature as something that can be controlled and exploited (Toulmin, 1992). Griffin (2008) and other feminists have been particularly vocal in criticizing this attitude of *dominion*, which denies “our dependence on nature” and assumes that we can “use force to get whatever we want” (p. 137). In this inquiry I ask if there are alternatives to the “grow-or-die logic [of] capitalism” (Best, 2009, p. 295) and more robust notions of progress that consider how humanity might flourish by harmonizing with, rather than opposing, nature.

***Feminism and the wisdom of marginalized voices.*** Because modern discourses have been notably Western, masculine, and white, feminist and postcolonial scholars offer a unique perspective from which to examine the questions posed in this study. It is

well documented that globalization and growth have had a disproportionately negative impact on Third World peoples, particularly women, as well as marginalized populations within developed nations (McMichael, 1996; Moghadam, 2005b, 2009; Shiva, 1993b). The Western world tends to ignore these people, to portray them as an amorphous mass or, in Bill Gates's (2008) terms, "the bottom billion" of society (p. 2). Initially I was unaware of the role that feminist scholars have played in exposing the effects of globalization and growth. In fact, as I discovered, my understanding of feminism was virtually frozen sometime in the late 1970s. This ossified popular version of feminism, based on white middle-class women's experiences, has long since been reformulated by a generation of remarkable feminist scholars who have struggled to reveal the persistence of patriarchy, racism, and oppression in our institutions. In the process, these scholars have given voice to marginalized peoples across the globe, bringing to light alternative viewpoints that are an indispensable resource for social change. Tragically, because their work has been undertaken almost exclusively in the academic world, practitioners operating in institutional settings generally are not aware of these potentially transformative perspectives and insights. One objective of this study is to make this knowledge accessible to a broader audience.

***Democracy as respectful struggle.*** Democracy is another issue raised in this study. A central concern: To what extent do the values driving our current form of capitalism support the ideals of liberty, justice, and equality on which democracy rests? I would argue that democracy is not a fixed notion, but rather an incomplete and fluid one that deserves less stridency and more scrutiny. I began that scrutiny with an exploration of feminist literature on women's approaches to democracy across the globe (see, e.g.,

Brodkin, 2007; Cockburn, 1998; Helms, 2003; Huijer & Janze, 2005; Side, 2005; Yuval-Davis & Stoetzler, 2002). I found that feminist scholars tend to focus less on what is said and more on how democracy is “done.” A key theme that emerged from my study was women’s inclination to confront and deal with the complex territory of identity and difference using dialogic democratic practice. I was particularly struck by Cockburn’s (1998) work, which finds that women’s democratic practices are less focused on consensus and more focused on the “difficult reality of unavoidable, unending, careful, respectful struggle” (p. 216). That thinking is in concert with a range of other literature, including Heifetz’s (1994) description of adaptive problems, problems that challenge us to confront and “address conflicts in the values people hold” (p. 22). Consistent with this, I argue that a dialogue that identifies and respectfully airs different views on the implications of growth is of vital importance to the future of our democratic institutions.

***Acknowledging power.*** If there is anything a successful practitioner intuitively understands, it is power. Yet in my experience, the concept of power is imbued with fear and distrust, and, as a result, discussions about power are virtually taboo in business settings. Not surprisingly, this avoidance carries over to much of the academic and popular literature on leadership and change, which tends to sidestep issues of power. In this study I argue that the underlying assumptions, beliefs, and myths driving relentless global growth have everything to do with power, drawing on the work of feminist, political leadership, and other social science scholars who deal with power straightforwardly and transparently. Central to this is the work of Foucault (1972, 1982, 1984), who, according to Flyvbjerg (2001), argued that power is not an “entity” that belongs to an individual or institution (p. 116). More accurately, Foucault (1979)

maintained that power is everywhere, something “exercised rather than possessed” (p. 26). Additionally, understanding power as something that is “constantly being constructed and reinforced through discourse” provides a multidimensional view of power as a source of both oppression and resistance (Sinclair, 2007, p. 78). As Flyvbjerg (2001) notes, a useful “point of departure” (p. 118) in approaching power is Foucault’s (1982) simple question: “How is power exercised?” (p. 785). Asking this question, as I do in this study, provides access to the “complex configuration of realities” that may otherwise elude our understanding (p. 217).

***The importance of human consciousness.*** Inherent in this study is the overarching challenge of the survival of our species. Reflecting many years ago on humanity’s alarmingly self-destructive behavior, Erik Erikson wondered if we are “destined to remain divided into ‘pseudospecies,’” or if we have the capacity to realize an inclusive “self aware, all-human identity” (as cited in Tucker, 1995, pp. 141, 140). Similarly, Freire (1970/2000) argues that the struggle for liberation and “life-affirming humanization” can only occur through critical consciousness and intentional learning (p. 68). On a more concrete level, it appears that the ability to shift frames and explore multiple perspectives is essential to the expansion of human consciousness (Bolman & Deal, 2003). This appreciation of shifting and multiple perspectives is echoed throughout much of the literature. Yuval-Davis (1993), for example, proposes *transversalism*, the ability to keep “one’s own perspective while empathizing and respecting others” no matter how contentious the issue (p. 193). And Kegan (2000) argues that modern life “requires that we be more than well socialized,” that we develop our own “internal authority” to make choices and judgments—a higher level of consciousness he calls the



“self-authoring mind” (p. 68). Whether we have the ability or the time to develop more life-sustaining levels of human consciousness is both an urgent and unanswerable question. In this study, I take the perspective that a dialogue on the consequences of growth can contribute to the collective awareness needed to ensure we make more sustainable and socially just choices in the future.

***Complexity and emergent change.*** Addressing the matter of human destiny, the philosopher Martin Heidegger compared humans to an acorn. As Strauss and Cropsey (1987) explain: “There is no question for an acorn about what it will become. Accidents aside, it becomes an oak. Man . . . has no such determinate end. . . . In contradistinction to the acorn he has a future” (p. 892). This observation provides context for several questions that lie at the heart of this inquiry: What futures do we envision individually and collectively? Do we have the capability to determine these futures? If so, how do we make them happen? It is not the purpose of this study to propose a unifying theory of change. In fact, as Bolman and Deal (2003) note, it is a peculiarly Western tendency “to embrace one theory or ideology and try to make the world conform” (p. 39). A pluralistic approach to theories and methods recognizes that social systems are too complex and multifaceted to be reduced to an overarching theory (Bennis, Benne, & Chin, 1985; Bolman & Deal, 2003; Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). As Hatch and Cunliffe (2006) contend, both researchers and practitioners benefit when they learn to “celebrate [a] diverse theoretical base,” embrace multiple, even contradictory, perspectives, and draw “inspiration from a wide variety of other fields of study” (p. 5). In the same vein, I embrace complexity theories that recognize that change is emergent, fluid, and unpredictable, in lieu of mythical narratives of top-down change led by individual heroic

leaders (Olson & Eoyang, 2001). To a certain extent, the metaphor of a tapestry that I used at the beginning of this section is also an appropriate image for my approach to change. Taken as a whole, the strands of my tapestry—the key themes of this study—comprise the various elements that I consider in my examination of social change.

### **Study Approach**

“Practice is particular and idiosyncratic, hence theory must be treated with flexibility: it must be shaped to fit practice.”

—Eisner, 1998, p. 97

**The theoretical dissertation.** In this dissertation I examine, critique, and hope to contribute to existing theories on the idea of endless accumulation that underlies Western modernity’s relentless quest for growth. This is a theoretical dissertation. *A theoretical dissertation*, as defined by Vaill (2008), requires an iterative process of research and reflection, resulting in a “new theory explaining some phenomenon, or a substantial addition or modification to some existing theory” (p. 1). Furthermore, the essential criterion on which the dissertation is judged “is whether the thinker can reformulate the insight into a coherent theory without first collecting empirical data” (p. 1). In doing so, the researcher also must seek to define *theory* itself, confronting issues that are central to the different positivist and constructivist paradigms.

**Theory and social inquiry.** According to Hatch and Cunliffe (2006), *theorizing* is the development of concepts through abstraction. They define *abstraction* as the process of forming and mentally distinguishing ideas “as a result of personal experience, or based on what others tell you” (p. 8). A *concept* is a broad idea or category that we use to mentally organize and store the inferences we draw from personal and shared experiences (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006; Torraco & Holton, 2002). Theories developed through this process, then, are explanatory constructs that help us to describe and

understand a particular phenomenon (Torraco & Holton, 2002). As Bentz and Shapiro (1998) explain, theoretical research is distinguished by the fact that the actual “subject matter of the inquiry is theory, concepts, analysis, and argument” (p. 142). Furthermore, in this process, “the researcher relates to this subject matter in the mode of theoretical reflection, even though she or he may be deeply personally engaged with the relevant theoretical issues” (p. 142).

There is a wide range of opinion and controversy on the definition and utility of theory in social inquiry. Flyvbjerg (2001) argues that the central debate revolves around the applicability of natural science methods and epistemologies to social inquiry. Essentially, he observes, the natural science model grew out of the Enlightenment belief in empirical universal truth that privileges instrumental rationality over intuition, interpretation, and context-specific value judgment. Accordingly, the term *theory* has become synonymous with prediction and quantitative scientific methods—an approach Flyvbjerg believes may work well with “dead objects” but that is unrealistic for dealing with “self-reflecting humans” (p. 32). Acknowledging the contribution of the empirical sciences to furthering our knowledge of the natural world, Flyvbjerg suggests that “centuries of rationalist socialization” and the reification of a scientific ideal threaten our “sensitivity” to the values, “context, experience, and intuition” essential to furthering human social development (pp. 54, 24).

Contesting the premise of objective and predictive theory opens the door to a discussion about the assumptions and biases that inevitably shape the process of theorizing. Even natural scientists, Flyvbjerg (2001) notes, have had to acknowledge the potential for relativism in their approach in the wake of Kuhn’s (1970) ground-breaking

analysis of the evolution of scientific thought. An example of unacknowledged bias in social science theory is provided by feminist anthropologist Catherine Lutz (1995), who reveals the numerous ways in which the academic culture reinforces the authority of masculine voices in the anthropological canon, including the “valorization of fieldwork” typically carried out by men, the tendency for men to cite more male authors, and the use of certain styles of abstract academic jargon by male authors (p. 256). By privileging these masculine assumptions and excluding feminist voices from the “central canon,” Lutz concludes that anthropological theory has acquired a significant bias. In fact, she argues that “theory has acquired a gender” (p. 251).

Recognizing these challenges, scholars like Eisner (1997, 1998) have explored the distinctive nature of social theory, arguing that interpretation must be explicitly recognized as intrinsic to social inquiry and that “theories of behavior” are by definition “radically incomplete . . . a pale and incomplete representation of actual behaviors” (Schwab, as cited in Eisner, 1998, p. 97). Because prediction is not possible, Eisner (1998) insists that “it is more reasonable to regard theories as guides to perception than as devices that lead to the tight control of precise prediction of events” (p. 95).

Additionally, recognizing the subjectivity inherent in any research endeavor, Bentz and Shapiro (1998) emphasize the need for researchers to practice reflexivity by critically examining and revealing their assumptions and any “philosophical bent” they bring to their research (p. 142). This cycle of theorizing and reflexivity is ongoing, indicating the dynamic and emergent nature of the process.

**Practical wisdom and the reflective scholar-practitioner.** One of the most prominent themes to emerge from the literature on social inquiry is the need for theory to

be practical, enabling pragmatic action for the common good. Perhaps the earliest and most famous reference to this is Lewin's (1945) oft-quoted remark that "nothing is as practical as a good theory" (p. 129). More recently, Schwandt (1996) characterized "the practice of social inquiry as practical philosophy" (p. 68). Similarly, Eisner (1997) discusses the importance of practical knowledge over theoretical knowledge in informing action and good decision making. Homer-Dixon (2006) argues for "the value of prudence—a long-neglected and even derided quality of mind and behavior" that allows for pragmatic decision making (p. 283).

These observations point to a critical distinction developed by Aristotle and recently revived by scholars like Flyvbjerg (2001) and Grint (2007). As Flyvbjerg (2001) explains, Aristotle differentiated among three intellectual virtues, each of which he considered essential for the full development of human society. The first he called *episteme*, defined as "scientific knowledge," which is generally consistent with today's "scientific ideal as expressed in natural science" (pp. 57, 56). *Episteme* is "based on analytic rationality" and is concerned with "universal, invariable," and "context-independent" knowledge (p. 57). Today we use the term *epistemology*, which is based on the root *episteme*. The second intelligence Aristotle called *techne*, the "know-how" or "craft knowledge" used to "produce other things" (Grint, 2007, p. 234). *Techne* forms the root of many modern words, among them *technique* and *technology* (Flyvbjerg, 2001). The third intelligence, *phronesis*, has no similar term in today's vocabulary, yet Aristotle considered this the most important of all the intelligences (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Defined alternately as "practical wisdom," "practical knowledge," "practical ethics," or "prudence," Aristotle associated *phronesis* with the ability to reflect and take political and

social action based on values and common sense (Flyvbjerg, 2001, pp. 2, 56). Despite its abstractness, episteme has evolved into the dominant instrumental rationality. By contrast, phronesis is a form of intelligence gained only through context-specific “lived *experience*” that leads to “moral knowledge” and the ability to make decisions in a world of “uncertainty and ambiguity” (Grint, 2007, pp. 236-237).

Flyvbjerg (2001) argues that vibrant social inquiry has everything to do with restoring our phronetic capability as reflective and socially committed scholars and practitioners. Grint (2007) agrees, saying that phronesis “is a medium that helps us get our bearings” because it is about moral “value-judgments” and action as opposed to the “production of things” or the contemplation of universal truths (p. 238). Although feminists do not tend to use this terminology, their work is similarly infused with a sense of practical wisdom focused on values, caring, justice, action, and relational sustainability. Lather (1991), for example, discusses the importance of “liberatory praxis,” which she defines as “the self-creative activity through which we make the world,” a practical philosophy focused on action and “premised on a deep respect for the intellectual and political capacities of the dispossessed” (pp. 13, 11, 55). As Schwandt (2001) notes, the “requisite knowledge” for praxis, as Lather has defined it, is, in fact, phronesis, which enables “practical activity . . . doing the right thing and doing it well in interactions with fellow humans” (p. 207).

Flyvbjerg (2001) also makes the critical observation that phronetic practice is bound up with the issue of power, which must be considered in evaluating how any action serves the common good, a point Aristotle failed to make in his original discussion of the three intelligences. Again, feminist theory addresses this topic in depth, another

reason I've relied on feminist voices in the exploration of my topic. From my perspective, the cultivation and application of values-based practical wisdom that addresses issues of power are central to this inquiry. In effect, the premise on which this study is built is that our survival as a species depends on our willingness to engage in a moral debate over values and our ability to make prudent and conscious choices about our relationship to one another and our planet. For this reason, I return for a more in-depth discussion of practical wisdom and power in Chapter IV.

There is one final important point to make about phronesis, which provides an appropriate conclusion for this chapter. As Grint (2007) observes, there is an inherent humility implied by phronesis—"the wisdom of knowing that there may not be a right answer, let alone a quick answer, to a problem" (p. 241). Flyvbjerg (2001) agrees, noting that a phronetic researcher knows that "no one is experienced and wise enough to give complete answers" to the questions we seek to explore in social research (p. 61). At best we develop partial conclusions, hoping that our thoughts will be a catalyst to others who will be inspired to continue the work we have begun. In this spirit, I recognize that this study, as I have defined it, is a daunting task, and one that I approach with both enthusiasm and humility. I know that accomplishing even a portion of what I have outlined here will entail considerable effort, but I believe that I will be sustained both by my passion as a practitioner and my scholarly fascination with leadership, change, and the world of ideas. I look forward to fully engaging with the process of discovery that lies ahead.

## Chapter II: Globalization and Social Change

*We arrived in Amsterdam during the summer of 2002. Like most new expatriates, our first few months felt like an extended vacation, enhanced by the long summer nights of Northern Europe. Our apartment was centrally located in this lovely city, and the muted sounds of the trams and street noises drifted in through the open windows. Almost every night when I got home from work, my husband, Andy, and I would take long walks to explore the city, sharing with each other what we'd learned that day about Dutch culture, language, and customs.*

*September quickly arrived, along with the first anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. That evening, on our regular stroll, Andy and I found ourselves gravitating toward the American consulate, which was located near our apartment. It was dusk on a beautiful, warm, late summer evening. As we approached the consulate, we noticed bouquets of flowers scattered across the lawn in front of the building. When we got closer, we could see that some of the flowers had notes attached to them, handwritten in Dutch, expressing the senders' sorrow for the loss our country had experienced just a year before. I was deeply touched by this spontaneous and generous expression of compassion and humanity. As an American abroad, I felt honored by the gesture and welcomed by the unknown people who had taken the time to commemorate the day.*

*Returning to the American consulate on the second anniversary of 9/11 was a different experience. By then the United States had treated the world to the spectacle of "shock and awe," the escalating "war on terror," and incessant messages of fear, revenge, and hate. During the weeks before the attack on Iraq,*



*we had stayed in rather than join the antiwar protests that were sweeping through Europe, not certain if we would be welcome. Reflecting the new mood and concern for American safety, a ring of empty railroad cars now protected the consulate building. This year the consulate was unapproachable, desolate. This year there were no flowers or notes from well-wishers.*

### **Introduction: A Big Enough Problem**

“We are the flood. We are the asteroid. We had better learn how to be the ark.”

—Friedman, 2008b, p. 150

It is common knowledge that the problems confronting humanity are increasing in complexity and magnitude. We are bombarded daily with news stories on global social, political, economic, and ecological crises. In fact, global crises have begun to intrude on local realities, overshadowing homelessness, the weak financial condition of cities and states, the destruction of local agricultural practices, and polarized and ineffective political action. Robert Jay Lifton (1982, 2005) describes an apocalyptic vision that pervades contemporary thought, “an image of extinguishing ourselves as a species by our own hand, with our own technology” (1982, p. 21). For Lifton, this image originated with the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—the potential for nuclear annihilation made real. In a post-9/11 world, he writes, the specter has become an “apocalyptic face-off” between Islamic and Western ideologies (2005, p. 165). In the early 1970s, a report for the Club of Rome accurately predicted the relationship of unchecked growth and the depletion of natural resources to escalating international conflict (Meadows, Meadows, Randers, & Behrens, 1974). And many argue today that the climate change produced by human technology represents the greatest and most immediate threat to human survival (see, e.g., Friedman, 2008b).

I am an optimist; and although I am loath to open this chapter with such a dismal subject, it's hard to avoid the fact that as a species, we are in trouble. For most social justice scholars and activists, confronting the reality of the many problems that threaten humanity is a call to action, an opportunity to contribute in an arena that engages their passion. But some are less interested in individual causes, relentlessly drawn instead by the need to know how these problems intersect at the highest level and by a fascination with systemic problems that can be understood only by examining them from a broad global and historical perspective. These are the problems that interest me; and my goal has been to discover both a big enough problem to satisfy my interest and a discipline or culture of inquiry with a perspective expansive enough to shed light on the matter.

It has been gratifying to find this broad perspective in the multidisciplinary field of global studies, which, according to Appelbaum and Robinson (2005), “views the world as a single interactive system,” focusing on “new sets of theoretical, historical, epistemological, and even philosophical questions posed by emergent transnational realities” (p. xi). Global studies has been enhanced by links to the global justice movement, by scholars asking vital questions about how globalization concepts and processes help or harm people around the world. These questions are of particular importance to academics within the emerging subdiscipline of critical globalization studies. As engaged social activists, these scholars tend to agree that “the dominant version of globalization . . . constitutes an assault on the world’s people, that there is nothing inevitable and foregone about the current course of history, and that human agency makes the whole process contested and open ended” (p. xiv).

In this chapter I investigate the work of several key scholars in an effort to provide an historical and theoretical understanding of global development and social change as a broad context for this inquiry. Although the breadth of research and scholarly writing is vast, most critical globalization scholars question the certainty of globalization narratives, challenging us to imagine alternatives to “triumphalist” discourses that assume the superiority of Western cultures, technologies, and sciences, and that mask the dark side of globalization processes (Harding, 2008b, p. 4). To better understand these alternatives, I trace the history of globalization from colonial imperialism through postcolonial development, to the current dominant form of capitalist globalization (Sklair, 2005), seeking to uncover the key forces and epistemologies that have shaped the world we know today. Woven through this narrative is a powerful recurring theme, the deeply embedded belief in economic growth that is intertwined with Western notions of progress and manifested in the myth of endless accumulation.

### **Journalists’ Views of Globalization: Zakaria and Friedman**

“The fact that we are living in a world of synchronous global growth is good news, for the most part, but it is also raising a series of complex and potentially lethal dilemmas.”

—Zakaria, 2009b, p. 27

Exploring the topic of globalization is like peeling an onion: Each layer of voices and perspectives reveals a new layer of meaning. Making up the outermost skin of the onion are members of the popular press, prolific commentators on the systemic global changes we are witnessing. Although much of their writing is superficial, reflecting commonly held beliefs about globalization, several journalists have made insightful and noteworthy contributions to the field. Fareed Zakaria and Thomas Friedman are two of the best known journalists currently writing on these topics, and their publications

provide an excellent introduction to the key issues, dilemmas, and controversies raised by globalization today.

In *The Post-American World* (2009b), Zakaria focuses on the “tectonic” shift in power that is occurring as the United States confronts the prospect of relinquishing its “single-superpower” status to other, non-Western, nations (pp. 1, 4). Reflecting on the past 500 years, Zakaria claims that only two such shifts have previously occurred: the “rise of the Western world” in the 15th century, followed in the late 19th century by the ascendance of the United States as the greatest global power “since imperial Rome” (p. 2). His major theme is that this shift in power is less about America’s fall and more about “the rise of the rest,” the emergence of a new constellation of powerful nations, most notably China and India (p. 2). In this light, Zakaria argues, the United States is likely to maintain political and military dominance, but “in every other dimension— industrial, financial, educational, social, cultural—the distribution of power is shifting. . . . We are moving into a *post-American world*, one defined and directed from many places and by many people” (pp. 4-5).

To Zakaria (2009b), these sweeping changes are an outcome of dramatically accelerating global growth, what he calls “the big story of our times” (p. 27). Noting that growth appears to be driving a number of “potentially lethal dilemmas,” he provides valuable and thoughtful analyses of key issues, including the rise of nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism, and the challenges faced by Americans as they adjust to their new status in a radically altered environment (p. 27). Zakaria also offers vital insights into Indian and Chinese social and political cultures, which underscore the complexities of globalization. But his underlying message is one of optimism: Refusing to succumb

to post-9/11 and post-financial-crash gloom, he argues that Americans' biggest problems are a function of successful growth, not failure. Acknowledging the inevitable tensions that are emerging as the global economy transforms into "an integrated system of about 125 countries," he focuses less on the social inequalities that are a consequence of these changes and more on the opportunities that lie ahead. In the end he places his faith in the "more open, connected" environment that allows "countries everywhere fresh opportunities to start moving up the ladder of growth and prosperity" (pp. xv, 25).

Friedman, who has written several books about the dangers of globalization, offers a somewhat different view. In his 2008 best seller, *Hot, Flat, and Crowded*, Friedman agrees that growth has transformed the global landscape but argues that the forces of global warming (hot), soaring population growth (crowded), and a "leveled . . . global economic playing field" (flat) create a toxic mix for the long-term survival of the species (p. 29). His core message is that these factors are forcing the "five big problems" of our time—"energy supply and demand, petrodicatorship, climate change, energy poverty, and biodiversity loss"—beyond "their tipping points" into unpredictable and perilous "realms we've never seen before" (p. 37). Friedman does a commendable job of describing "how we got here," how we created a global appetite for American-style overconsumption. "We can hardly blame the Chinese people for wanting to enjoy the same smorgasbord of life's treats," he says, but we must understand the crisis of the "consumption volcano that is erupting" as economic growth fuels rapid social and political change (pp. 51, 60).

Despite these stark realities, Friedman (2008b) declares himself a "sober optimist" and suggests some solutions (p. 411). Like Zakaria, he takes a Western-centric

stance, arguing that Americans must acknowledge the ecological limits of capitalism and model for the world a more sustainable lifestyle, a curious conclusion given the lack of evidence that Americans are willing to make these changes. Even more curious is Friedman's default assumption that the tried-and-true formula of Western capitalism—growth and technology—is still the best solution available to us:

I start from the bedrock principle that we as a global society need more and more growth, because without growth there is no human development and those in poverty will never escape it. But it can't be growth based on CO<sub>2</sub>-emitting dirty fuels from hell. We have to have growth based as much as possible on clean fuels from heaven. So, for starters, we need a system that will stimulate massive amounts of innovation and deployment of abundant, clean, reliable, and cheap electrons. (p. 186)

Both Friedman and Zakaria are convincing when they describe global trends; they are less so when they explain root causes or propose solutions. Although they raise important questions about Western capitalism and the drivers of globalization, there are some "truths" they do not challenge. As a result, they fail to fully acknowledge the social costs of globalization, including growing inequalities and human misery and the disproportionate consequences borne by women. By focusing on the upsides of growth, they portray these social concerns as interesting "problems to be solved rather than crises" that require a radical rethinking of the paradigms of globalization (Sklair, 2009, p. 95). To fully address the social costs of globalization demands a critical challenge to conventional wisdom. For this we must turn to world-systems, postcolonial, feminist, and globalization scholars.

## Wallerstein's World-Systems Theory

“We have been saying that this world-system . . . is a social creation, with a history, whose origins need to be explained, whose ongoing mechanisms need to be delineated, and whose inevitable terminal crisis needs to be discerned.”

—Wallerstein, 2004, p. x

Although Zakaria and Friedman can be commended for their sweeping analyses of global trends, they cannot compete with the breadth of Immanuel Wallerstein's work on world-systems (1974/2011a, 1980/2011b, 1989/2011c, 2011d), an undertaking that describes and challenges the core beliefs and forces that drove history from the 16th to the 20th century. He unapologetically positions world-systems as a grand narrative, saying that “all forms of knowledge activity necessarily involve grand narratives, but that some grand narratives reflect reality more closely than others” (2004, p. 21). Whether or not one agrees with Wallerstein's assessment of reality, he and other world-systems theorists have had an undeniable impact on scholars' understanding of development and globalization (see, e.g., Appelbaum & Robinson, 2005; Harding, 2008b; McMichael, 1996; Moghadam, 2009).

Wallerstein (2004) began his work on world-systems theory in the early 1970s. The theory has three distinguishing characteristics. First, it replaces the “standard unit of analysis,” the nation-state, with “a unit of analysis called the ‘world-system’” (p. 16). According to Wallerstein, world-systems are not the economies or empires *within* the world; they are the “systems, economies, empires *that are* a world” (p. 17). Second, because world-systems have life cycles, an extended historical perspective—what he calls the “*longue durée*”—is necessary to distinguish their origins, development, and “terminal transitions” (p. 18). Third, world-systems theory does not recognize the “traditional boundaries of social sciences”; rather it takes a “unidisciplinary” approach

that analyzes events, materials, and phenomena “within a single analytical frame” (p. 19). That “frame,” Wallerstein argues, addresses the fact that our understanding of global trends and social phenomena is severely limited by a lack of historical perspective and the separation of knowledge into disconnected academic “boxes” (p. x). Working with partial truths, “we are unable to put the pieces together and we are constantly surprised” by events that actually are totally predictable (p. ix).

Wallerstein (2004) claims that our “modern world-system” has been in existence for more than five centuries (p. x). He distinguishes the modern world-system first as a *world-economy*, comprised of a “loosely tied together” interstate system unified by “a division of labor” and “significant internal exchange of . . . goods as well as flows of capital and labor” (p. 23). Then he distinguishes the system as a “*capitalist world-economy*,” which gives “priority to the *endless* accumulation of capital” (pp. 23, 24). He goes on to clarify that a system of endless accumulation

means that there exist structural mechanisms by which those who act with other motivations are penalized in some way, and are eventually eliminated from the social scene, whereas those who act with the appropriate motivations are rewarded and, if successful, enriched. (p. 24)

For Wallerstein, these two aspects have ensured the longevity of the current world-system: “Historically, the only world-economy to have survived for a long time has been the modern world-system, and that is because the capitalist system took root and became consolidated as its defining feature” (p. 24).

Wallerstein (2004) insists that two historical events have defined the “geoculture,” or “common cultural patterns,” of the modern world-system since its inception in the 16th century (p. 23). The first was the French Revolution, which, propelled by the ideals of “liberty, equality, and fraternity,” normalized the concept of



political change and shifted the concept of sovereignty from the ruler to the general public (p. 65). In the wake of these radical changes, people no longer saw themselves as “subjects” but as “citizens”—a change that heralded the concept of “universal suffrage” (p. 51). Because of the obvious gap between these new ideals and the continued exclusion of many categories of people, the “politics of inclusion and exclusion” was born and became a “centerpiece of national politics” and the subject of contentious debate along an ideological spectrum (p. 52). Most important, Wallerstein contends, a centrist liberal ideology, extolling the values of progress (change), education, meritocracy, and an expanded role for the state, came to dominate this debate, overshadowing both right/conservative and left/radical viewpoints, and becoming the foundation of the world-system geoculture.

The second historical turning point, according to Wallerstein (2004), was “the world revolution of 1968,” a series of global social upheavals that erupted in the face of “the long-existing anger about the workings of the world-system” (p. 84). In the subsequent turmoil, he argues, the liberal geoculture that had unified the modern world-system lost its unquestioned authority; “long-term certainties of evolutionary hope had become transformed into fears” that the world-system’s problems could not be solved (p. 84). Without the firm grounding of the “liberal center,” the world-system had become subject to a series of escalating global crises, symptomatic of the predictable chaos that ensues when a system is inalterably destabilized (p. 85). Wallerstein concludes that the modern-world system has now entered its “long terminal phase,” a transitional period of crisis that may continue for several more decades (p. x). (See Chapters IV and V for further discussion of Wallerstein’s theories.)

## Challenging Development: Postcolonial and Feminist Critiques

“For instead of the kingdom of abundance promised by theorists and politicians, . . . the discourse and strategy of development produced its opposite: massive underdevelopment and impoverishment, untold exploitation and oppression.”

—Escobar, 1995, p. 4

Another important source on development and globalization is the work of postcolonial and feminist scholars who rely on an array of methods and approaches, including poststructuralist and standpoint theories, to reexamine prevailing orthodoxies on global development. As McMichael (1996) argues, we cannot begin to understand the world in which we live without an historical perspective, beginning with an appreciation of European colonial beliefs that have “shaped perceptions and conflict for five centuries” (p. 16). For example, one lingering belief is that non-Western societies are inherently primitive and, so, inferior to modern Western societies (Harding, 2008b; McMichael, 1996). The fact that this and similar beliefs generally go unexamined gives them great power because they appear to be obvious or true. Challenging these deeply embedded assumptions has been a central mission of the postcolonial and feminist scholars whose contributions are summarized here.

One common thread running through postcolonial and feminist literature is a focus on the *discourses* of colonialism and postcolonial development, a concept drawn from poststructural theorists like Foucault (1972, 1982, 1984) and Derrida (1976). As Escobar (1995) explains, a “discursive” approach asserts the close relationship among knowledge, language, and power, recognizing “the importance of the dynamics of discourse and power to any study of culture” (p. vii). Chandra Mohanty, an Indian American sociologist, was among the first to apply this approach within a postcolonial framework in her groundbreaking essay “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and

Colonial Discourses” (1984). In the essay Mohanty assails white Western feminist scholars for their portrayal of Third World women as uniformly “ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc.” (p. 337). In effect she argues that feminists were mirroring preconceptions derived from colonial discourses and using self-referential criteria to understand and evaluate the non-Western world. In fact, she counters, “only from . . . the West is it possible to define the ‘third world’ as underdeveloped and economically dependent”; furthermore, without this “discourse that creates the *third* world, there would be no (singular and privileged) first world” (p. 353).

Many postcolonial and feminist scholars have added to Mohanty’s (1984) insights into the *colonialist move*, a term she uses to describe the tendency for Westerners to see themselves as the “subjects” of history, as opposed to peoples of the Third World who “never rise above their generality and their ‘object’ status” (p. 351). Essed (1996), Bulbeck (1998), Enloe (1989), and Harding (2008b), for example, write about the creation of the non-Western “Other,” a legacy of colonial discourse that portrays Third World cultures and peoples as backward and inferior. Shiva (1988/2010) describes how these attitudes of superiority have in a brief period destroyed indigenous “feminine knowledge of agriculture evolved over four to five thousand years” (p. xi). Speaking from the perspective of an indigenous scholar, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) attests to the durability of this colonial discourse, arguing that it has reached into the “heads” of the formerly colonized, defining “concepts of what counts as human” (pp. 23, 25). Furthermore, she contends, genuine decolonization, allowing for the recovery of authentic indigenous values and culture, is hindered by the embedded “archive” of

Western “knowledge and systems, rules and values,” which produces “a cultural ‘force field’” that conceals “oppositional discourses” (pp. 42, 47).

One of the most comprehensive and influential poststructural examinations of development comes from Arturo Escobar (1995), an anthropologist, who places development discourse within the broad context of the “anthropology of modernity” (p. 3). From Escobar’s perspective, Harry Truman’s 1949 inaugural address, calling for an international effort to “solve the problems of the ‘underdeveloped areas’ of the globe,” signaled a critical turning point (p. 3). Truman’s approach, Escobar argues, rested on a powerful “organizing premise” that had been in formulation for a number of decades:

[There was a] belief in the role of modernization as the only force capable of destroying archaic superstitions and relations, at whatever social, cultural, and political cost. Industrialization and urbanization were seen as the inevitable and necessary progressive roots to modernization. Only through material advancement could social, cultural, and political progress be achieved. (pp. 39-40)

Steeped in the modernist faith in technology, science, and progress, the ensuing Truman Doctrine conceived of development as a “technical problem” that could be resolved by experts using rational approaches (Escobar, 1995, p. 52). Not only did these statements make sense, but their overwhelming acceptance demonstrated the “growing will” in post-World War II society “to transform drastically two-thirds of the world in pursuit of the goal of material prosperity and economic progress” (Escobar, 1995, p. 4).

What distinguishes Escobar from more-popular writers—Zakaria and Friedman, for example—is the depth of his engagement with epistemological issues. By removing the lens of Western assumptions, Escobar (1995) makes a compelling argument that development discourse is based not on certain truths but on deeply held beliefs that have had tragic consequences. He makes the audacious claim, for example, that “mass poverty” was “discovered” after World War II, signaling a critical epistemological shift

that served to define Western understanding of developing nations (p. 21). Escobar is not arguing that poverty didn't exist; he is saying that Western notions about rural and indigenous lifestyles were embedded in the "problematization of poverty," as were assumptions about creating prosperity through industrialization (p. 21). Moreover, by defining poverty as an essential trait of Third World nations, development discourse rendered invisible the fact that the supposed solution to poverty, the "spread of the market economy" through industrialization, was contributing to "systemic pauperization" by devastating communities, denying access to essential resources such as land and water, and forcing migration to urban centers (p. 22).

In essence, Escobar's (1995) critical insight is about power. If discourse determines what is perceived as reality, he argues, then development discourse has "colonized" reality by giving power to certain voices and silencing others (p. 5). Furthermore, he contends, "the forms of power" in development discourse are subtle and impersonal, acting "not so much by repression but by normalization; not by ignorance but by controlled knowledge" (p. 53). With this awareness, one can begin to understand the stunning failure of most experts to recognize, much less concede, the dark secret of the development dream: While people in the First World prospered, living conditions for most people across the Third World deteriorated. Ultimately, Escobar agrees with Ashis Nandy's stark conclusion that "the modern world, including the modernized Third World, is built on the suffering and brutalization of millions" (as cited in Escobar, 1995, p. 213). Clearly, he argues, unless we can break the grip of development discourse, these disastrous unintended costs will continue.

## From Development to Globalization

“The development project . . . has been replaced with another unrealizable ideal—the globalization project, which speaks a similar language about the centrality of economic growth, but with different means. It is old wine in a new bottle.”

—McMichael, 1996, p. 241

Combining the journalistic clarity of Zakaria and Friedman with the storytelling ability of Wallerstein and the depth of postcolonial and feminist scholars, Philip McMichael’s (1996, 2010) work is an excellent starting point for understanding the transition from the development era to the era of globalization. McMichael (1996) is in concert with Escobar and other poststructuralist scholars, but builds on them in some significant ways. First, like Escobar (1995), McMichael traces the social, cultural, and economic antecedents to development, describing with great precision the legacy of European colonial culture. However, McMichael also provides a particularly lucid and compelling framework for understanding international postcolonial development. Second, McMichael’s (1996) framework goes an important step beyond Escobar by distinguishing between the *development project*, which spanned the decades from the 1940s through the 1970s, and the *globalization project*, which emerged in the 1970s and has now eclipsed in significant ways many of the key tenets of the development project.

McMichael (1996) describes the development project as a “multilayer enterprise” that, like a “Russian doll,” contained numerous interrelated and “nested” elements (p. 73). The project’s goal was for Third World countries to catch up to First World living standards as measured by per capita GNP (p. 74). How? Through a strategy of global industrialization based on “international transfers of economic resources” between First and Third World nations (p. 75). Key to that strategy were two “universal ingredients”: the *nation-state*, which focused development efforts within discrete,

“territorially defined political systems,” and *economic growth*, which ensured that “development planning [would] focus on economic transformation” (pp. 31, 33). Other ingredients included international financial institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and a structure of international military and economic aid that would bind “the developing world to the developed world” (p. 74). What emerged, according to McMichael, was “a key historical event,” the “linking of human development to national economic growth” (p. 31).

McMichael (2010) argues that instead of achieving universal global prosperity, the development project has resulted in the “ever-receding goal of overcoming poverty and discrimination across the world” (p. 3). His key point is that this outcome was not inevitable but rather the result of an “historical choice based on the West’s experience,” the choice of “a common future, defined by the standards of Western experience and bundled up in the idea of national economic growth” (McMichael, 1996, pp. 31, 243). “Ultimately,” McMichael (1996) claims, development should be understood as “a strategy of organizing social change” that occurs both “within a field” of national and international power as well as “within a cultural field—in this case, the Western enterprise of endless capital accumulation” (p. 250). Like Mohanty (2003) and Escobar (1995), McMichael believes that social change is defined by the “self-referential categories” of the dominant discourse (McMichael & Morarji, 2010, p. 234), in this case what he calls “the ‘epistemic privilege’ of the market calculus” (McMichael, 2010, p. 3).<sup>2</sup> However, because discourse is never absolute and development’s assumptions are always

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<sup>2</sup> Notice that McMichael (2010) defines *episteme* as “a core set of assumptions that seem like common sense” (p. 3), which is remarkably similar to Flyvbjerg’s (2001) definition of *phronesis* as “practical common sense” (p. 56). Presumably they are making a similar point; however, as Flyvbjerg notes, there is no contemporary term for *phronesis*, and scholars like McMichael have had to work within the existing vocabulary.

subject to question, “social change is far more complex and contradictory than the narrative of capitalist modernity would have it” (McMichael, 2010, p. 5). This, suggests McMichael (2010), is the good news: By contesting the beliefs embedded within the development project and its successor globalization project, we may regain the power to envision and make possible alternative futures.

According to McMichael (1996), the development project, which had been built on “the image of a *convergent* world of independent states at different points along a single path of modernization,” began to collapse during the 1970s as a number of forces pulled in opposing directions (p. 79). These “divergent forces” included the growing gap between First and Third World per capita income and the emergence of a handful of Third World countries (Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, Brazil, and Mexico) that were able to approach the goal of “upward mobility in the international system” (pp. 79, 81). With the “notion of a universal blueprint” beginning to fade, significant changes were occurring in the “global production system” as several Third World governments promoted strategies to shift from domestic production to aggressive “export growth in both manufacturing and agricultural projects” (p. 109). Concurrently, the scale and influence of transnational corporations increased dramatically as they implemented “global sourcing” strategies that relocated “*industrial* investment from the First World to the Third World” (p. 92). These changes facilitated a major reorganization of global labor: Lower-level skills were moved to low-cost regions, creating a “new international division of labor,” with a disproportionately negative impact on Third World peoples, particularly women (p. 96). In this way, the world began to shift toward a



truly global economy, a “world factory” employing a “global labor force” and producing a “world product” (pp. 87, 95, 92).

For McMichael (1996), the progression from the development project to the globalization project reached another critical turning point during the global debt crisis of the 1980s. During this period, he explains, Third World countries caught in a debt trap were forced to submit to austere debt management procedures instituted by international financial institutions. This “global managerialism” gave disproportionate power to international banks, whose policies privileged global economic expansion and transnational corporations at the expense of national economic and social interests (p. 132). The transfer of “economic managerial power” from Third World nations to global institutions also accelerated the ideological turn-away from socially oriented Keynesian economic policies toward a neoliberal philosophy that favors free-market policies implemented on a global basis (p.142). McMichael (1996, 2010) argues that these changes had far-reaching consequences. In fact, he contends, with the ascendancy of the neoliberal worldview, any progress that had been made during the development project was effectively reversed. Furthermore, as most Third World nations lost political power to global financial managers and transnational corporate interests, “the poor shouldered an extra burden”: Infant mortality rates rose, and poverty significantly deepened in several regions of the world (McMichael, 1996, p. 131).

Over the past few decades, the trends described by McMichael have continued to accelerate. There is little doubt that we now live in a world dominated by the narratives of globalization. Whether this is good or bad remains contested. McMichael (1996) summarizes the debate this way: “There are two sides to the globalization project: (1) the

goal of global economic growth, managed by advocates of the free market ideal, and (2) the untidy social reality generated in the wake of the development [and] globalization project[s]” (p. 179). In the first instance, the globalization project is built on the “idea that liberalization brings greater economic efficiency,” a notion that replaced the “postwar consensus built around Keynesian ideals of state economic intervention” (p. 158). This perspective is accepted by Zakaria (2009a, 2009b) and others who claim that the fundamental challenge of our time is not growth or capitalism per se, but our ability to manage and master a globalized economy, calling for better international political and economic structures, new skills, and a renewed sense of ethics. On the other hand, as McMichael (1996) points out, globalization is not only an economic process—it is “also profoundly political” because it impacts governments, communities, and the lives of individuals across the globe (p. 179). From this perspective, he argues, the promise of globalization is threatened by growing social disparities, environmental devastation, and the delegitimization of democracy and national governments as the “unelected bureaucrats” of global financial institutions wield their power over local elected officials (p. 168). Ultimately, McMichael concludes, the two sides of the globalization project cannot be reconciled because “expectations do not square with reality”; the globalization project, like the development project before it, is an “unrealizable ideal” (p. 174).

### **21st-Century Critical Globalization Studies**

“The first stage of the anti-corporate globalization movement was largely negative. . . . In the past years, the search has been for alternate . . . globalizations, providing positive visions of what a more democratic, just, ecological and peaceful globalization could be.”

—Kellner, 2009, p. 191

Although globalization continues to reshape the economic, political, and social landscape, many scholars agree with sociologist Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2009) that “the

21st century momentum of globalization is distinctly different from 20th century globalization,” that American dominance has waned, and that the “axis of globalization” has turned from North-South trade relations to emerging East-South trade between the Middle East and Brazil, and China and Chile (p. 156). In addition, the first decade of the 21st century has been marked by a number of events that have altered the trajectory of globalization and preoccupied scholarly writing, including the 9/11 terrorist attacks, escalating religious and ideological fundamentalism, the unilateralist and militaristic actions of the Bush/Cheney administration, and the 2008 collapse of the financial markets. Drawing from a variety of recent books and articles, this section explores key trends and concerns voiced by critical globalization scholars as the first decade of the 21st century came to an end.

**21st-century trends: Nederveen Pieterse.** Nederveen Pieterse (2009) provides a valuable starting point for understanding contemporary globalization. Acknowledging the ongoing evolution of globalization, he argues that new patterns can be discerned if we seek to “identify structural trends and discursive changes as well as tipping points that would tilt the pattern and the paradigm” (p. 157). His basic premise is that the two defining projects of the late 20th century, “American hegemony and neoliberalism,” although still present “are now over their peak” (p. 168). Emerging instead, he suggests, is a globalization characterized by new trends in “hegemony,” trade, finance, “institutions,” and “social inequality” (p. 168).

***Diminished U.S. hegemony.*** Nederveen Pieterse (2009) contends that the Bush policies of “unilateralism and preventative war,” which overextended American capacity, coincided with the emergence of militant Islam and other non-Western “poles of

influence” (pp. 165, 164). Somewhat like Zakaria (2009a), he concludes that what we are seeing is “not simply a decline of (American) hegemony and rise of (Asian) hegemony but a more complex multipolar field” (Nederveen Pieterse, 2009, p. 163).

***Shifting patterns of trade.*** According to Nederveen Pieterse (2009), the marked patterns of North-South trade noted earlier by scholars like Escobar (1995) and McMichael (1996) are giving way to new geographies of “East-South trade . . . driven by the rise of Asian economies” and a South that “no longer looks just north but also sideways” (Nederveen Pieterse, 2009, pp. 158-159).

***Reorganization of global finance.*** America’s debt, surpluses in Asia, and other significant financial “imbalances in the world economy . . . are unsustainable and producing a gradual reorganization of global finance and trade” (Nederveen Pieterse, 2009, p. 159).

***Shifting institutional power.*** Nederveen Pieterse (2009) suggests that the failures of “structural adjustment” and the diminishing power of the “Washington Consensus” have weakened the increasingly “fragile” framework of international institutions (e.g., the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank), while at the same time the “clout of emerging economies” continues to grow (p. 162).

***Increased social inequality.*** Nederveen Pieterse (2009) describes “flashpoints of global inequality,” a reference to growing urban and rural poverty within developing nations and to accelerated migration across national boundaries (p. 165). He argues that this shift is as significant for 21st-century globalization as is the rise of Asian economies; but whereas the Asian “story” is widely discussed and recognized, the looming issues of poverty, oppression, and human misery “receive mention only in patchy ways” (p. 157).

Taking India as an example, he asks, “What is the relationship” between the India publicized by Friedman (and, I might add, Zakaria) that celebrates growth with glamorous malls and thriving wealthy neighborhoods, and the India so impoverished that more than 100,000 farmers “committed suicide between 1993 and 2003” (p. 167)? Equally important, he argues, “the emerging powers face profound *urban poverty* as . . . the rural crisis feeds into the sprawling world of . . . shanty towns and shacks” (p. 168). He insists that we ignore these “flashpoints” at our peril, that these are not transient issues but serious social crises with potentially devastating implications. And he adds that if we do not attend to these social trends, we miss the fact that in some regions “poor people’s movements and social struggles” have begun to make significant inroads during the early 21st century (p. 167). For example, social unrest in China has sparked a debate about the “*harmonious world* or the idea that China’s rise should not come at the expense of other developing countries and the world’s poor” (p. 175).

**Feminist globalization scholarship.** The lack of attention to gender in the development and globalization literature has concerned feminist scholars for some time (see, e.g., Mies & Shiva, 1993). However, 21st-century globalization studies have been enriched by an “emerging feminist scholarship on globalization” (Moghadam, 2005b, p. 17). Examining this body of literature, Moghadam (2005b) notes two different approaches to power, drawn from different frameworks and cultures of inquiry. In the first, “feminist political economy,” or “Marxist-feminism,” scholars focus on the “nexus of capital, class, and gender” to analyze how men and women are “affected by the economic, political, and cultural dimensions of globalization” (p. 29). From this perspective, power is not entirely diffused; instead it converges in institutions and

organizations (e.g., multinational corporations), particularly those based in core, or dominant, states. The second category is comprised of postmodern or postcolonial feminists who focus less on state and global institutions, and more on “multiple forms and sites of power” (e.g., “scattered hegemonies”) and issues of “agency, identities, [and] differences” across the structural hierarchies of gender, race, class, and the like (pp. 27, 28). Together, these scholars provide valuable insights into the nature of globalization, power, growth, and social change. For this reason, I return to the work of these feminist scholars in my discussion of power in Chapter IV.

**Controversies and tensions: The dialectics of 21st-century globalization.** It would be misleading to imply that scholars agree about most aspects of globalization. On the contrary, as Appelbaum and Robinson (2005) note, although globalization may be one of the defining concepts of this century, it is also “one of the most hotly debated and contested” (p. xv). There is, for example, extensive debate on the historical starting point of globalization. Some scholars believe globalization is a recent phenomenon, beginning in the last several decades; world-systems theorists and others argue that globalization began several centuries ago, “coterminous with the spread and development of capitalism and modernity” (Appelbaum & Robinson, 2005, p. xv). Still others maintain that globalization has been under way since the birth of human civilization. Frank (2009) and Nederveen Pieterse (2009), for instance, take this longer view, arguing that Western hegemony is a mere 200-year interruption in a process of globalization that for most of history has been dominated by Asia. Some might argue that this diversity of perspectives is challenging, hoping for scholars to coalesce around a central theory. But I would make the case that this dynamic exchange of views enriches and strengthens critical

globalization studies as scholars challenge, critique, and learn from one another's approaches and assumptions.

Kellner (2009) also comments on these opposing worldviews, noting that many scholars take polarized "pro or con" positions, resulting in "one-sided optics" that impede a full appreciation of the complexity of globalization (p. 180). He reiterates the value of a discursive approach that takes a broad view of globalization as "a contested terrain with opposing forces" seeking to shape its technologies and institutions "for their own purposes" (p. 191). Furthermore, Kellner suggests that critical globalization theory benefits from a "dialectic framework" that articulates the "contradictions and ambiguities of globalization," and considers both "its positive and negative features," much as Marx and Engels acknowledged both the favorable and destructive aspects of capitalism (pp. 180, 182). More specifically, he argues that scholars should focus on the "contradictory amalgam of capitalism and democracy" that characterizes 21st-century globalization, sometimes enhancing the democratic process and sometimes generating more tensions between "the 'haves' and 'have nots'" (p. 182). This approach—embracing contradiction, ambiguity, and paradox—has merit and provides a useful context for exploring some of the more puzzling aspects of globalization today.

One area that is drawing the attention of critical globalization scholars is the shifting nature of institutional power in a globalized world. At the broadest level, the focus is on the relevance of the nation-state within a global system that increasingly ignores traditional geographic boundaries. For Appelbaum and Robinson (2005), "a central contradiction of globalization is the transnationalization of the economy through a nation-state based political system" (p. xx). Kaplan (1994) and others argue that the

authority of the nation-state is increasingly diminished by growing anarchy, war, resource scarcity, and ethnic and racial tensions. This thinking is consistent with Wallerstein's (2004) view that the nation-state and nationalist ideology have been crucial to maintaining the modern world-system, and that the chaos we are experiencing now is a symptom of the diminished role of the nation-state as well as the demise of the broader world-system. Others, like Kiely (2009), caution us not to "rigidly dichotomize a past of national sovereignty" with a future of "global 'de-territorialized,' placeless flows" (p. 132). Instead he suggests we look more closely at the critical role the nation-state continues to play in the accumulation of capital. Similarly, McMichael (1996) points out that the globalization project has produced an international system of financial "global managerialism" in which the nation-state, despite its diminished power, plays a vital role (p. 132). Sklair (2009) agrees that the nation-state persists but argues that the current form of "capitalist globalization . . . cannot be adequately studied at the level" of the nation-state (p. 83). He and others focus instead on the relationship among state actors, transnational corporations, and an emerging transnational capitalist class of corporate and government elites whose interests are increasingly global in nature (see also Chase-Dunn & Gills, 2005; Sklair, 2005).

At the other end of the spectrum, critical globalization scholars examine power dynamics at the individual level, focusing on the contradiction between capitalist "promises of prosperity and happiness for all" and growing social inequality (Sklair, 2009, p. 95). George (2005) makes the intriguing suggestion that scholars "should study the rich and powerful" because "the poor and powerless already know what is wrong with their lives and those who want to help them should analyze the forces that keep them



poor and powerless” (p. 8). There is an equally valid case to be made for focusing on those who have been marginalized and impoverished by globalization. In fact, here one finds a rich body of work by feminist, postcolonialist, and critical race scholars who give voice to critical social justice issues that tend to be minimized—or dismissed—by mainstream media and educational institutions. McMichael (2010), for instance, devotes a recent book to an examination of globalization’s “misfits” and “market casualties,” arguing that an examination of their “critical struggles” reveals how the dominant neoliberal culture “inhibits social imagination by marginalizing, or silencing, values and knowledges . . . critical to sustaining human communities, rights and perhaps humanity itself” (pp. xiii, 3). Similarly, Harding (2008b) claims that “it takes the standpoint of the oppressed and the disempowered to reveal the objective natures and conditions of dominant groups” (p. 14). Only from these marginalized perspective can elites begin to see the “exceptionalism” (belief in Western superiority) and “triumphalism” (the uncritical celebration of Western achievement) that blind them from recognizing alternative modes of action (p. 3).

As these authors suggest, the gap between First and Third World perspectives—a legacy of colonialism and developmentalism—is taking on new forms in the 21st century. Witness the “paradoxical relationship” between Western aid organizations and the developing nations they set out to help (Wainaina, 2009, p. 2). Kenyan writer and social activist, Binyavanga Wainaina, discussed the “ethics of aid” in a remarkable radio interview aired in 2009:

A lot of people arrive in Africa . . . assum[ing] that it’s a blank empty space and their goodwill and desire and guilt will fix it. And that to me is not any different from the first people who arrived and colonized us. This power, this power to help, is just about as dangerous as hard power, because very often it arrives with a

kind of zeal that is assuming “I will do it. I will solve it for you. I will fix it for you,” and it rides roughshod over your own best efforts. (p. 1)

Wainaina (2009) does not argue against the reality of poverty or the hardships associated with a young, emerging democracy. Rather, like Mohanty (1984, 2003) and Escobar (1995) in their critiques of Western discourses of development, he says the “problem begins with seeing Africa as . . . a monolithic story of poverty, need, and despair,” a bare canvas on which others project their own needs, generating frenzied reactions to stereotypical photographs of starving and dirty children at the expense of real and sustainable change (p. 2). One consequence of these dehumanizing attitudes, says Wainaina, is that Westerners impede African nations from solving their own problems; a second, they waste billions of dollars on failed aid projects.

Another subject that divides globalization scholars is the ambiguous, often problematic, relationship between capitalism and democracy. Many authors agree with Dasgupta (2009), who contends that contemporary globalization is almost completely intertwined with a “corporate type of capitalism” (p. 8). “In a neoliberal world,” writes McMichael (2005), “development is identified as the outcome of ‘good governance,’ that is, market accountability. Whereas the original formula (of the development project) was ‘development brings democracy,’ we now have the reverse” (p. 119). Sklair (2005) agrees that “capitalist globalization” is currently the dominant—and most virulently antidemocratic—form of globalization but argues against equating capitalism with globalization (p. 55). Not only are there other forms of globalization, he says, but, more important, “capitalist globalization cannot succeed in the long term because it cannot resolve two central crises, those of class polarization and ecological unsustainability on a global scale” (p. 55). His conclusion: We can expect a more democratic form of

globalization when an ideology of “consumerism” shifts to one of “human rights,” placing more value on people than possessions (p. 62). How this might happen, how we can diffuse the myth of endless accumulation, is a critical topic that I turn to in a later section.

Finally, it is important to note one other theme in recent globalization literature—the impact of growing resistance movements around the world, the hope among scholars that resistance will lead to a more democratic form of globalization. Because globalization has had a particularly damaging impact on women, forcing them in disproportionate numbers into low-paid domestic, production, and sex work, women’s resistance movements play a vital role in contesting the inevitability of the current form of globalization (see, e.g., Bulbeck, 1998; Enloe, 2004; Mohanty, 2003; Pyle, 2005). In Chapter IV, I look more closely at these movements, focusing on Moghadam’s (2005a, 2005b, 2010) research on transnational feminist networks. For many scholars, that resistance movements are growing may be a sign of an emerging “cosmopolitan globalization,” driven by a new “multipolar” mindset that is committed to diversity, democracy, “women’s, workers’ and minority rights, as well as strong ecological perspectives” (Dasgupta, 2009, p. 13). Equally important, these movements play an important role in balancing criticisms of globalization today with alternative “visions of what a more democratic, just, ecological and peaceful globalization could be” (Kellner, 2009, p. 191).

### Interlude: Epochal Choices

“Some of us have a feeling of dread. . . . Globalization erases our jobs, new technologies inundate our lives with information, waves of migrants push at our borders, and pollution destabilizes our climate . . . leading many people to feel that things are out of control, and we’re going to crash.”

—Homer-Dixon, 2006, p. 8

As must be clear by now, globalization is a multifaceted, complex, and controversial phenomenon. That may well explain the uncertainty and unease that seem to permeate the globalization literature, ranging from Friedman’s (2008b) “sober” optimism to Homer-Dixon’s (2006) “feeling of dread,” captured in the quote above. Wallerstein (2009) reinforces this mood of apprehension by pointing out that the serial global crises we are facing are entirely predictable and characteristic of the “systemic anarchy” that occurs as we transition from one world-system to another (p.153). Yet he also argues that the outcome is not determined, that human society has the power and the duty to shape its future, imbuing the notion of choice with an epochal significance: “The members of the system collectively are called upon to make a historical choice about which of the alternative paths will be followed, that is, what kind of new system will be constructed” (Wallerstein, 2004, p. 76). Wallerstein (2004) tends to frame this choice in stark binary terms, analogous to the “the struggle between the spirit of Davos and the spirit of Porto Alegre” (p. 88).<sup>3</sup> By evoking these images, he articulates the gap in worldviews that lies at the heart of the globalization debate, a debate he says will be decided by the value we place on “two long-standing central issues of social organization—liberty and equality” (p. 88). Which direction we “lean,” he argues, will

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<sup>3</sup> Davos, Switzerland, is the location of the annual World Economic Forum; Porto Alegre, Brazil, is the location of the annual World Social Forum.

lead us toward either “a hierarchical system bestowing privileges . . . according to rank in the system” or “a relatively democratic, relatively egalitarian system” (pp. 88-89).

The theme of choice between conflicting worldviews echoes across much of the literature. McMichael (1996), for example, characterizes it as a conflict between “globalists,” who speak the language of economics and “believe in the rationality of an open world economy,” and “localists,” who speak the language of culture and advocate “local knowledge and the virtue of small-scale communities” (pp. 255-256). Sen (1999) distinguishes “two general attitudes” (p. 35): One views development as a “‘fierce’ process” requiring discipline, hard work, and sacrifice in lieu of “the ‘luxury’ of democracy”; the other sees development as a “‘friendly’ process,” compatible with “mutually beneficial” exchange, “political liberties,” and “social development” (pp. 35-36). Should we make the wrong choice, these authors imply, we face “the horror of the contrast between winners and losers, between lions and foxes at all levels of human existence” (Dasgupta, 2009, p. 12). Added to this is the horror of planetary destruction accelerated by the forces of “hot, flat, and crowded” (Friedman, 2008b). Best (2009), in a particularly stark essay, equates the human species with a “*meteor storm* that continuously, repetitively keeps pounding into the planet . . . driving itself full speed into an evolutionary dead end” (pp. 301, 303). “The main drama of our time,” he says, “is which road we will choose to travel into the future—the road that leads to peace and stability or the one that verges towards war and chaos” (p. 306). Kaplan (1994) builds on the most negative of these images, describing a dystopian world plunged into anarchy as the divide grows between a small number of affluent elites and the bulk of humanity

imprisoned by escalating “disease, overpopulation, unprovoked crime, scarcity of resources, refugee migrations,” and environmental scarcity (p. 46).

Almost 20 years ago, Lifton (1982) addressed the power of these apocalyptic images, noting how many of us share “doubts” and “despair” about the future of “human existence” (p. 15). “Yet,” he continued, “it is also true that that despair, if confronted—and that is a big if—can be a powerful source of the finest kind of teaching and learning” because it returns us to our core values and rekindles our commitment to living (p. 15). To engage in this process, Lifton suggests we ask, “What story are we in?” (p. 27). His implication: There are multiple plot lines and outcomes, and we are the authors of this story, not passive bystanders. Along similar lines, critical globalization scholars continually warn against fatalism, reminding us that globalization is neither monolithic nor inevitable (Appelbaum & Robinson, 2005; Kiely, 2009; Marchand & Runyan, 2011d; Moghadam, 2005a; Sklair, 2005). By and large, they also advocate for choices away from the “grow-or-die logic [of] capitalism” toward a more meaningful notion of progress that “informs us that humanity survives and flourishes not by opposing itself to nature . . . but rather by harmonizing with [the] highly complex universe” of which we are a part (Best, 2009, pp. 295, 305, 304). Standing as we are, on the precipice of these epochal choices, it is reasonable to wonder if we have either the capacity or the time to undergo this transformation in human consciousness. Clearly the answer to this question is unknown. In the meantime, as Best (2009) says, “we have no choice but to live in the twilight and tension of optimism and pessimism, hope and despair” (p. 309).

### **Prosperity Without Growth: Jackson**

“For the first time in human history . . . economic values have now superseded every other human value, and the language of economics is like a gang of thieves breaking and entering our brain and stealing our sense of compassion.”

—Roddick, 2005, p. 393

At the risk of oversimplification, the basic narrative of critical globalization studies goes something like this: For a long time, probably centuries, human societies have been moving toward greater complexity and interconnectedness; over the past few decades, the speed of that change has increased dramatically, producing an unprecedented interdependence we now call globalization. Although there are many forms of globalization, most would argue that globalization today is tied closely to a type of capitalism that privileges unrestrained markets and corporate economic growth along with Western middle-class lifestyles and consumerism. This form of globalization is not good for our planet or our souls. The increased frequency of social and ecological crises presents us with tangible evidence of the limits to growth and human ambition. We now have a brief window of time to alter the trajectory of this narrative and to find more liberating and sustainable ways of living together. Exactly how we do that is unknown, but it would seem to require a shift away from our focus on accumulating wealth toward a focus on liberating and respecting all human and nonhuman life-forms.

Unfortunately, despite the logic and the urgency of its message, this narrative still struggles to gain traction, at least in the West, beyond a limited community of academics, practitioners, and activists. This is not to say that inroads have not been made, as evidenced by recent mainstream articles and forums that discuss alternative forms of capitalism and new concepts such as social entrepreneurship, corporate social responsibility, “blended value,” and “shared value” (see, e.g., Emerson & Bonini, 2006;

Gates, 2008; Porter & Kramer, 2011). But awareness seems to be growing slowly. In fact, in my experience of working with corporate (as well as government and nonprofit) organizations, I still find that nothing produces more blank stares than the suggestion that our preoccupation with growth is endangering our species. Why is that?

Some scholars compare this apathy to an addict's denial of addiction. Sklair (2009), for example, says that research on addiction may "help us understand the psychological processes involved in burying what most of us know to be true about class polarization and ecological unsustainability" (p. 95). Homer-Dixon (2006) agrees, saying that like "drug addicts needing a fix," we are driven to consume even though we know the act of buying brings only fleeting happiness (p. 197). These analogies are apt, but I believe the issue is more profound, that we must look in the realm of assumptions and beliefs for a deeper understanding. Addicts may deny their addiction, but most are aware of it; by contrast, beliefs and assumptions are far more insidious because they seem "like common sense" (McMichael, 2010, p. 3). And, as McMichael (2010) explains, "the market, and its 'invisible hand' assumptions (neutrality, efficiency, rationality) has come to represent" the central belief system of our time, rendering other worldviews "unviable, invisible, or unthinkable" (p. 3).

In a similar vein, Flowers (2007) works with the notion of myths, "large cultural stories" that shape our individual and collective dreams for the future (p. 5). Although she acknowledges other powerful myths that have shaped our culture and lives, Flowers contends that Americans in particular are dominated by an "economic myth" based on a fundamental belief in growth and a Darwinian sense of competition and natural selection: "The strong survive and grow," while the frail die out (p. 11). Although myths are



neither inherently good nor bad, when we begin to treat myth as “truth,” she argues, we surrender our power to change the story (and our future). Today, Flowers warns, “we live in an economic myth the way the fish swim in the sea—unconsciously” (p. 10).

Flowers’s thesis is particularly compelling when juxtaposed with a speech delivered at the 2008 World Economic Forum by Bill Gates, arguably one of the most prominent living manifestations of the economic myth. One notable aspect of Gates’s speech is his acknowledgement that capitalism not only has failed to produce benefits for “the bottom billion” of society but has also rendered them disproportionately vulnerable to “the negative effects of economic growth” (p. 2). Gates remains captivated, however, by “the genius of capitalism,” which “lies in its ability to make self-interest serve the wider interest” (p. 2). His solution is to harness the “two great forces of human nature: self-interest and caring for others,” molding them into an enhanced economic system he calls “creative capitalism” (pp. 2-3). This new system, Gates claims, will continue to rely on market incentives (e.g., “profit and recognition”), but will “have a twin mission: making profits and also improving the lives of those who don’t fully benefit from today’s market forces” (p. 2). Although Gates’s intentions are admirable, his words demonstrate a point made by McMichael (2010) and Flowers (2007): The economic myth of endless accumulation functions as a powerful gatekeeper for our dreams. Gates is unwilling to consider the possibility that our societies (including both Western and non-Western elites) might need to abandon, or at least reexamine, our cherished belief in economic growth to achieve his vision. Instead he reiterates stories of capitalist success (even quoting Adam Smith), promoting the idea that we can still have it all—we can end poverty *and* save the planet—without having to give up anything.

Gates's (2008) remarks exemplify the ways in which many business leaders respond to the various social and economic concerns that characterize 21st-century globalization. Part of the difficulty they confront is that beliefs about markets and growth are held in place by the taken-for-granted principles and tenets of economics, more often viewed as a science than a discourse in its own right (Escobar, 1995). Fortunately, in recent years, a number of economists have begun to challenge many of the fundamental beliefs of their field, pointing to new ways of thinking and behaving. One of the more important of these contributions comes from Amartya Sen (1999), who in his landmark book *Development as Freedom* maintains that economists have confused the means of development with the ends. "Economic growth cannot sensibly be treated as an end in itself," he reasons; instead, "development has to be more concerned with enhancing the lives we lead and the freedoms we enjoy" (p. 14). Sen's basic premise is that typical measures of success (e.g., wealth accumulation and GNP) are insufficient measures of development outcomes. From a "freedom-based perspective," he argues, development should be evaluated by the presence of "the substantive freedoms—the capabilities—to choose a life one has reason to value" (pp. 86, 74). Accordingly, Sen suggests that successful societies provide people with the opportunity to exercise the "capabilities" they value, including, for example, the freedom to be nourished, to be healthy, to participate within a community, to have self-esteem, and to do meaningful work.

In *Prosperity Without Growth* (2009), Tim Jackson builds on Sen's ideas, incorporating them into a comprehensive and accessible examination of economic growth. Jackson, a British economist, sets out to explore one of the most intractable problems of our time: how to reconcile "our aspirations for the good life with the

constraints of a finite planet” (p. 3). Writing during the recent recession, Jackson notes that the economic downturn has only reinforced the idea that “the modern economy is structurally reliant on economic growth for its stability. . . . Questioning growth is deemed to be the act of lunatics, idealists and revolutionaries” (p. 14). Then he proceeds to do just that. The belief that “business innovation (creative destruction) and consumer demand (novelty seeking) will drive consumption forwards again” is faulty, he contends, when logic tells us that continual long-term growth is fundamentally self-destructive (p. 118). He also discusses at some length proposals for “decoupling” growth from its ecological impact by redesigning production processes, and he rejects the “myth” that decoupling will allow us to continue to grow without inviting ecological devastation (p. 68). To date, none of these proposals, says Jackson, address the central “dilemma of growth,” which “has us caught” between the need to keep growing “to maintain economic stability” and the need to stop growing “to remain within ecological limits” (p. 121).

Arguing that “prosperity for the few founded on ecological destruction and persistent social injustice is no foundation for a civilized society,” Jackson (2009) maintains that human survival may rest on our ability to tackle this complex dilemma of growth (p. 15). In this and other ways, Jackson’s writing resonates with the work of critical globalization scholars. For example, he confronts and systematically rejects several of the central tenets of capitalism, beginning with the premise that prosperity is measured by the accumulation of wealth. In its place, Jackson constructs a new understanding of prosperity. He begins with the concept developed by Sen (1999), that people “flourish” in societies that allow them to enjoy basic human capabilities—for

example, physical health and the opportunity to work or be in relationships with others (p. 44).<sup>4</sup> Given today's realities, however, he argues for "bounded capabilities," capabilities that recognize the limits of "ecological resources" and the "scale of the global population" (p. 45). With these concepts in mind, Jackson proposes a new definition of prosperity: Prosperity, he writes, "consists in our ability to flourish as human beings—within the ecological limits of a finite planet" (p. 16).

Jackson (2009) then goes on to confront economic theory. He describes macroeconomics as "ecologically illiterate" (p. 123) and challenges economists to construct a new theory that rejects the "presumption of perpetual economic growth" and ends the "folly of separating economy from society and environment" (pp. 141-142). Moving beyond prescription, he analyzes macroeconomic basics and outlines a possible new theory of macroeconomics. Finally he offers a three-part proposal for addressing the elements that prevent a more sustainable approach to prosperity: "Establish resource and environmental limits" that support sustainability; define and implement a new macroeconomic model; and change "the social logic" of consumerism to give people alternatives for more "sustainable and fulfilling lives" (pp. 173, 180). These actions are essential, he insists, if we want to remedy the extreme danger presented by our current form of capitalism and find alternatives to the dominant "materialistic vision" (p. 156). Within this context, Jackson concludes: "The idea of an economy whose task is to provide capabilities for flourishing within ecological limits offers the most credible vision to put in its place" (p. 156).

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<sup>4</sup> Further discussion of Sen's work on capabilities, and that of Nussbaum (2006), is included in Chapter VI.

## Women and Marginalized Voices: A Resource for the Future

“If we begin our analysis from . . . the space of privileged communities, visions of justice are more likely to be exclusionary because privilege nurtures blindness. . . . Beginning from the lives and interests of marginalized communities of women, I am able to access and make the workings of power visible—to read up the ladder of privilege.”

—Mohanty, 2003, p. 231

Jackson’s (2009) effort to refute conventional economic wisdom and loosen the grip of the economic myth is commendable. And the fact that Jackson’s and even Gates’s visions come from white male representatives of the Western academic and business elites is a hopeful sign. However, it must also be noted that much of what these men are saying has been said before by others who lack the prominence or the audience or the credibility or the opportunity to be heard in the same way. Feminist scholars, for example, have been a rich source of analysis and alternative vision for decades (a subject I come back to in Chapters III and VI). In particular, feminist standpoint theory has advanced the idea that the perspectives of the nonelites are a source of wisdom and transformation because they offer new choices to a world constrained by disempowering worldviews (Harding, 2008a, 2008b; Mohanty, 2003). McMichael (2010) would agree. He profiles a number of globalization’s “misfits” from across the developing world, testifying to the ingenuity and tenacity required to survive. These voices are essential resources, McMichael concludes, for “in contesting the . . . privilege of the market calculus, these critical struggles do not simply alter the world, they transform the way we can think about the world and possibilities for social change” (p. 3).

I would argue that this notion of the marginalized as resource can be expanded to include any disempowered individual or community. For example, although it is popular to demonize corporations, these organizations are full of people who have different

visions of organizational purpose but lack the power to make their visions reality. The point is that we don't have the time to wait for alternative worldviews to bubble to the top (assuming they would); we need to pay attention now to the wisdom and the voices of those who feel powerless to dissent—whether they are located on a farm in a small Third World country or in the corridor of a First World multinational corporation. In that spirit, the next chapter delves into feminist theory, listening to a number of voices, exploring new approaches, and looking for perspectives to illuminate both the nature of our current global dilemmas and paths toward a more hopeful future.

### Chapter III: Feminist Wisdom

*I've been the "first woman" a number of times, particularly during my years in city government. Always an achiever, as the first woman to join the budget office in 1977, I worked hard to adapt to the informal code of conduct. That meant working long hours and looking down on the slackers who left the office at 5:00—not a problem for a workaholic like me. Next I learned that swearing was important, particularly frequent and creative uses of the f-word. I can modestly say that I excelled at this. Excessive consumption of alcohol also was valued, and I was good at that too. Fighting was pretty important, including direct confrontation and behind-the-scenes maneuvering. This was harder for me because yelling scared me, and I wasn't very mean. Over time, I found a way to get things done by being nice, but it was pretty exhausting. Even so, I had to learn to fight if I wanted to survive. So when it was really necessary, I yelled and pushed back and acted tough. I also did a few mean things I still regret. But no matter how hard I tried, I still wasn't one of the guys. Two examples come to mind. My first real leadership role was as a member of the management team for the public works department (again, the first woman). My nemesis was a man named Dave. He used a variety of methods to belittle me, like refusing to allow me to use the department radio because he didn't like the sound of women's voices coming over the system. Then there was his not-so subtle habit of calling me "dear" during meetings, where, of course, I was the only woman. To make it worse my manager would tell me later how funny it was to watch my neck and face get red with anger when this happened. Finally I took matters in*

*my own hands and called Dave out during a meeting: “My name is not dear” is all I said. He never did it again.*

*Several years later, I became one of the first women to achieve a high-ranking leadership role in city government. Now I was managing several hundred people and was accountable for the city’s administrative functions. Almost all of my direct reports were men who were older than me and who had never had a woman manager. But what made this job particularly difficult was my relationship with my own manager, who seemed eternally disappointed by my failure to be more like him. One day he exploded at me (a common occurrence): “You know what’s wrong with this place?” he asked, jabbing his finger at me. “Tell me how many hours a week you work,” he demanded. I said between 50 and 60 hours a week. “I work eighty!” he said, “That’s what’s wrong around here—I work eighty hours, and you work fifty!” In that moment, I realized that I would never make it in his eyes. It didn’t matter that every night after tucking in my children I would put in several more hours of work. It didn’t matter that I would routinely sacrifice my family and my own well-being for the sake of “getting the job done.” It didn’t even matter that his 80 hours of “work” included a lot of time in a bar schmoozing with politicians. None of it would ever matter. This time I didn’t fight back. I wish I had, but I felt so resigned, I never said a word. Instead, within the year I left city government for good.*



## What Does Gender Have to Do With It?

“The masculine is an archetypal force, it is not a gender. . . . When it becomes unbalanced and unrelated to life it becomes combative, critical and destructive. . . . We need the moist, juicy, green, caring feminine to heal the wounded, dry, brittle, overextended masculine in our culture. Otherwise, we inhabit a wasteland.”

—Murdock, 1990, p. 156

What if women ran the world? I often hear this question asked by friends, family, and colleagues. Some insist that men have made a mess of it; that women, by focusing on relationships and collaboration, would balance, if not transform, the effects of aggression and competition. Others disagree, pointing to high-profile women in business and government who, they contend, act just like men. And then the discussion moves to leadership qualities, often expressed in masculine versus feminine terms: In today’s environment, should leaders be tough or compassionate? Decisive or collaborative? Ruthless or forgiving? These conversations never lead to answers, just new questions. Beyond the stereotypes, do women have something to offer that might be useful as we confront the puzzling and intractable problems of our time? More specifically, is there wisdom in feminism that can shed light on how we might end our self-destructive commitment to growth?

As we move into an increasingly chaotic and unpredictable era, these questions should not be left to essentialist stereotypes and unproductive debate. In fact, after delving into the rich body of feminist theory, I am now convinced that gender is deeply implicated in the processes of globalization and growth. However, as I mentioned in Chapter I, I was able to reach this conclusion only after updating my own view of feminism. Although there are certainly feminists who have made inroads into the practitioner world, I know many practitioners who have concluded, as I once did, that a

feminist agenda is no longer relevant.<sup>5</sup> This may be in part because feminist awareness remains rooted in the 1970s, reinforced by popular literature that defines feminist success as a numerical increase in representation without addressing prevailing behavioral norms and power dynamics (Fletcher & Jacques, 1999; hooks, 2000; Summers, 2003). The immediate challenge is to find a way to bridge the gap between our social and institutional realities, and the “visionary feminist discourse” contained mostly within the “corridors of the educated elite” (hooks, 2000, p. xiv). By doing so, there are a number of ways in which feminist thought can substantially contribute to the much needed transformation of our institutions.

First, although many now believe that various forms of institutionalized oppression have diminished, feminist scholars continue to expose deeply embedded patriarchal practices and assumptions that shape Western institutions (Harding, 2008a, 2008b). As hooks (2000) argues, feminist theory is essential to social change:

Sexist oppression is of primary importance . . . because it is the practice of domination most people experience. . . . Since all forms of oppression are linked in our society because they are supported by similar institutions and social structures, . . . challenging sexist oppression is a crucial step in the struggle to eliminate all forms of oppression. (pp. 36-37)

Second, feminist scholars have a commitment to examining social change from the standpoint of those who are disproportionately and negatively impacted by that change (Harding, 2008b). This approach is particularly important to the inquiry here: Only by appreciating these perspectives can we understand the full effect of globalization and growth, and imagine alternatives that are socially just and ecologically sustainable.

Finally, feminists offer alternatives to the masculine heroic archetype that looms large in

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Eisenstein’s (1991) discussion of Australian “femocrats” of the 1970s and 1980s; Eisenstein is herself an American turned Australian femocrat. See also Moghadam’s (2005a, 2005b, 2010) research on transnational feminist networks.

our collective psyche and leadership approaches, suggesting that *how* we work together to solve our difficult social problems is as critical as the actions we ultimately take (Murdock, 1990; Sinclair, 2007).

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, I attempt to build a small bridge between practitioner and academic worlds by summarizing the recent history of feminist scholarship and discussing the ways in which feminist thought contributes to our understanding of institutions and social change. Second, this synopsis of my feminist learning journey also provides context for subsequent chapters, especially the discussion in Chapter IV on feminists' contributions to critical globalization studies. In the following pages, I delve into the incredibly rich body of feminist literature, seeking to learn the writers' languages, understand their approaches, and explore their insights. I begin with an exploration of feminist epistemologies.

### **Making Feminist Epistemology Accessible**

**Epis·te·mol·o·gy:** “The study of the nature of knowledge and justification.”

**Feminist epistemologies:** “There is no single feminist epistemology.”

—Schwandt, 2001, pp. 71, 92

The word *epistemology* is from the ancient Greek word *episteme*, which Aristotle defined as the knowledge of “eternal truths” achieved through “the life of contemplation,” and distinguished from the “practical knowledge” he called *techne* and *phronesis* (Schwandt, 2001, p. 206). For scholars actively engaged in the pursuit of knowledge, *epistemology* rolls easily off the tongue; but for those outside the academy, the term is arcane, rarely used or understood. Furthermore, at least across the Western world, the practice of contemplating the nature of truth and knowledge is largely devalued, a consequence, I think, of the technology, data, and marketing that make our lives more and more complex. This is unfortunate because epistemology—“knowing

how you can know”—has the power to unmask unexamined belief systems, which in turn can lead to new ways of thinking about the most intractable social problems of our time (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006, p. 13).

My tasks in this chapter are to make feminist epistemology accessible and to present alternative ways of knowing that contribute to this inquiry on growth. At the broadest level, the key issues lie in the shifting debate on modernist versus postmodern perspectives, a debate that has been evolving over several decades. Within this debate, a primary concern has been the nature of knowledge, with postmodernists challenging modernists' faith in progress, instrumental reason, objectivity, and the use of empirical methods to establish truth. It would be simplistic to portray modernism as a uniform set of beliefs, and postmodern thought may be even more disparate. As sociologist Laurel Richardson contends, “The core of postmodernism is the *doubt* that any method or theory, discourse or genre . . . has a universal claim as the ‘right’ or privileged form of authoritative knowledge” (as cited in Clarke, 2005, p. xxvi). Approaching this exploration of epistemology, then, involves a willingness to enter into the domain of doubt, wrestle with alternative perspectives, and seek understanding and insight rather than easy answers and closure.

To guide me on this journey, I've examined the work of feminist scholars who for decades have been pursuing a number of critical epistemological questions that are relevant to this study. A diverse and vibrant discipline defying easy categorization, feminist research has been relentlessly self-critical, challenging scholars to engage with the difficult issues of race, class, gender, privilege, and power (hooks, 2000; Olesen, 2005; Peterson, 2003). Despite differences in approach, feminist research converges on one overarching

theme: “It is the question of knowledges. Whose knowledges? Where and how obtained, and by whom; from whom and for what purposes?” (Olesen, 2005, p. 238). Equally important, in their efforts to answer these questions, feminist scholars have built off one another’s insights, showing increasing independence from any academic orthodoxy—modernist, postmodern, or otherwise. It is from this vantage point, seeking wisdom from decades of unique and authentic feminist voices, that I embark on this inquiry.

### **A Retrospective: The Unfolding Feminist Journey**

“My questions are about our perceptions of reality and truth: how we know, how we hear, how we see, how we speak.”

—Gilligan, 1993, p. xiii

Second-wave feminism (as distinguished from the first wave of feminism, from the mid 19th century to the early 20th century) can be characterized as an unfolding dialogue between scholars and activists committed to an agenda of liberation and social justice. As Olesen (2005) argues, the variety and richness of scholarly thinking have strengthened the impact of feminism over time: “Feminist inquiry is dialectical, with different views fusing to produce new syntheses that in turn become grounds for further research, praxis, and policy” (p. 236). Appreciating this, I examined feminist thought retrospectively, distinguishing some of the key themes that have emerged in overlapping timeframes since the late 1970s (Table 3.1). This approach enabled me to learn about the emergence of core ideas, the impact of subsequent critiques, and the appearance of more new and even more refined theories over time. The discussion of these themes begins in this chapter and continues in Chapter IV, which focuses on feminist views of power and globalization.

**Table 3.1 Feminist Thought From the Late 1970s to Today**

Timeframe	Representative scholars	Key epistemological themes
Late 1970s to mid-1980s	Belenky Gilligan MacKinnon Marshall Ruddick	Rejection of patriarchy Suppression of women's voices Recognition that women's perspectives may be different but no less valuable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethic of care</li> <li>• Collaborative orientation</li> </ul>
Mid 1980s to today	Antrobus Behar Cocks Collins Enloe Ferguson Fletcher Gordon Green Harding Harraway hooks Mies Mohanty Shiva Spretnak	Criticism of Western feminism Problem of essentializing women Postmodern and poststructuralist influence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender as social construct</li> <li>• Power and discourse in knowledge production</li> </ul> New approaches: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Postcolonial feminism</li> <li>• Indigenous feminism</li> <li>• Standpoint theory</li> <li>• Relational theory</li> <li>• Ecofeminism, feminist ecology</li> <li>• Women and development</li> </ul>
1990s to today	Braidotti Bulbeck Butler Cockburn Eisenstein Griffin Irigaray Lather Marchand Moghadam Nicholson Nussbaum Peterson Runyan Smith Yuval-Davis	Discomfort/ambivalence with male-defined poststructuralism: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women and differences overlooked</li> <li>• Lack of engagement and political action</li> </ul> Broad critiques of Western thought: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instrumental reason, progress</li> <li>• Binaries: West vs. Other</li> <li>• Critical globalization studies</li> </ul> Reengagement with core Enlightenment values, self/individual, progress New forms of feminist unity Emergence of feminism as distinct discipline, unique voices

**The emergence of second-wave feminist epistemologies: Late 1970s to mid-1980s.** Chilla Bulbeck's (1998) "minimalist" and "maximalist" categories of feminist thought provide a useful framework for understanding the feminist themes that emerged following the social upheavals of the late 1960s (p. 10). The minimalist branch, Bulbeck contends, was comprised of liberal feminists (focused on equal opportunity) and social feminists (focused on the intersection of class and gender oppression) who minimized gender differences, advocating that women "should have the same opportunities to participate in politics, paid labour or revolution" (p. 10). Maximalists, on the other hand, argued that essential differences between men and women "produced quite different understandings of the world" (p. 11).

Catharine MacKinnon (1983) exemplifies maximalists who saw differences as a source of oppression, and rejected the liberal feminist view of sexism as "an illusion or myth to be dispelled, an inaccuracy to be corrected" in favor of "true feminism"—radical feminism that "sees the male point of view as fundamental to male power to create the world in its own image" (p. 640). Another group of maximalists saw differences in a more positive light, articulating and celebrating women's unique strengths (Bulbeck, 1998). Sara Ruddick, whose iconic article "Maternal Thinking" (1980) advocated "maternal power which is benign, accurate, sturdy, and sane," epitomizes this perspective (p. 345).

Any discussion of early feminist epistemology must include Carol Gilligan, whose work on moral development extended maximalist theories and articulated the concept of women's different (and suppressed) voice (Bulbeck, 1998; Fletcher, 1998). Gilligan (1977, 1987/1995, 1993) argues that widely accepted adult development

theories, which were based on generalizations drawn only from male research subjects, are inherently biased and incomplete. Because boys and men tend to equate morality with justice—the moral obligation to be fair—she insists that theories of moral maturity developed by male scholars like Piaget and Kohlberg recognize and value only this singular perspective. Since the late 1970s, Gilligan’s enduring legacy has been to elevate the “ethic of care,” the obligation to help others in need, as an equally valid moral perspective that generally is embraced by women (Gilligan, 1993, p. 73). Echoing a theme that has permeated feminist thought, Gilligan (1977) suggests that women’s orientation toward an ethic of care has been overlooked because it is associated with the “private domain of domestic interchange,” as opposed to the ethic of justice, which “traditionally [is] associated with masculinity and the public world of social power” (p. 489). Furthermore, recognizing and valuing the ethic of care, she contends, allow women’s “different” and inherently relational voices to be heard, an imperative at a time when “human survival . . . may depend less on formal agreement than on human connection” (Gilligan, 1987/1995, p. 45).

Many researchers have followed in Gilligan’s path, focusing on women’s ways of knowing. Mary Belenky proposes a five-stage theory of feminine development, contending that women at higher levels of maturity demonstrate an ability to integrate two ways of knowing: separate (impersonal and analytic) and connected (emerging through relationship and care) (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). Similarly, based on her research on female managers in the United Kingdom, Judi Marshall (1984) distinguishes between two coping strategies, “agency” (‘achieving control’ through “self-assertion” and action) and “communion” (achieving “union”



through cooperation and acceptance), noting that women have a natural tendency to prefer communion (pp. 65-66). Like Gilligan and Belenky, she observes that women's voices tend to be suppressed or "muted" in male-dominated "agentic"-oriented organizations and argues that women would be best served by choosing the path of communion "enhanced, supplemented, protected, supported, aided, focused, and armed, with agency" (Marshall, 1984, pp. 74, 71, 73). This theme of women's silence and invisibility pervades feminist thought from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s. Although it may not seem revolutionary today, it is important to recognize the groundbreaking nature of this earlier work, which established the argument that women's unheard voices may be different but no less valuable than men's.

**Criticism of Western feminism and poststructural influences: Mid-1980s to today.** By the 1980s, a new wave of feminists was questioning a bias in feminist writing. They argued against the "essentialized, universalized woman" (Olesen, 2005, p. 243), a reflection of the white, middle-class, Western scholars who were writing in the late 1970s and early 1980s. bell hooks (1981) distinguished herself early in her career by insisting that women on the margins do not experience a shared identity with white feminists. Instead, she writes, women of color encounter a double-edged challenge at the intersection of race and gender:

No other group in America has so had their identity socialized out of existence as have black women. We are rarely recognized as a group separate and distinct from black men, or as a present part of the larger group of "women" in this culture. When black people are talked about, sexism militates against the acknowledgement of the interests of black women; when women are talked about racism militates against a recognition of black female interests. When black people are talked about the focus tends to be on black *men*; and when women are talked about the focus tends to be on *white* women. No where is this more evident than in the vast body of feminist literature. (p. 7)

Also raising their voices against Western feminism were postcolonial and environmental feminists from formerly colonized non-Western nations (see, e.g., Antrobus, 2000; Mohanty, 1984, 2003; Shiva, 1988/2010). In her seminal article “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses” (1984), Chandra Mohanty argues that Western feminism suffers from the faulty “assumption of women as an already constituted, coherent group with identical interests and desires” (pp. 336-337); in 2003 she wrote that this “political presupposition” stereotyped non-Western women as impoverished, uneducated, backward, and abused (p. 22).

In their critiques of Western feminism, indigenous scholars focused on the intersection of patriarchy, racism, and colonialism in Western nations. Canadian aboriginal scholar Joyce Green (2007), for example, describes “the unthinking racism” of a women’s movement that

failed to see Indigenous women in their full historical and contemporary contexts: as simultaneously Aboriginal and female, and as contemporary persons living in the context of colonial oppression by the occupying states and populations . . . with their racist mythologies, institutions and practices. (p. 21)

The consequences of this, Green notes, were twofold. First, both “Aboriginal intellectuals” and “non-Indigenous scholars” tended to view feminism as an “alien ideology, inimical to the political and cultural objectives of Aboriginal women” (p. 15). Second, aboriginal women were reluctant to self-identify as feminists, rendering them invisible until recently to the broader feminist community of scholars.

According to anthropologists Ruth Behar and Deborah Gordon (1995), this kind of criticism plunged “an arrow into the heart” of feminist scholarship; but it also forced Western feminists to acknowledge that they had “unself-consciously created a cultural other” in the form of Third World and minority women (p. 6). Much of the scholarly

work of this era began to rethink taken-for-granted feminist concepts, including “woman” and “gender,” with a greater appreciation for the complex relationship linking gender, race, and class to systems of domination and oppression (Bulbeck, 1998; hooks, 2000; Olesen, 2005). Additionally, by the mid-1980s, new transnational coalitions of feminists under the leadership of women like scholar-activist Peggy Antrobus (2000) began to emerge with agendas on “the feminization of poverty,” “women’s human rights,” and other international women’s issues (Moghadam, 2010, p. 24).<sup>6</sup>

From a broader context, this dialogue between feminists was occurring during a period of turmoil within the academy as the “crisis of representation” and emerging postmodern epistemologies were generating “profound uncertainty about what constitutes an adequate description of social ‘reality’” (Lather, 1991, p. 21). As Olesen (2005) says, feminist research was “*not* a passive recipient of transitory intellectual themes and controversies”; it was actively engaged with and influencing emerging postmodern theories and epistemologies across a variety of disciplines (p. 236).

Feminist scholars were particularly drawn to poststructural theory, which “links language, subjectivity, social organization, and power” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 961). According to political theorist Joan Cocks (1989), poststructuralism’s distinguishing characteristic is its focus on *discourse*, “a coherent and forceful system of written and spoken ideas” that is “passively received” by the reader or listener, without conscious choice (p. 37). Instead of expressing an objective reality, poststructuralists argue, language creates meaning and what is perceived as reality—a process that favors

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<sup>6</sup> For a sense of the issues that are important to transnational feminist networks, see the Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN, <http://www.dawnnet.org/>) and Women In Development in Europe (WIDE, <http://www.wide-network.org/>) websites.

the voices of some groups over others. In this sense, language becomes an expression of power and competing discourses (Fletcher, 1998; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005).

Beginning in the early 1980s, references to poststructural theorists like Foucault (1972, 1982, 1984) and Derrida (1976) are pervasive in feminist writing (see, e.g., Cocks, 1989; Ferguson, 1984; Lather, 1991), indicating their impact on feminist thought. Kathy Ferguson's *The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy* (1984) is an early and particularly lucid example of the appropriation of poststructural theory for feminist purposes.

Examining "modern organizational life from a feminist point of view," Ferguson notes the power of supposedly neutral "bureaucratic discourse" to silence and enslave those on the margins, contrasting this with the "submerged discourse" of feminism, which holds the promise of a more liberating "collective life" (1984, pp. ix, 22, 23). She also expresses the emerging view of gender as a social construct, noting that the tendency to "attribute women's distinct worldview to...biology" overlooks the importance of the broader historical and cultural contexts that make women's experiences unique (p. 28).

Responding to the challenges of black, indigenous, and postcolonial feminists as well as the influence of postmodern/poststructural approaches, the mid-1980s into the 1990s was an important epistemological turning point for feminism (Behar & Gordon, 1995; Olesen, 2005). During this time, feminist scholars began to question their ready acceptance of white middle-class values and Western notions of progress, objective truth, and instrumental reason (Harding, 2008b; Lather, 1991; Nicholson, 1990). Said another way, as feminists distanced themselves from the assumption of a singular Western women's epistemology, they began to explore the nature of knowledge from a profoundly expanded perspective that raised questions about the core beliefs underpinning Western

institutions. That exploration would lead feminist inquiry in a number of new directions (Behar & Gordon, 1995; Olesen, 2005). Although it is not possible in the space of this study to describe all of these new directions; I provide a snapshot of two important and representative theories that emerged during this period: standpoint theory and relational theory.

***Standpoint theory.*** According to Sandra Harding (2008b), standpoint theory was developed by feminists looking to understand how supposedly “good science” could produce consistently “sexist and androcentric research results” (p. 114). Borrowing from Marxist theory, which examines capitalism from the standpoint of the proletariat, standpoint feminists argue that research concerned with “how to produce knowledge *for* women, not just about them,” should be grounded in the perspective of women’s lives (p. 114). In this sense, standpoint theory rejects positivist notions of objectivity—for example, the “view from nowhere” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 238). Standpoint theory, like poststructural thought, argues that “knowledge and power are internally linked. . . . What people do . . . both enables and limits what they can know”—and what they “do” is often determined by “their locations in social structures” (Harding, 2008b, p. 117). For this reason, standpoint theory has been developed further by postcolonial scholars and feminists of color who maintain that understandings of social structures, generated by those at the margins, can give rise to new epistemological possibilities unimagined when seen through the lens of the dominant class (Collins, 1998; Harding, 2008b; hooks, 2000). Patricia Hill Collins (1998), for example, reflects on the biography of the African American pioneer Sojourner Truth to “gain a fresh angle of vision” and explore the unique “visionary pragmatism” of black women who combine “a concern for justice with

a deep spirituality” (pp. 235, 200). This approach gives voice to the silent, oppressed, and marginalized, shifting them from object to subject. As Harding (2008b) notes, standpoint research seeks to “study up” by “reveal[ing] principles and practices of dominant institutions” that can be understood only from the perspective of those “governed” by them (p. 117).

***Relational theory.*** Relational theory draws from standpoint theory, poststructuralism, and feminist literature on the “nature of work” (Fletcher, 1998, p. 164). As Joyce Fletcher (1998) observes, relational theory is based on the specific epistemological belief “that growth and development occur best in a context of connection,” in sharp contrast with mainstream (e.g., masculine) theories of growth and development, which “emphasize autonomy and the individuation process” (p. 167). Fletcher’s (1998, 1999) own research on relational practice in business organizations has contributed significantly to feminists’ efforts to make visible the gendered nature of an organizational life in which powerful norms stifle those who attempt to forge mutually empowering relationships. Although Fletcher (1998) builds on Gilligan’s original work, she is careful to avoid “claims to speak for all women,” focusing instead on “gendered assumptions” that are deeply embedded in organizational systems, creating invisible and coercive power dynamics and behavioral norms that harm both women and men (pp. 166, 163). This shift in perspective brings previously unexamined assumptions that privilege individualistic and competitive behaviors to light. In this way, Fletcher (1998) argues, relational theory has “potential as a destabilizing alternative voice in organizational discourse” (p. 167).

**Transcending postmodernisms and reexamining modernisms: 1990s to today.** Table 3.1 shows how feminist thought has evolved since the 1970s, new perspectives emerging alongside established theories, foreshadowing new inquiries that in time would become more fully developed. This has certainly been the case in the third phase of feminist inquiry: Many of the themes that are relevant to feminists today were beginning to emerge by the early 1990s. By that point, there was broad agreement with Hester Eisenstein's (1991) characterization of feminism as "a daughter of Western theory and Western patriarchal categories of thought" (p. 65). Recognizing this and the "embeddedness of [their] own assumptions within a specific historical context," feminists from the mid-1980s often distanced themselves from their modernist forebears, allying themselves with postmodern approaches (Nicholson, 1990, pp. 1-2). Still, despite the attraction of postmodern and poststructural theories, many feminists were reluctant to embrace any specific culture of inquiry, opting instead to chart their own paths (Braidotti, 2003; Eisenstein, 1991; Lather, 1991; Nicholson, 1990). At the very least, the exchange of views among feminists shed significant light on the scholarly debate over modernist and postmodern perspectives. Perhaps more important, this dialogue also facilitated the emergence of feminism as a distinct discipline, offering a unique vantage point from which to examine social change.

Patti Lather (1991) epitomizes the feminist ambivalence in the early 1990s with postmodern thought. On the one hand, she offers a virulent critique of modernism. Positivism, she argues, is "rife" with "the lust for certainty, . . . tainted with colonialism," and is "no longer capable of giving meaning and direction to . . . the bewildering new world space of multinational capital" (p. 88). She goes on:

To position oneself in the twilight of modernity is to foreground the underside of its faith in rationality, science and the human will to change and master: Auschwitz, Hiroshima, My Lai, Three Mile Island, Chernobyl. It is not that the dreams of modernity are unworthy; it is what they render absent and their conflictual and confusing outcomes that underscore the limits of reason and the obsolescence of modernist categories and institutions. (p. 88)

On the other hand, Lather “wonder[s] about the seduction of postmodernism,” saying that she “remain[s] ambivalent, attracted to some parts of postmodern thought and practice, repelled by others” (pp. 36, 38). She worries that “the debunking of foundational grounding [may] pose dangers for any appropriation of postmodernism on the part of the marginalized” (pp. 37-38). Lather, like many other feminists (see, e.g., Eisenstein, 1991; Irigaray, 1991; Nicholson, 1990), is also troubled by the dominance of postmodern male theorists who position themselves as experts on difference and women’s experiences. In response she argues that feminism’s role is to dislodge “the articulation of postmodernism from the site of the fathers,” much like quantum physics “opened up another world” beyond taken-for-granted scientific approaches (p. 27). Rather than subsume feminism within postmodernism, she suggests, feminism should harness the power of postmodernism to “think more about how we think” in “the name of liberatory politics” (pp. 39, 38).

Disagreement and doubt are recurring themes as feminists continue to explore the territory beyond postmodernism. Bulbeck (1998), for example, argues that although postmodern challenges to Western notions of rationalism, humanism, and objective truth have enriched postcolonial critique, they also have undermined “the truth claims of the ex-colonized that they were and are oppressed” (p. 14). Mohanty (2003) acknowledges the contribution of poststructuralist thought in her scholarly journey, but complains of the “triumphal rise of postmodernism in the U.S. academy” and the “valorization of



difference over commonality in postmodern discourse” (pp. 225-226). “Now,” Mohanty claims, “I find myself wanting to reemphasize the connections [to] build coalitions and solidarities across borders” (p. 226).

Some, however, seem to have moved past postmodern doubt. Harding (2008b), for example, suggests we should engage in “discussions of modernity beyond the point where postmodernity ended” (p. 3). She adds:

There are good reasons why feminisms . . . are frequently labeled postmodern. Yet in other respects these social movements also seem firmly lodged in modernity. . . . They seem unwilling to engage in the luxury of postmodern disillusion with politics and its silence in the face of needed social justice projects. (p. 2)

Along the way, Harding (2008b) finds that many feminists “do not reject modernity” but instead are thoughtfully pursuing modernist ideals, among them “the growth of knowledge, . . . more perfect sciences, [and] expanded democratic principles and practices” (p. 126). These profound observations indicate how far feminism has come and the inherent fluidity and pragmatism of feminist thought. In essence Harding is arguing that the basic values and purposes of feminism are in many ways consistent with Enlightenment ideals, and inconsistent with postmodern skepticism, which may impede rather than enable social action.

Rosi Braidotti (2006, 2007) also positions herself beyond postmodernism in her discussions of postindustrial society and recent trends in feminist epistemology. Commenting on today’s emerging “master narratives” of “market economics” and “biological essentialism,” Braidotti (2007) argues that feminist theories are poised to “strike back” with “relevant critiques” to counter the “determinism” of these views (pp. 69, 65). In this “post-postmodern context,” Braidotti observes, the focus of “third-wave feminists” has shifted to an interest in science and technology and “critiques of

globalization” (pp. 69, 65). Further, she notes that one of the primary interests of contemporary feminism, which she shares, must be to “passionately pursue the quest for alternatives” to the “master narratives . . . aim[ed] at restoring traditional, unitary visions of the self in the neo-liberal model” (Braidotti, 2006, p. 4). In lieu of this, Braidotti (2006) argues for a “non-unitary” or “nomadic” subjectivity that is both “dispersed” and “fragmented,” and “functional, coherent and accountable” (p. 4).

Braidotti’s work exemplifies the way in which feminist inquiry has moved beyond either/or discussions of modernity and postmodernity. In addition the exchange of views on the related concepts of “self,” “identity,” and “subject” is an illuminating example of how this scholarly debate continues to unfold. As Schwandt (2001) notes, postmodernism opposes the Cartesian idea of the “rational, autonomous subject,” a core belief underlying Western individualism (p. 201). This argument has troubled feminists from the beginning, many of whom shared Eisenstein’s (1991) “suspicion that the death of the unified subject came about just at the historical moment when feminists were deciding that the human subject could be female” (p. 64). Similarly, Nicholson (1990) observes that although the “autonomous and self-legislating self” reflects a Western masculine bias, the “adoption of postmodernism” may undermine feminism, which “depend[s] on a relatively unified notion of the social subject ‘woman’” (pp. 5, 7). More recently, Mohanty (2003) suggested that the “hegemony of postmodern skepticism” has led scholars to view identity as “either naïve or irrelevant, rather than as a source of knowledge and a basis for progressive mobilization” (p. 6).

Addressing this issue, Lather (1991) challenges feminists to consider that “what has ‘died’ is the unified, monolithic, essentialized subject. . . . Such a subject is replaced

by a provisional, contingent, strategic, constructed subject which . . . *must* be engaged in processes of meaning-making given the bombardment of conflicting messages” (p. 120). Lather’s remarks foreshadow further pioneering work on the concepts of self and identity that has emerged from a variety of feminist scholars. Cynthia Cockburn’s (1998) study of three women’s groups in Northern Ireland, Israel/Palestine, and Bosnia/Herzegovina offers an instructive example. In understanding how these groups built collaborative relationships across harsh ethnic boundaries, Cockburn makes a key distinction between *self* or *selfhood*, which is “what a person feels about herself,” and *identity*, which refers to “external” meanings, such as nationality or religion (pp. 14-15). Identity processes, she explains, are powerful systems of domination that seek to fix essentialist stereotypes of ethnic homogeneity based on an erroneous belief that identities are fixed and unchanging (e.g., a Serb will always be a Serb). By developing a stronger internal sense of self, says Cockburn, these women were able to make conscious choices about accepting or rejecting externally imposed identities, a process that required the difficult and painful work of confronting the “friction and disjuncture between a woman’s sense of self and the identities with which she was labeled” (p. 10). This evidence of a fluid self that continually re-forms as relationships with others change, Cockburn argues, contradicts the traditional view of the self as stable, fixed, and unchanging. She concludes that the notion of an “ambiguous and shifting” identity, subject to human agency, is “anathema to projects of power” (p. 213).

Cockburn’s (1998) work is representative of the diverse and innovative exploration of self and identity by feminists across a number of disciplines. For example, Judith Butler’s (1993) “performative” theory of gender extends poststructural thought to

gender identity by arguing that gender is not innate but is constantly performed in a way that continually reinforces heterosexual norms. Gender, then, is not decided by “a choosing subject” but “is part of what decides the subject” (p. x). Amanda Sinclair (2007) is one of the rare feminists to venture into identity formation in the field of leadership. Building on performative theory, she suggests that organizational discourses dictate and bind leaders into “tightly prescribed performances,” and argues that even the best intentions to foster a more authentic self will fail to liberate unless leaders make “their own identity work conscious” (pp. 139, 142). Finally, sociologists Bulbeck (1998), Cockburn (1998), Mohanty (2003), and Nira Yuval-Davis (Yuval-Davis & Stoetzler, 2002) have extensively examined the construction of gendered identities in relationship to the boundaries and borders of communities, cultures, and nations.

These examples are testimony to the rich array of theories and epistemologies that continue to emerge as feminist scholars have moved away from the confinement of modernist and postmodern thought. Although many of these scholars have refused to accept postmodern denial of the self-aware subject, they have utilized postmodern/poststructural theories to engage in a number of innovative and sophisticated inquiries into identity, consciousness, and human agency. Looking ahead, as Olesen (2005) argues, “it is not likely that any [feminist] orthodoxy . . . will prevail; nor . . . should it” (p. 259). More important,

early millennial feminist qualitative research . . . offers strategies to lay foundations for action on critical projects, large and small, to realize social justice in different feminist versions, a challenge that thoughtful feminists must accept and carry forward. The range of problems is too great and the issues are too urgent to do otherwise. (p. 260)

## The Gendering of Institutions: Feminist Views on Social Change

“Gender, the workhorse concept of feminist theory and research, has . . . undergone changes that make contemporary use of this concept much more complex.”

—Olesen, 2005, p. 250

With this background on the history, variety, and power of feminist thought, I now delve deeper into how feminist scholars have contributed to thinking about institutional and social change. Instead of approaching gender as a simple matter of biology, feminists have created a rich body of literature that views gender as “constructed within social, historical, material and discursive practices” (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006, p. 273). One of the most interesting and pervasive themes in this literature is how gender is constructed within the different arenas of public and private life. For many feminists, the conceptual split between these domains—the “masculine” world of work versus the “feminine” world of family—is deeply embedded in our institutions and lies at the heart of sexual oppression (Bulbeck, 1998; Enloe, 2004; Fletcher, 1998; Marchand & Runyan, 2011a; Marshall, 1984; Peterson, 2003). As Ferguson (1984) explains, historically the production of goods occurred in the home, and women were integral to the family’s role as a “producing unit” (p. 47). But with the advent of the industrial society, work was redefined as something that occurred outside the home; and by the end of the 19th century, the middle-class family was transformed from a producer of consumer goods to a “consuming unit in capitalist society” (p. 47). Moreover, each realm was accorded a specific set of values: The public realm embodies the values of rational thought, material success, and competition; the private realm represents the values of nurturance, empathy, and connection. The confinement of feminine values to the domestic realm, many feminists theorize, has marginalized and silenced women, producing serious

consequences at both micro and macro levels of society (see, e.g., Eisenstein, 1991; Enloe, 2004; Ferguson, 1984; Marchand & Runyan, 2011a).

Within this context, the family has been the object of considerable feminist scrutiny as the site where proscribed gender roles converge, creating “a highly contradictory burden” (Ferguson, 1984, p. 48). On the one hand, given the exclusion of feminine values from the public realm, the family is the primary vehicle for meeting human needs for nurturance and intimacy; it is also responsible for human biological reproduction (Eisenstein, 1991). By rejecting the “fictive boundary between public and private spheres,” feminists have revealed both the “intolerable pressure” that results from placing the full burden of nurturance on the family and the barrenness of a public domain that “precludes these kinds of supportive relationships from flourishing” (Eisenstein, 1991, p. 95). On the other hand, feminists also have exposed the ugly side of family life, linking domestic violence and abuse to patriarchal norms that sanction authoritarian behaviors within the family sphere. As hooks (2000) describes:

Family exists as a space wherein we are socialized from birth to accept and support forms of oppression. . . . Even as we are loved and cared for in families, we are simultaneously taught that this love is not as important as having power to dominate others. (p. 38)

These insights have greatly enriched contemporary understanding of the family. Still, as hooks points out, some feminists alienated potential allies by demonizing the family, failing to recognize that for many marginalized people, the family is “the least oppressive institution” (p. 38). Not surprisingly, the family remains a problematic subject that continues to be debated today.

Feminist scholars also have made a significant contribution to our understanding of corporations, government, and other bureaucratic institutions, focusing on the

gendered nature of organizational life. Ferguson (1984) weaves the public/private distinction into her central argument that bureaucracies are not neutral entities but structures held in place by powerful self-justifying patriarchal norms and rules that “manipulate, twist, and damage human possibility” in pursuit of capitalist goals (p. xii). Joan Acker (1991) explains the “extraordinary persistence . . . of the subordination of women” by pointing to gender assumptions that devalue women yet are deeply embedded in organizational processes, language, and metaphors (p. 166). Marshall (1984) and Luce Irigaray (1991) both question efforts to ensure greater equality of women within organizational structures, noting that this approach forces women to measure themselves again male standards. “Demanding to be equal presupposes a term of comparison. Equal to what?” asks Irigaray (1991, p. 32). Eisenstein (1991) observes that despite the entry of more women, organizations have generally resisted “the infusion of ‘women-centred’ values into patriarchal culture and politics” (p. 82).

Fletcher’s (1998, 1999) research on relational practice is notable because it combines many streams of feminist thought in a coherent theory of gender and organization. Arguing that “the current definition of work in organizational discourse is . . . premised on a gendered dichotomy between the public and private spheres of life,” Fletcher (1998) hypothesizes that the feminine voice is likely to be absent because “the knowledge production in each sphere proceeds independently, resulting in two separate discourses, each with certain ‘truth rules’” (p. 165). Studying the interactions of women and men in an engineering firm that equates work with technical skill, Fletcher reveals how feminine “relational practice” is devalued and “disappeared” because it challenges the gendered “truth rules” of behavior (p. 175). Her findings point to the theoretical

weakness of most organizational change theories and initiatives. Despite assertions about the importance of including private/feminine values, most efforts to do so are likely to be stymied by “powerful forces that silence and suppress” and “systematically” devalue behaviors “coded as private sphere (i.e., feminine)” (p. 181).

Finally, shifting to the macro level, many feminist scholars also have examined the gendered nature of nations, international institutions, and transnational corporations. Reiterating the theme that “one of the most potent mechanisms for political silencing is dichotomizing ‘public’ and ‘private,’” Cynthia Enloe (2004) reveals embedded “myths of femininity” that silence and marginalize women internationally (p. 73). For example, she contends that “private/public dichotomies” prevent public discussion about violence against women and ensure the silence of many women who “have been targets of that violence. Together these two silencings have set back genuine democratization as much as has any military coup or distortive electoral system” (p. 73). Enloe also notes the insidious relationship between violence and nationalism, arguing that “masculinized movement leaders” convert experiences of violence against women into imagined insults to the nation (p. 80). Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler (2002) theorize that women have an ambivalent and paradoxical relationship with the concept of nation: Because they bear children and are largely responsible for the “construction of ‘home,’” women often are valorized for their role in maintaining national culture and values; at the same time, their membership in the nation is gendered and marginalized (p. 335). Reflecting on the different positioning of women in national discourses, Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler (2002) and Cockburn (1998) examine how women use relational skills to resolve conflict across



national and ethnic boundaries, a conclusion consistent with Fletcher's (1998) work on relational theory at the organizational level.

This distinction between public and private realms is an important theme in the feminist literature. As I discuss in the next chapter, it also appears in the work of several feminist globalization scholars (see, e.g., Marchand & Runyan, 2011a, 2011b; Peterson, 2003).

### **Interlude: The Case for Feminist Optimism**

“Feminist thought has opted for a sort of optimism of the will and has taken a stand against both nostalgia and melancholia. It stresses instead the need for a positive ethics . . . based on the necessity of meeting the challenges of the contemporary transformations with creativity and courage.”

—Braidotti, 2007, p. 72

While researching this study, I came across a lovely essay by Eisenstein titled “The Case for Feminist Optimism” (1991). A self-avowed optimist, I was delighted to discover that “a commitment to optimism itself [is] a political stance, a belief in the future in order to try and ensure that a future is possible” (Eisenstein, 1991, p. 73). Weighing the partial success of feminism against the challenges that lie ahead, Eisenstein chooses not to succumb to despair, referring instead to Ruddick's (1980) observation that the social role of motherhood predisposes women to “clear-signed cheerfulness” and “a matter-of-fact willingness to continue . . . to welcome life despite its conditions” (p. 351). Ruddick goes on to say, “In the face of danger, disappointment, and unpredictability, mothers are . . . aware that a kind, resilient good humor is a virtue” (p. 351). Looking ahead, Eisenstein (1991) argues that women's optimism should be nurtured, and in that spirit she suggests we give “proper credit” to feminist achievements, measuring them “not against what needs to be accomplished but against the strength of the obstacles overcome to date” (p. 85).

It is not hard for me to step into Eisenstein's optimism and Ruddick's "resilient good humor," both refreshing alternatives to facing the apocalyptic images I describe in Chapter II. But Eisenstein was writing 20 years ago, and Ruddick was writing more than 30 years ago, and their topic was not the catastrophic changes wrought by globalization and the unremitting accumulation of wealth. Would I find more recent examples of optimism in the work of feminist writers?

In fact, I did. Moghadam (2009), for example, is careful to present a balanced view of globalization: "We are living in times of insecurity, instability, and risk, but equally in times of opportunity and possibility" (p. ix). As I discuss further in Chapter IV, this balance also is evident in the work of other feminist contributors to critical globalization studies who, like Moghadam, argue against the idea that neoliberalism and capitalist globalization are inescapable and irreversible (see, e.g., DAWN, 2010; Marchand & Runyan, 2011d; Peterson, 2003). In this sense, optimism continues to thread through the literature as a political stance. Consistent with this, Braidotti (2007) observes in her broad survey of emerging 21st-century feminist epistemologies:

At the start of the third millennium, feminist intellectual and political energies are converging on the ethical project of contributing to the construction of social horizons of hope. The challenge is how to put "active" back into activism. In so far as this position entails accountability for one's historical situation, it expresses not only a sense of social responsibility, but also an affect. Hannah Arendt used to call it: love for the world. (pp. 72-73)

It is important to state that feminist optimism is a conscious choice, an attitude or standpoint from which new possibilities can be envisioned. As Braidotti's (2007) comments underscore, there are other important themes underlying hope, including an ethic of care and a commitment to meaningful action. This willingness to embrace optimism in the face of uncertainty also may help to explain another important attribute

of feminism. Unlike many other “isms”—Marxism, communism, capitalism—feminism as a discipline refrains from one-size-fits-all explanations and solutions. “It is a great psychological temptation,” Susan Griffin (2008) notes, “to hope and even believe that all misfortune, loss, death, or any form of evil can be mastered by one idea, one grand plan, in the hands of one infallible leader” (p. 279). Instead, feminism holds up a mirror and poses questions about the unknown territory beyond modernity and postmodernity.

Equally important, feminist optimism is supported by a tradition of advocacy and vision. During this journey of inquiry, I have come to understand the relationship between epistemology and vision, realizing that different ways of knowing give access to different visions of human possibility. As Mohanty (2003) argues, “a just and inclusive feminist politics for the present needs to also have a vision for transformation and strategies for realizing this vision” (p. 3). True to her word, she proceeds to lay out a “bare-bones description” of her own “feminist vision”:

A world where women and men are free to live creative lives, in security and with bodily health and integrity, . . . where free and imaginative exploration of the mind is a fundamental right; a vision in which economic stability, ecological sustainability, racial equality, and the redistribution of wealth form the material basis of people’s well-being [and] democratic and socialist practices and institutions provide the conditions for public participation and decision making. (pp. 3-4)

Absent this kind of liberatory vision, grounded in a tangible description of a better world, optimism may seem a naïve and ineffectual perspective from which to address the complex problems of our time. However, taken together, optimism and vision may be feminists’ most powerful and lasting contribution.

### **The Web of Significance: A Context for Gender**

“Finally, we have got somehow to get beyond the obsessive polarity and pendulum swing between sameness and difference, and get used to some new ways of thinking about gender in its social, economic and political context.”

—Eisenstein, 1991, p. 112

Despite the extensive and obvious changes that have occurred within feminist theory, it is important to return to some of the observations I made at the beginning of this chapter. In my experience as a practitioner, one of the least understood and most abused notions about gender is contained in the debate about sameness and difference. Discussion of the similarities and differences between men and women goes on everywhere, all the time, and almost inevitably devolves into unproductive debates over stereotypes. Underneath these debates lie a number of unanswered—and unexplored—questions: Are there genuine differences between men and women? If so, how do we account for these differences? Are they a function of nurture or nature? Reflecting on the considerable scholarship that has been dedicated to this issue, it appears that the confusion can be attributed at least in part to the tendency of Westerners to think in terms of either/or binaries —masculine/feminine, nature/nurture, public/private, mind/body—a legacy of Cartesian philosophy (Bulbeck, 1998; see also MacKinnon, 1987). However, to better grasp the implications of this debate, it is necessary to take a closer look at the key issues causing the confusion.

Both Eisenstein (1991) and Bulbeck (1998) provide clarity by distinguishing the key ideas involved in the sameness/difference debate. According to Eisenstein (1991), feminists tend to migrate toward one of two theoretical views: The first (attributed to de Beauvoir and later Friedan) is that sexual oppression is a result of biological difference and the resulting “social adaptations” demanded of women. In this view, “the path to

liberation” is achieved by eliminating difference and achieving “sameness or androgyny” (Eisenstein, 1991, p. 99). Bulbeck (1998) calls this the “minimalist” perspective, which holds that aside from unimportant physical differences, women are essentially the same as men and so should be accorded political, social, and economic equality (p. 10). The second view is the “woman-centered” perspective (associated with writers like Griffin and Irigaray), which argues for the “the intrinsic worth of women’s differences as a source of moral and political values” (Eisenstein, 1991, p. 100). “To these writers, the goal [is] not to diminish female difference but, on the contrary, to celebrate it” (p. 100). Bulbeck (1998) calls this the “maximalist” perspective and notes that coexisting with this positive and celebratory view is a second strand that equates difference with the “curse of oppression” (p. . 10).

These viewpoints on sameness/difference are expressed and debated extensively, particularly in feminist literature from the 1970s through the early 1990s. Gilligan (1977), for example, proposes a view of difference in her article on women’s voice, arguing that gender is understood as two contrasting “constructions of the moral domain—one traditionally associated with masculinity and the public world of social power, the other with femininity and the privacy of domestic interchange” (p. 489). Belenky et al. (1986) follow in her path, articulating a model for understanding women’s different ways of developing and learning. Ferguson (1984) contends that “having been excluded, historically, from public life, and still occupying largely peripheral and powerless positions when they do enter that realm, women have developed a different voice, a submerged discourse” (p. 23). Ruddick (1980) proposes “maternal thinking” as a “social category,” not a biological one (p. 346).

I could continue—the references are extensive—but I want to make a different point at this juncture. Returning to my initial observations of the practitioner world, there is a stunning absence of critical thinking about gender distinctions and, more important, a complete lack of awareness of the subsequent dialogue that has occurred between feminist scholars over the last two decades. By the early 1990s, the sameness/difference debate was being significantly altered by postcolonialist scholars and feminists of color who were questioning the underlying premise of sameness among women as well as the assumptions of difference contained in the binaries of masculine/feminine, Western/non-Western (Other), and First World/Third World (Bulbeck, 1998; Cocks, 1989; Harding, 1997; hooks, 2000). Bulbeck's (1998) cogent inquiry into these implicit dualisms exposes the elitism, racism, and ethnicism underlying much of Western feminism. For example, she points out that white Western women tend to stereotype non-Western women as “more oppressed or backward” (p. 221). In an organizational setting, Bell and Nkomo (2001) reveal how race and privilege create distinct differences between white and black women's experiences of corporate life, differences that are largely unacknowledged and never discussed openly. By revealing underlying biases and prejudices, these and other scholars have altered both the content and direction of the sameness/difference debate.

Reflecting on this scholarly discussion, Cockburn (1998) notes that most feminists are “anti-essentialist,” meaning they have rejected beliefs that women are either innately different from men or universally similar to one another. Instead, she argues, most feminists have come to recognize that women's oppression can be better understood as a function of “power relations” (p. 44). Although I agree with Cockburn, I wonder if

her remarks can be generalized beyond a small group of feminist scholars and activists. In the business world, stereotypes, universalism, dualities, and essentialist thinking about gender abound. A recent study on women in business by McKinsey & Company, for example, concludes that women are distinct from men because their “double burden—motherhood and management—drains energy in a particularly challenging way” and that “they tend to experience emotional ups and downs often and more intensely than most men do” (Barsh, Cranston, & Craske, 2008, p. 36). What is most insidious about this article is the failure of the authors to inquire in a mindful way about these observations, leaving the reader to conclude that they are a result of inherent and universal biological differences between men and women. Again, as Ferguson (1984) notes, “it is not biology *per se* but the web of significance within which biology is embedded and from which it takes its meaning that makes gender differences intelligible” (p. 28). By failing to show any curiosity about the complex “web of significance” in operation, the authors of the McKinsey report were conveniently able to sidestep the difficult subject of power—a subject I now turn to in Chapter IV.

## Chapter IV: Power

*A few years ago I ran a leadership program in Prague for a group of Eastern European professionals, members of a large multinational financial services corporation. My Dutch coleader, Pleuntje, and I were part of an international team of educators who had led this program dozens of times in locations around the world. The program was well regarded by both the company and the participants, who usually reported greater self-awareness and a new ability to build collaborative relationships within the organization.*

*But this group in Prague was different. From the very beginning, the participants showed a sort of begrudging compliance. Yes, they would follow instructions, but often with a great deal of pushback. During large-group discussions, many would be talking among themselves, disrupting the class. And although they were outspoken about the content of the program, we had the sense there was a lot they were not saying.*

*Both Pleuntje and I have worked with people of many different nationalities, but we found this group of Russians, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, and Romanians a real challenge. We tried pretty much everything we could, pushing ourselves to be as dynamic, transparent, and direct as possible. In the end, we managed to complete the program without completely disgracing ourselves, but we left exhausted and puzzled.*

*As sometimes happens, the real learning came later, when I thought about what had occurred. My first realization was that we all had brought “baggage” into the room. Although I certainly was aware of how the group’s countries had changed with the end of communism, had I really appreciated what these people*



*had experienced in their lifetimes? I remembered in particular stories I had heard about Romanians, who reportedly had suffered greatly under communist rule. How had this impacted the participants in the program? If I were in their shoes, wouldn't I have approached the experience with a well-deserved wariness and skepticism? And here I was, a nice middle-class American lady, flown over to "teach" them something they presumably didn't already know. What did they think of me? Did I represent the American dream portrayed in American movies and television shows? Or did I represent the darker side of Western imperialism, America's post-9/11 militarism perhaps? Was there something else I couldn't see given the blindness of privilege? Maybe I would have been more effective if I had just pulled up a chair and listened.*

*In the end, I was left admiring the participants' spirit, their ability to challenge openly what they questioned or just ignore what they didn't want to hear. I realized that we expect (and receive) a level of compliance from our corporate employees that is, frankly, stunning. We have pretty much trained the rebellion out of most of them. If my trainees really will do anything I ask them to, what is my training accomplishing? What good is self-awareness without freedom? So the rebel inside me would like to pay tribute to that defiant bunch in Prague.*

*Wherever they are, I hope they have kept it up!*

### **Who Gains and Who Loses?**

"Social and political thinking becomes problematic if it does not contain a well-developed conception of power."

—Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 110

As Marchand and Runyan (2011a) note, both popular and scholarly literature tend to present globalization as a "unitary *force majeure* out of nowhere" rather than as a set of "multi-dimensional" processes that are neither inevitable nor unchangeable (p. 1).

They point out that this narrative of inevitability is laced with assumptions drawn from neoliberal ideology and post-9/11 fears that only further justify the rampant consumerism and hypermasculine militarism that characterize this period of globalized growth. As Moghadam (2009) argues, although “globalization is certainly the result of forces such as technology, management innovations, and the market . . . it does not just ‘happen.’ It is, rather, engineered and promoted by identifiable groups of people within identifiable organizations and states” (p. 21). In other words, globalization may not be a neutral, faceless phenomenon, but a process of social change shaped by power. This chapter delves into the topic of power, seeking first to understand the nature of power and second to explore how the dynamics of power operate with regard to growth and accumulation. This discussion, then, is focused on my third research question: Who gains and who loses if we maintain or alter the discourses of growth, and by which mechanisms of power?

The process of examining this question also serves to develop the link between power and practical wisdom, or the Aristotelian notion of *phronesis*, which I introduced in Chapter I. As Flyvbjerg (2001) notes, we are engaging in *phronesis* when we reflect on the ethical aspects of our lived (context-dependent) experiences, using values and common sense to guide our thoughts and action. Core to this is the “practical question of what is good and bad for humans” (p. 101), as well as, I would add, for nonhumans and the biosphere. Clearly we are engaged in a global debate on this question. But instead of framing this debate as a dialogue on values, much of the wisdom is obscured by illogical nonsense masquerading as “truth.” In the face of this, Foucault argues, the “political task” of social inquiry is to “criticize the workings of institutions, which appear to be

both neutral and independent . . . in such a manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight them” (Chomsky & Foucault, 1974, p. 171). In this spirit, this chapter lays the groundwork for a values-based practical philosophy that confronts and evaluates how power is used to define—and contest—fundamental notions about human capability and potential. In Chapter VI, I build on this foundation to propose my own interpretation of *phronesis*.

### **Understanding Power**

“At issue is the extent to which positivist and modernist orientations misconceive how power is produced. In particular they fail to apprehend power that operates less by direct coercion than by *normalization* of governing codes.”

—Peterson, 2003, p. 14

**Modernist and critical approaches to power.** Over the past few decades, numerous social and political theories of power have emerged, reflecting alternative paradigms and approaches. Prominent among these are modernist theories that assume that power resides in formal, hierarchical structures that can be deployed in a rational manner to improve efficiency and performance (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). An early example is Weber’s (1919/1946) influential essay on politics, which depicted “the state” as a “relation of men dominating men,” and proposed a number of legitimate forms of domination (power), including traditional (e.g., patriarchal), legal, and charismatic, defined as an “extraordinary and personal *gift of grace*” (p. 78). A few decades later, Dahl (1969) again brought the subject of power to the forefront of political science. Taking a behaviorist approach that focused on power as an observable relationship between people, Dahl posited this now iconic definition of power: “*A* has power over *B* to the extent that he can get *B* to do something that *B* would not otherwise do” (p. 80).

Since that time, modernist scholars have given a great deal of consideration to mechanisms that control opposing interests to serve presumably more important organizational (and societal) interests (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). Many of these ideas are now contested; however the influence of Dahl and other positivist power theorists lingers in the world of business and human resources.

Whereas modernist approaches to power view conflict as a something to be managed or controlled, critical approaches have developed from a different tradition, the Marxist notion that “conflict rather than cooperation is the basis of organizing” (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006, p. 251). This perspective was reflected in Bachrach and Baratz’s (1962) critique of Dahl, who, they argued, revealed only the “first face” of power, one “embodied” and “reflected in ‘concrete decisions’” and observable behaviors (p. 948). Missing, they noted, was the “second face” of power, which reflects “bias” embedded in “dominant values” and enabled by the “*status quo*” and the dynamics of “*nondecision-making*” (p. 952). In his groundbreaking work *Power: A Radical View* (1974), Lukes argued that both Dahl and his critics had missed a critical third dimension of power. He introduced the concept of *latent conflict*, “the supreme and most insidious exercise of power to prevent people . . . from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things” (p. 24).

Lukes’s (1974) work marked a significant shift from modernist to critical theory as a means of understanding power. Most notably, Lukes was influenced by Antonio Gramsci’s notion of *hegemony*, which describes how dominated groups give consent to their oppressors because domination becomes part of their everyday reality (Hatch &

Cunliffe, 2006). In fact Lukes quotes Gramsci, noting that subordinated groups show a tendency “for reasons of submission and intellectual subordination” to adopt “a conception which is not its own but is borrowed from another group” (as cited in Lukes, 1974, p. 47). As Sinclair (2007) notes, Lukes’s arguments were pivotal: “Power was exposed as a deeply structural property that predetermines how people see the world, without them necessarily being aware of it” (p. 82).

Although Lukes and other theorists provide a crucial backdrop to this inquiry on power, they do not offer the only authoritative view on this topic. As feminist scholars have repeatedly pointed out, many of these discussions on power fail to address gender, race, ethnicity, or other “structural hierarchies” of power such as national origin and class (Peterson, 2003, p. 8). With this in mind, and building on this brief historical sketch, I turn to a more in-depth discussion of feminist approaches to these critical dimensions of power.

**Discourse, domination, and hegemonic masculinities.** Peterson (2003), who is quoted at the beginning of this section, argues that by focusing on observable “coercion,” modernist scholars failed to adequately understand “how power is produced” (p. 14). In a similar vein, Flyvbjerg (2001) notes that many power theorists, including Lukes, have been limited by the assumption that power is “an entity” that can be acquired, leading them to focus on the location or outcomes of power rather than the exercise of power across a diffuse network of relationships (p.116). From this alternate perspective, power operates indirectly, through what Peterson (2003) calls the “normalization of governing codes” that are embedded in language, “*producing* power and disciplined subjects” (p.14).

As I discuss in Chapter III, a number of feminists have drawn on the works of poststructuralists, particularly Foucault (1972, 1982, 1984), to bring “attention to the relationship between knowledge, discourse, and power” (Fletcher, 1998, p.164). Three aspects of this culture of inquiry have been particularly useful. First, poststructuralists argue that behavioral norms and patterns of control are constructed through language; power is understood as “constantly being constructed and reinforced through discourse and discursive relations” (Sinclair, 2007, p. 78). Second, poststructuralists claim that knowledge creation is “an exercise in power where only some voices are heard and only some experience is counted as knowledge” (Fletcher, 1998, p. 164). Third, poststructuralist theory does not view power as one-sided, monolithic, or absolute, but as something that can be resisted by challenging unexamined assumptions or passively refusing to cooperate (Fletcher, 1998; Sinclair, 2007).

By focusing on discourse, poststructuralists seek insights into more liberating ways of thinking, speaking, and behaving. Similarly, by focusing on the gendered aspects of discourse, feminists hope to reveal “relationships of power and domination,” bringing structures that suppress and oppress women and other marginalized groups into the open (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006, p. 274). In an early example, Ferguson (1984) looks at organizations from the perspective of *bureaucratic discourse*, which she defines as “ways of speaking and writing,” disguised in neutral administrative language, that create and reinforce hierarchy and patriarchal control within capitalist society (p. 6). Fletcher (1998) applies relational theory to expose and question the masculine “definition of work in organizational discourse . . . by calling attention to the feminine as a voice that has been silenced or obscured” (p. 165). In the global arena, Enloe (1989) explores how

discourses on international politics—on subjects ranging from diplomatic marriage, tourism, and global retail manufacturing, to the banana trade—mask relationships “infused with power, usually unequal power backed up by public authority,” that silence women’s voices and obscure their labor (p. 195). And Marchand and Runyan (2011a) argue that the central discourses of globalization are infused with “gendered, classed, racialized and heterosexist” notions that exert power because they are generally invisible and unquestioned (p. 16).

Focusing on gendered discourses, Moghadam (2009) suggests that “heroic” or “hegemonic masculinity” is a “key concept in gender analysis” (p. 29). The term *hegemonic masculinity* refers to internalized and broadly accepted cultural norms for “real manhood” that may shift over time or across cultures (p. 29). In the United States, Moghadam explains, “hegemonic masculinity is defined by physical strength and bravado, exclusive heterosexuality, suppression of ‘vulnerable’ emotions, . . . economic independence, authority over women and other men, and intense interest in ‘sexual conquest’” (p. 29). In contrast, Middle Eastern hegemonic masculinity is more likely to value “personal honor” or the capacity to control women’s behavior within the home and community (p. 132). For many feminists, discourses that create and perpetuate hegemonic masculinities provide particular insights into the operation of power and international conflict. For example, Moghadam argues that competing masculinities helped ignite both World War I and World War II, and a number of “post–Cold War” conflicts, and led to “the emergence of a global weapons market” (pp. 29-30). Even more

unsettling, she contends, in today's world, competing masculinities are a recognizable force fueling the conflict between American interests and militant Islamic resistance.<sup>7</sup>

Feminist scholars also have explored how hegemonic masculinities perpetuate women's inequality and oppression in a globalized world. In one excellent example, Swords (2010) examines the gender dynamics in Chiapas, Mexico, a region hit hard by the economic consequences of neoliberalism and well known for its armed resistance to the implementation of North American Free Trade Agreement initiatives in the mid-1990s. Swords notes that scholars often overemphasize women's perspectives and fail to adequately "attend to" hegemonic masculinities, which prevents a full understanding of the "whole complex of gender relations" (p. 126). In Chiapas, she writes, the ongoing economic and political challenges have "put a strain on men's (stereotypical) roles as fathers and providers," driving many men to reassert their identities through violence, aggression, and "hyper-masculinity" (p. 122). These behaviors, she contends, reinforce traditional "stereotypes that exclude women [and] undervalue their labor or make it invisible" (p. 125). Exacerbating the problem of behaviors and stereotypes are "hero-centered" stories that focus on "great" men, in particular Marcos, a legendary resistance leader (p. 125). Fortunately the people in Chiapas have benefited from educational workshops and community organizing that built awareness of the gendered aspects of the neoliberal policies impacting their community. Swords's conclusion: "Interpersonal relationships based on non-violence and solidarity," as opposed to hegemonic and gendered stereotypes, are possible if the parties are willing to engage in "listening and mutual respect" (p. 131).

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<sup>7</sup> Moghadam's thinking adds the element of gender to Lifton's (2005) characterization of the "apocalyptic face-off" between the United States and Islamic extremists.



**Structural hierarchies and the feminization of the powerless.** Almost three decades ago, in 1984, Ferguson in the United States and Marshall in the United Kingdom published simultaneous and complementary research on how processes of domination are ingrained and perpetuated through the hegemonic processes of discourse. Referencing Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/2000), Marshall (1984) discusses the difference between "dominant" and "subdominant," or "muted," groups:

To avoid negative sanctions, the subdominant group must be continually sensitive to the dominant group's needs, and play down its own. It therefore makes understanding the world around it a priority. Listening is the basic skill members develop to achieve this. (p. 60)

Knowing that they are perceived as a threat by the dominant group, women and other marginalized groups learn to self-manage by suppressing communication and developing pleasing behaviors and other "styles of interaction" defined as feminine within organizational and social discourse (Ferguson, 1984, p. 92). Ferguson (1984) refers to this as the "feminization" of the powerless, noting that even male bureaucrats (dominated by hierarchy) and clients (dominated by bureaucratic process) develop "supportive, nonassertive, [and] attentive" behaviors when subordinated (p. 93). "These traits have very little to do with being biologically female," she concludes, "but they have a great deal to do with being politically powerless" (p. 92).

Reflecting on these and subsequent analyses of gender, Peterson (2003) declares that feminism's "singularly most transformative" contribution has been to describe how the "symbolic, discursive, cultural . . . privileging of masculinity" normalizes power relations across all hierarchies of power, regardless of biology or gender (p. 14). She uses the term *structural hierarchies* to refer to the array of inequalities that persist and

intersect across the categories of gender, race, ethnicity, class, and nation (p. 8). And she argues that preexisting and deeply ingrained notions of masculinity (e.g., hegemonic masculinities) are deployed to determine norms of behavior across all structural hierarchies. Her central theme is that masculine concepts do not necessarily refer to men but to those who are perceived to be more powerful within any hierarchy.

Correspondingly, feminine concepts do not refer to the biologically female but to hierarchical subordinates. Peterson captures these insights in this remarkably lucid summary:

The point here is that diverse hierarchies are *linked and ideologically “naturalized” by denigration of the feminine*. In other words, casting the subordinate as feminine—lacking agency, control, reason, skills, or culture—devalorizes not only women but also racially, culturally, or economically marginalized men. (p. 14)

**Resistance and respectful struggle.** It’s important at this point to reiterate that power should not be viewed as absolute, nor should women or subordinate members of other hierarchies be essentialized as helpless victims. In fact, as Flyvbjerg (2001) says, power and resistance exist simultaneously—“where there is power there is resistance” (p. 121). With this in mind, hooks (2000) cautions that “feminist ideology should not encourage . . . women to believe they are powerless. It should clarify for women the powers they exercise daily and show them ways these powers can be used to resist sexist domination and exploitation” (p. 95). She advocates in particular for the “power of disbelief,” which allows women and men to “reject prevailing notions of power and envision new perspectives” (p. 93). This capacity to hold multiple and shifting perspectives—“both/and” thinking—is echoed throughout much of feminist literature and is key to understanding liberatory resistance movements, including the transnational feminist movements I discuss shortly.

Invariably, changes in perspective about assumed realities also involve what Sinclair (2007) calls “identity work,” a demanding process that requires individuals to “relinquish some certainty or deeply held ways of understanding themselves” (pp. 89-90). As Essed (1996) writes, the notion of identity erroneously carries a “static connotation,” as if one “has” a singular unchangeable identity (p. 129). Similarly, in their studies on women’s peace movements, Cockburn (1998) and Yuval-Davis (1993) both argue that identities are not fixed but can be altered in positive ways through dialogue and exposure to different perspectives that shatter embedded discourses and expose oppressive assumptions.

Although this type of awakening often occurs as part of cross-boundary dialogues between individuals who, for example, have different ethnic backgrounds or nationalities, Yuval-Davis (1993) argues that the process of exploring identities should not be confused with the simple process of “empowerment,” which implies “a non-problematic transition from individual to collective power” (p. 181). Rather, recognizing the multiple dimensions and contradictions any person might bring into these situations (e.g., gender, nationality, ethnicity, class, etc.), she suggests that

all feminist (and other forms of democratic) politics should be viewed as a form of coalition politics in which the differences . . . are recognized and given a voice, without fixating the boundaries of this coalition in terms of “who” we are but in terms of what we want to achieve. (pp.188-189)

As an example, Yuval-Davis cites the process of forming the organization Women Against Fundamentalism (WAF) in 1989, in response to the fatwa issued against Salman Rushdie. In this case, she points out, there was “no attempt to ‘assimilate’ the women who came from . . . different backgrounds” (p. 191). Instead “differences . . . are recognized and respected. But what is celebrated is the common political stance”

(pp. 191-192). This process of shifting perspectives, claims Yuval-Davis, is decidedly not one that produces homogeneity or uniformity of thought. Instead it produces “transversalism,” a form of dialogue, distinct from “universalism,” that allows participants to keep their “own perspective while empathizing and respecting others” (p. 193).

As Yuval-Davis (1993) notes, the exploration of dialogue and the democratic process is an important contribution being made by feminist scholars. In particular, she credits Patricia Hill Collins’s work, which builds on standpoint theory and recognizes the importance of hearing and respecting the “partiality” of each group’s “situated knowledge” (as cited in Yuval-Davis, 1993, p. 192). Cockburn’s research (1998) on women’s projects in Northern Ireland, Israel/Palestine, and Bosnia/Herzegovina documents the emergence of the democratic process as a key element in understanding “*how peace is done*,” how a group of women without any formal power or authority “arrange to fill the space between their national differences with words in place of bullets” (p. 1). Cockburn’s research led her to the work of William Connolly (1991), who introduces the notion of “agonistic democracy,” the “practice of democracy . . . that responds to the problematic relation between identity and difference” (p. x). According to Cockburn (1998), agonistic democracy does not seek consensus; instead it “settles for the difficult reality of unavoidable, unending, careful, respectful struggle” (p. 216). From my perspective, the term *respectful struggle* is a valuable way to summarize the key elements of this discussion. In these two words, Cockburn has captured the dynamic essence of the democratic process, calling to mind the arduous (yet often rewarding)

procedure of shedding assumptions, clarifying values, and finding commitment to a larger purpose that is essential to meaningful social change.

### **Power, Privilege, and Growth: Who Gains, Who Loses—and How?**

“There is a price to be paid for prosperity. Capitalism . . . comes at a cost. Do we want capitalism with a cause or a curse?”

—Ridderstråle and Nordström, 2003, p. 285

In *Karaoke Capitalism* (2003), Swedish authors Jonas Ridderstråle and Kjell Nordström note that Western societies are reshaping or abandoning those institutions that traditionally have provided collective meaning for individuals and society. Government, neighborhoods, religion, and family structures on which we depended in the past are less likely to provide safety nets, moving us from a “world of dependability into one of individual accountability” (p. 53). In this void, they argue, market capitalism emerges as the most critical contemporary institution, bringing with it sweeping social change. Like many feminist scholars, Ridderstråle and Nordström refuse to succumb to the doomsday theme that permeates much of the globalization literature; instead they are looking for nuggets of “inspirational gold” in the “gutters of commerce and society” (p. 9). Still they are clear about what’s at stake: “Think about this,” they ask, “are we adopting a system where more opportunity also by design leads to more misery; where growth and grief go hand in hand; where inequality nurtures the very qualities of the model?” (p. 297).

These questions are both pragmatic and ethical, exemplifying phronesis, the kind of values-based rationality needed to confront the key social issues of our times. Echoing Ridderstråle and Nordström’s (2003) theme, Hillman (1995) concludes that Western capitalism has “become the fundamental force in human society, and in the manner of any monotheism, promulgates a fundamentalist faith in its basic tenets” (p. 3). He goes

on to make an important connection between growth and power, emphasizing both the power of ideas and, specifically, the power of growth as an idea:

Because growth invites images from nature like burgeoning trees and ripening fruit, and the longings of childhood to get bigger and stronger and take charge, the word “growth” delivers the heroic message more effectively than concepts such as “progress,” “advancement” or “development.” Growth has come to be a major indication of power . . . since the ability to grow assumes an innate potential to survive and to win out in the competitive jungle. (p.29)

In other words, if power creates truth, or the “types of discourse which society accepts and allows to operate as true,” and if the imperative to grow is not only deemed to be “true” but is indicative of power itself, then we are indeed dealing with a formidable idea (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 125).

Wallerstein (2004) contends that the modern world-system is capitalist because it places the “*endless* accumulation of capital” as its highest priority, over and above any other concern or consideration (p. 24). From this perspective, he argues, the structure of the capitalist system and the behavior of its principal actors make sense: Although the world economy needs an “interstate system” as well as the “periodic appearance” of a dominant state or set of states to function properly, “the priority of capitalists” is always the accumulation of capital, not the running of these institutions (p. 59). This goal, Wallerstein explains, is best accomplished by ensuring an “ever-shifting set of political and cultural dominances within which capitalist firms maneuver, obtaining their support from the states but seeking to escape their dominance” (p. 59). Similarly, Homer-Dixon (2006) concludes that persistent economic uncertainty and their lack of power compel most workers not only to “play by the rules” but to internalize the rules (including the necessity of growth) as “morally legitimate” (pp. 217-218). This “perverse insecurity,” he argues, helps explain the persistence of the discourses of capitalism (p. 218).

Who exactly benefits from these perpetual games of dominance and uncertainty? Who are “they”? Wallerstein would say that capitalists are the obvious winners in the modern world-system. Other scholars would refer to the beneficiaries of neoliberal globalization and growth in vague terms as “economic elites,” “capitalist elites,” “global elites,” or some other category of privileged elites (e.g., white, male, or Western). To his credit, Sklair (2005) attempts a more specific definition, suggesting that we are seeing the emergence of a “transnational capitalist class”—a combination of corporate, state, professional/technical, and consumer (e.g., “merchants and media”) elites that increasingly are linked by common economic interests (p. 59). The difficulty of definitively naming the beneficiaries of globalization and growth stems from the fact that the effects of globalization and growth are uneven and sometimes contradictory (Kiely, 2009; Marchand & Runyan, 2011a; Peterson, 2003). It may not be enough, then, to ask *who* gains; we may also have to ask *how* they gain—and consider various theories on the intersection of power, growth, and accumulation.

David Harvey (2005), for example, argues that in a post-9/11 militarized world, globalization has morphed into a new form of imperialism led by the United States. In particular, he is interested in understanding how the “logic” of state power is intertwined with neoliberalism and the “dynamics of endless accumulation” (p. 93). He is intrigued by Hannah Arendt’s observation that “a never-ending accumulation of property must be based on a never-ending accumulation of power” (as cited in Harvey, 2005, p. 93). He also credits the “brilliance of Marx’s dialectical method” for showing that instead of producing harmony, market liberalization actually produces “greater levels of social inequality [and] chronic crises of overaccumulation,” which only further feed the impulse

to “absorb surplus capital by imperialist expansion or suffer the consequences of crisis and deflation” (p. 97). This insight, he claims, helps explain why, in an age of market liberalization (e.g., neoliberalism), the United States and its allies have sought to expand their international dominance, employing imperialist strategies to discipline and subjugate less developed countries. The strategy of choice, according to Harvey, is “accumulation by dispossession” (p. 96). By this he means using the “powers of the credit system backed by state powers” to dispossess nations and communities of their resources (p. 98). A case in point: requiring Third World countries to comply with draconian structural adjustment policies to compensate for overborrowing but not imposing similar penalties on the financial institutions complicit in these practices. Harvey also notes that neoliberalism has opened the door to “wholly new mechanisms” of ensuring that the benefits of growth accrue to Northern elites (e.g., imperialist powers), including intellectual property rights, “biopiracy,” and an entirely new array of “fraudulent and predatory” financial practices (p. 97).

Consistent with Harvey’s thinking, world-systems scholar Giovanni Arrighi (2005) describes the role played by the financial sector to contain the demands of nonelites. As I discuss in Chapter II, an important tenet of world-systems theory is that social upheavals of the late 1960s unalterably destabilized the world-system, threatening both the dominance of the United States and the prevailing centrist liberal ideology (Arrighi, 2005; Wallerstein, 2004). Arrighi (2005) argues that “financialization” and the “restructuring of the global political economy” have been powerful methods of undermining and “disorganizing the social forces that were the bearers of these demands in the upheaval of the late 1960s and 1970s” (p. 39). “In a very real sense,” he says, “the



present financial expansion has been primarily an instrument of the containment of the combined demands of the peoples of the non-Western world and of the Western working classes” (p. 39).

On the one hand, both Harvey’s and Arrighi’s arguments call to mind conspiracy theories and small groups of men plotting to take over the world. On the other, their arguments make sense in a context that views power as diffused and embedded in culturally accepted assumptions, beliefs, and discourses that create reality. From this perspective, there is no “man behind the curtain” (as depicted in the 1939 movie *The Wizard of Oz*), but there are dominant discourses that privilege certain groups, inform decision making, justify behavior, and mask the unanticipated and unwanted consequences of action.

McMichael (2005, 2010) provides that context by describing the far-reaching effects of taken-for-granted Western discourses on progress, which view “human history as a linear journey through development stages [from] traditional society to consumer state” (McMichael, 2010, pp. 1-2). Underlying these discourses are powerful assumptions about “traditional” cultures (e.g., primitive and poor) and the imperative to “develop” Third World societies by moving them from subsistence (unpaid and “nonmonetized”) to “productive” (monetarily measurable) activities (McMichael, 2010, p. 2). Central to this shift is the deep-seated belief in development’s “particular calculus of value,” which presumes “that well-being depends on increasing GNP”—the generally accepted monetized measure of growth (McMichael, 2010, p. 2). Clearly those perceived as Western, or modern, or monetarily wealthy stand to gain from what McMichael (2005) alternately refers to as the “development project,” the “globalization project,” and the

“emerging imperial project” (p. 120). More important, McMichael (2010) argues, these discourses of progress have produced two significant casualties. First are “those whose class, gender, racial/ethnic, sexual, or disability identities have served as axes of exploitation, as well as those regarded as redundant or at odds with the values and history of capitalist modernity” (p. 1). The second casualty, he continues, “is the inability or unwillingness to imagine alternatives to development as we know it” (p. 3). For McMichael, this may be the greatest tragedy, for the “categorical violence” directed toward the world’s “‘misfits’ ultimately inhibits social imagination by marginalizing . . . values and knowledges . . . critical to sustaining human communities, rights and perhaps humanity itself” (p. 3).

### **Unmasking Growth: Power Through the Lens of Gender**

“In short, the prevailing world market system, oriented towards unending growth and profit, cannot be maintained unless it can exploit external and internal colonies: nature, women and other people, but it also needs people as consumers who never say: ‘IT IS ENOUGH.’”

—Mies, 1993, p. 62

Interestingly, McMichael (2010) makes almost no reference to feminist scholarship; yet his insights and sensitivities are in concert with feminist approaches that take the standpoint of those who are most negatively impacted by the dominant discourses of modernity. As such, McMichael provides a valuable transition into feminist theories and even deeper levels of inquiry into the nature of growth and power. As I discuss in Chapter II, feminist scholars have a long history as observers and critics of social change. In this section, I turn to an in-depth exploration of feminist critiques of globalization, neoliberalism, and growth. For example, ecofeminists like Indian physicist Vandana Shiva (1988/2010, 1993b) have argued for years that a focus on economic growth brings with it widespread poverty and environmental devastation. What went

wrong, Shiva (1993b) contends, is that the basic premise of development, embedded in Western notions of progress, defines success exclusively in terms of market-based, financial indicators of growth like GNP. Within this context, “the conventional paradigm of development perceives poverty only in terms of an absence of Western consumption patterns” and is consequently unable to find value in “self-provisioning economies” or confront the actual poverty created by the development process (p. 72). Poverty persists, then, because cultural bias makes it difficult to confront real poverty “in terms of threats to a safe and healthy life either due to denial of access to food, water and shelter, or due to lack of protection from hazards in the form of toxic and nuclear threats” (p. 78).

Turning to the relationship between growth and environmental degradation, feminists have consistently argued that the “the privatization” of the “earth’s commons” is inherently unsustainable (Marchand & Runyan, 2011c, p. 103). Shiva’s book *Staying Alive* (1988/2010) documents the historical discourses and myths driving the destruction of Earth’s natural resources, leading to systemic crises in food, water and other planetary “life-support systems” (p. xxxi). In a later essay, Shiva (1993b) notes that even though economic growth is now “recognized as the root of the ecological crisis,” it is nevertheless still “offered as a cure” by Western institutions that continue to market the idea that economic growth actually enhances environmental sustainability (p. 270). Her German colleague, Maria Mies (1993), concurs, pointing out that even for those living “the good life” in the North, “the paradigm of unlimited growth” has not increased happiness, but has instead increased environmental deterioration along with homelessness, crime, and addiction, “and subsequently the quality of life” (pp. 60, 57).

Such is the power of discourse that it restricts consideration of any alternatives to growth even when experience proves otherwise.

**Gender and growth.** Of course, attention to gender is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the feminist inquiry into growth, with its focus on increased global inequalities and the disproportional impact of development and growth on women and girls. From this vantage point, Shiva (1988/2010) writes that “the modes of thinking and action that pass for science and development . . . are not universal and humanly inclusive, as they are made out to be” (p. xxxi). For Marchand and Runyan (2011a), an examination of gender dynamics provides deep insights into “how and to what extent . . . unequal power relations” are woven into and intensified by globalization (p. 12). Many feminist scholars agree that the twin forces of patriarchy and neoliberalism are central to understanding these dynamics, arguing that they “feed off each other . . . to maintain the vast majority of women in a situation of cultural inferiority, social devaluation, economic marginalization, [and] ‘invisibility’” (*Advocacy Guide to Women’s World Demands* as cited in Moghadam, 2009, p. 74).

Considerable scholarship has been devoted to understanding the root causes of the gender inequalities produced by globalization and growth. Pyle (2005) identifies five major trends in globalization that are responsible for distinctly gendered outcomes:

- A large number of nations have “increased the role of markets in the economy,” while simultaneously reducing “the role of government” (p. 250).
- Many Third World and “formerly socialist” countries have shifted their production focus from their own internal needs to an “export-development strategy” (p. 250).

- The global presence of multinational corporations has dramatically increased, particularly within the service and financial services industries.
- The IMF and structural adjustment policies, which dictate the terms for obtaining and repaying loans, “increasingly [are] governed by commercial and financial interests,” requiring participating nations to “open their economies to trade and financial flows, deregulate, and privatize” (p. 251).
- An “overarching” international “shift in the structure of power” has increased the “power of institutions that profess to support market-determined economic outcomes” (p. 251). These institutions include multinational corporations, the IMF, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Taken together, these trends have had a significant impact on the lives of women, particularly in the Third World and among marginalized groups in First World nations. There is, for example, general consensus that structural adjustment policies have been particularly punitive for women and girls in a number of ways. First, policies encouraging the expansion of export crops in developing nations have reduced the amount of available land for subsistence farming and “in-common uses,” making it necessary for women and girls to “walk further, forage longer, and pay more for resources they need” to provide food, firewood, and water for their families (Schaeffer, 2009, p. 96). Additionally, government cutbacks driven by structural adjustment policies have eliminated subsidies for fuel, food, and other basic necessities, and have reduced expenditures on health care, education, and government services (Pyle, 2005; Schaeffer, 2009). As Schaeffer (2009) notes, even though these circumstances impact men, patriarchal norms drive gendered behaviors; hence, women and girls tend to make greater

sacrifices, and learn to survive with fewer basic necessities, less medical care, and less education than do men and boys.

According to Moghadam (2005b), another gendered effect of globalization and growth is the “feminization of labor”: “Global accumulation relies heavily on the work of women” across public and private sectors (p. 51). She adds:

The world economy generates capital largely through the exploitation of labor, but it is not indifferent to the gender and ethnicity of that labor. Gender and racial ideologies have been deployed to favor white male workers and exclude others, but they have also been used to integrate and exploit the labor power of women and of members of disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups in the interest of profit making. (p. 51)

Enloe (1989) and Pyle (2005) contend that as many multinationals have restructured and expanded, they also have pursued policies to locate their production processes in developing countries presumed to have docile women workers willing to work for low wages. This has worked synergistically with many national governments, whose “most-favored growth strategy” has been to attract multinational corporations in response to IMF demands and economic hardship (Pyle, 2005, p. 255). Although on the one hand, this strategy has provided more work for women, there is evidence that women are paid less than men and are more likely to face job dislocations and cutbacks (Moghadam, 2009).

**Informalization, invisibility, and the intimate other.** Because growth and globalization have adversely impacted women by denying them basic rights, necessities, and services, and by placing them in insecure low-wage jobs, many women have been forced to look beyond their national borders for sources of income (Marchand & Runyan, 2011c; Schaeffer, 2009). Their migration has been supported by many of their governments, for whom “exporting surplus labor to other countries” has become a key

development strategy (Pyle, 2005, p. 255). This pattern of global migration also is fueled by Northern demand for women and girls from the South for a range of purposes, including domestic labor, wives, sex workers, and adoption (where the preference is for orphaned girl children) (Moghadam, 2005b; Pyle, 2005; Schaeffer, 2009). What we are seeing, then, is the feminizing of global migration patterns; in fact, as Schaeffer (2009) notes, “today, half of all cross-border migrants are women” (p. 113). And all of these factors contribute to the dramatic movement of women into the *informal sector*, which includes unpaid and undocumented work, as well as low-paid export-oriented, domestic, child care, and service work (Marchand & Runyan, 2011b; Peterson, 2003; Pyle, 2005; Schaeffer, 2009). Of particular note is the considerable increase in sex work and the trafficking of “prostituted women” as part of this general pattern of migration and informalization (Moghadam, 2005b, p. 37; see also Enloe, 1989, 2004; Peterson, 2003). Schaeffer (2009) notes that the dramatic recent increase in “male demand for sexual services” is partially met by women who are duped by recruiters into believing that they will find legal employment in another country (p. 122). According to recent U.S. government estimates, there are more than 1.39 million victims of criminal sexual trafficking, and the majority of them are women and girls (U.S. Department of State, 2009).

The increased migration of women into the informal sector has intensified an already existing concern about women’s invisibility. Shiva (1993b) argues that for years women have been unseen in their home countries, a function of development’s exclusive focus on the growth of GNP and of “dominant economic theories” that devalue the unpaid contributions of women and girls who feed and care for families (p. 75). As a

result, she writes, “women, children and the environment have been excluded from central concern” (p. 74). Today, this invisibility has been globalized as large numbers of non-Western women and feminized/subordinated men migrate to other countries, laboring long hours at subsistence wages to serve the needs of global elites. Referring to this largely feminized informal labor segment, economist Hazel Henderson (2006) claims that global economic measures overlook “two-thirds of the world’s output” (p. 50).

This is a critical point: The invisibility of women masks some of the most damaging and oppressive consequences of globalization and growth. Marchand and Runyan (2011b) discuss this, noting the contrast between the real experiences of large numbers of women and the “dominant masculine construction of globalization,” which is depicted as “variously, cosmopolitan, postmodern,” or liberating (p. 26). In fact, this well-publicized hypermasculine form of capitalism, they argue, “not only hides, but also rests upon” the “low-wage and highly sexualized and racialized labor done largely by women workers in the Global South” (p. 26). Chang and Ling (2011) refer to this invisible “underside” of globalization as its “*intimate other*” (p. 30, emphasis added). Within this realm, a growing cadre of (mostly) female workers “perform intimate, household services” (e.g., caring for children and cleaning) while confronting a host of other “intimacies”—“leaving home, living among strangers, facing sexual harassment and abuse, making moral choices” (p. 30).

Of course this juxtaposition of the external/masculine with the intimate/feminine calls to mind the longstanding feminist interest in the split between public and private domains (see Chapter III). In their summary of these ideas, Marchand and Runyan (2011a) suggest that the masculine side of globalization thrives by dominating the



marginalized members of this “intimate space” (p. 8). Moreover, this domination is accomplished through disciplinary discourse and hegemonic masculinities, reinforced by a broad range of institutions and the tendency for subordinated groups to “engage in their own ‘self discipline’” by conforming to expected norms of behavior (p. 8). For example, as Marchand and Runyan (2011a) argue, women working abroad often are exposed to gendered messaging from both their elite employers, who expect subservience, and their families at home, who expect them to “chastely serve God, country, and family” (p. 26). Whether women workers choose to stay at home or migrate, then, they remain “subject to intimate regimes of surveillance and discipline” by the state, employers, and communities that require them to develop suitable neoliberal attitudes “that will keep them working hard” while also developing obligatory “consumer habits” (Marchand & Runyan, 2011c, p. 100). From this perspective, Marchand and Runyan (2011a) conclude, globalization “is far from ‘freeing’ for most (especially women in the Global South)” (p. 26).

**Militarism, patriarchy, and imperialism.** “Out of the assumption of superiority flows the notion of the white man’s burden,” writes Shiva (1993a), capturing in one brief sentence the patriarchal and racist history of colonial empire (p. 264). Many people prefer to believe imperialism is in the past; for others, however, the dramatic ramping up of military action after 9/11 makes that argument problematic (Best, 2009; Chase-Dunn & Gills, 2005; Enloe, 2004; Harvey, 2005; McMichael, 2005). In fact, Marchand and Runyan (2011a) insist that 21st-century “geopolitical struggles” signal the return of empire “based on the twinning of globalization and re-militarization” (p. 2). They agree with Harvey’s (2005) theory of “accumulation by dispossession” (p. 96). They too contend that we live in a time of “neoliberal imperialism” characterized by strategies of

“capitalist extraction” (Marchand & Runyan, 2011a, p. 8). And Moghadam (2009) uses the term *globalization-from-above* to describe the “spread” of “the latest stage . . . of neo-liberal capitalism through investment, trade, and war” (p. 14). Furthermore, she asserts, “processes of accumulation” are a primary method for maintaining “inequalities of class, gender, and race” (p. 14).

It is instructive at this point to introduce Wallerstein’s (2004) discussion of the two possible ways for states to achieve dominance within the world-system. The first, Wallerstein argues, is through *world-empire*, which he defines as “a structure in which there is a single political authority for the whole world-system” (p. 57). He cites Napoleon and Hitler as examples of military and political leaders who attempted to create world-empire. From a world-systems perspective, empire is problematic because political interests eventually “override those of economic producers, and the endless accumulation of capital will cease to be a priority,” threatening the premise on which the world-system is based (p. 24). The second, and more prevalent, approach to dominance, writes Wallerstein, is “to obtain what may be called hegemony in the world-system” (p. 57). Hegemonic powers “establish the rules of the game” by controlling world economics and politics “with a minimal use of military force” and by determining the language “with which one discusses the world” (p. 58).

World-systems theorists generally agree that only three powers have achieved hegemony in the 500-year history of the modern world-system: the Dutch, the British, and now the United States (Arrighi, 2005; Wallerstein, 2004). According to Wallerstein (2004), however, it is inevitable that other states competing with the hegemonic power eventually will improve their economic capabilities “to the point that the hegemonic

power's superiority is considerably diminished and eventually disappears. With that goes its political clout" (p. 58). At this point, Wallerstein concludes, the hegemonic power invariably "self-destructs" (p. 58). He goes on to explain why:

To maintain hegemony, the hegemonic power must divert itself into a political and military role, which is both expensive and abrasive. . . . The use of "imperial" force undermines the hegemonic power economically and politically, and is widely perceived as a sign not of strength but of weakness. (pp. 58-59)

Based on these definitions, it is hard to build a case that the United States has achieved anything approaching a world-empire. However, Wallerstein's description of hegemony—particularly his depiction of the behaviors of a waning hegemonic power—seems eerily similar to the post-9/11 actions taken by the United States and its allies. This helps clarify why most of the scholars I cite tend to focus their attention on imperialism, or a set of patriarchal, racialized, and militarized behaviors: The persistence of these behaviors is more relevant than the actual creation of empire. From my perspective, Wallerstein's description of hegemonic behavior also lends credibility to Harvey (2005), Marchand and Runyan (2011a), and other scholars who link processes of accumulation to an evolving capitalist form of imperialism.

This line of inquiry is enriched by turning again to feminist scholarship. Whether we are seeing the rise of a new empire or the frantic final act of a declining hegemonic power, many feminists agree that present-day imperialism draws from a trove of historical imperial/colonial discourses, including an array of preconceived notions about race, ethnicity, gender, and class (Enloe, 2004; Harding, 2008b; Marchand & Runyan, 2011a; Moghadam, 2009; Mohanty, 2003; Peterson, 2003; Smith, 1999). Writing from the point of view of a non-Western scholar, Mohanty (2003) notes that "Third World women's writings on feminism have consistently focused on the . . . grounding of

feminist politics in the histories of racism and imperialism” (p. 52). Similarly, Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) writes that “imperialism frames the indigenous experience” and that “imperialism still hurts, still destroys and is reforming itself constantly” (p. 19). Both Mohanty and Smith take an historical perspective, aware that discourses of colonial conquest and patriarchal domination may go unrecognized but continue to have a hold on current thought and behavior. As Harding (2008b) observes, “mostly invisible” to Western and global elites, but not to postcolonial and feminist scholars, “are the long histories and present projects of male supremacy and imperialism/colonialism, hulking like two proverbial 800-pound gorillas in the parlors, parliaments, board rooms, and laboratories of modernity and its sciences” (p. 27). Clearly the task of critical scholarship is to relentlessly shine a light on and defuse the power of these projects.

**Integration: Economies of power.** I close this section with the work of V. Spike Peterson (2003), who skillfully integrates a number of these critical approaches and perspectives into her discussion on gender and power. Peterson builds her argument around a framework that includes three distinct “economies of power”: productive, reproductive, and virtual (Franklin, Holman, Marchand, & Overbeek, 2003, p. xi). The *productive economy* refers to the formal and visible economic realm—goods and services, markets, patterns of employment and consumption, and the like. In contrast, the *reproductive economy* includes both the private sphere of family and the informal sector. Although this sphere is much less visible than the productive economy, Peterson argues, “activities previously considered non-waged and private . . . are increasingly commodified and drawn into circuits of capital accumulation” (p. 78). To these

economies, Peterson adds a third, the *virtual economy*, so called because it has emerged as a force along with the technology revolution and exists in the realm of symbols and symbolic transactions, including virtually transmitted financial goods and services and intangibles like knowledge and information. With the explosion in global financial markets, Peterson contends, the virtual economy is increasingly overshadowing the other economies, in particular the relatively marginalized reproductive economy. Furthermore, to understand the power of the virtual economy, Peterson argues for an interpretive perspective that goes beyond positivist views to one that appreciates the “subjectivities, signs, and semiotics” inherent to this realm (p. 115).

Peterson’s (2003) primary objective is to “rewrite global political economy” by illustrating the “interdependence” of these three economies (p. 13). She wants to “demystify the operating codes of neoliberal capitalism,” in particular the “social logic [of] its accumulation dynamics and pursuit of profit,” to “expose its uneven effects” (p. 13). Although Peterson sees globalization as an “outcome” of “modernity” and the historic social events that produced modern science and capitalism, she argues that globalization is also postmodern in the sense that technology has transformed and “enabled the reorganization and globalization of production processes” (p. 3). In the same way, she argues that globalization is both an extension of the “capitalist racialized patriarchy” that has characterized modernity, and a new, equally powerful, postmodern version of capitalist racialized patriarchy (p. 4).

To illustrate her point, Peterson (2003) sets out to reveal how power works, paying particular attention to the intersection of neoliberal ideology and the preexisting structural hierarchies of ethnicity/race, gender, class, and nation. First, she notes that

every society has a group of elites with the power to choose “what becomes valorized and materialized” (p. 148); in today’s global society, this power is conferred on economists and their followers, who transmit the basic messages of neoliberal capitalism. Next Peterson interprets the messages of neoliberalism, articulating the key assertions that not only argue for the supremacy of the market mechanism and the “ideology of consumption,” but also “embed financial liberalization as the *only possible alternative*” (pp. 144, 151). She also links neoliberal ideology, patriarchy, and imperialism, insisting that the deeper purpose of these messages is to “self-consciously” pursue a “strategy for liberalization” that “deploys the code of ‘civilization’ and how ‘others’ can achieve it only through adopting the economic *culture* and the mindset of neoliberalism” (p. 151). Notably, Peterson argues, this “code” is not new; it draws on the archive of structural hierarchies and “their legacies—of masculinism, racism, classism [and] colonialism” (p. 8). In fact, she says, the power of the code rests on the fact that these hierarchies are already “internalized and institutionalized” and ready “for deployment in support of neoliberal objectives” (pp. 8-9).

Returning briefly to the three economies, Peterson (2003) describes how their interaction supports her narrative. One of her key points is that within this system, “*everything depends on what is valued,*” a subjective process determined by “trust and expectations” (pp. 162, 165). Given this, she claims, what is increasingly valued in today’s economy is determined by the virtual economy, particularly within the financial markets where virtual/symbolic money and the “disembodied circuits of financial markets” are accorded more value than capital accumulation in the “real economy” (p. 164). Furthermore, because the virtual economy symbolizes and promotes the ideals

of consumption and neoliberalism, it plays a powerful role in the restructuring of the global economy. Even though “real” work and accumulation occur in the productive and reproductive/informal economies, it is the virtual economy that “structurally shapes the work undertaken—and the value it is accorded—in [those] economies” (p. 112).

Ultimately this means that consumption and global finance are valorized, while both the productive and reproductive realms are devalorized. They also are feminized as they are restructured to promote more informalization, cheaper production, and a subordinated class of workers who can serve the proliferation of neoliberal ideology. In the end, Peterson makes the case that today’s structural inequalities are not simply a byproduct of globalization but rather the “enduring ‘main story’ of capitalism”; and that neoliberal ideology is not a fad but rather the discourse that justifies and obscures the unequal and unjust consequences of globalization (p. 147).

### **Transnational Networks of Resistance**

“We are living in times of insecurity, instability, and risk, but equally in times of opportunity and possibility.”

—Moghadam, 2009, p. ix

One overarching message of critical globalization studies is that nothing about globalization is inevitable. In fact, many scholars and activists around the globe have proclaimed that “another world is possible”—a direct rebuke to Margaret Thatcher’s legendary declaration that “there is no alternative” to neoliberalism (as cited in Moghadam, 2009, p. 112). Given the overwhelmingly powerful discourses of growth, capitalist globalization, consumerism, patriarchy, racism, and classism, it would be easy to dismiss those in opposition as hopeless idealists or outright fools. Instead I find them courageous. I also find among them many examples of practical wisdom.

As I discuss in Chapter I and earlier in this chapter, it is useful to distinguish practical reasoning, or practical wisdom (Aristotle's *phronesis*), from the more dominant instrumental reasoning (*episteme*). Instrumental reasoning is an exclusively analytic form of intelligence that searches for universal answers to the question "Why?" (Grint, 2007). Associated with the process of scientific inquiry, this form of reasoning may help us understand a problem, but it has little "utility in resolving, transcending or inhibiting" that problem (Grint, 2007, p. 235). Unfortunately, because Western modernist thought has relied so exclusively on instrumental rationality, we have failed to develop *phronesis*, the capacity to make the value-based, context-dependent, experience-driven judgments necessary to take "ethically practical action" (Grint, 2007, p. 237; see also Flyvbjerg, 2001; Nussbaum, 2006; Taylor, 1991). As Grint (2007) argues, instrumental rationality brings us knowledge but not the reflective wisdom necessary to "see the good and realize it in each specific situation" (p. 242).

Practical reasoning is particularly relevant in the context of this chapter because both the exercise of and the response to power are intrinsically pragmatic. Power is not inherently good or bad. It just is. And knowing that power is always there, we can explore it, embrace it, work with it, and talk about it. This pragmatic acceptance of power makes power visible, and along with it the naturalizing codes, discourses, and beliefs that are otherwise unseen. And once these elements are visible, we can ask moral and pragmatic questions like "Is this good for humanity?" "Is this right?" "Who might be harmed?" and "How will we choose to exert our own power?"

In my view, activists and resistance movements exemplify practical wisdom. In fact, practical wisdom is necessary for their success. In this section I highlight some of



the research on one form of resistance, transnational networks, with a particular focus on transnational feminist networks. In Chapters V and VI, I explore both instrumental rationality and practical wisdom in greater depth.

There seems to be broad agreement that the same forces driving globalization also have contributed to the growth of a myriad of local and transnational resistance movements and networks (Marchand & Runyan, 2011d; Moghadam, 2005a, 2005b, 2009, 2010). To understand how entails an appreciation of the interplay between the “twin notions of hegemony and resistance” that run throughout the globalization narrative (Parpart, 2011, p. xxi). To begin, it is important to reiterate the premise that hegemonic discourses of this magnitude naturally foster alternative and conflicting narratives and resistance is intrinsic to discourses of power (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Second, as many critical scholars have pointed out, the effects of globalization are uneven, and the dominion of hegemonic discourse incomplete. As Flyvbjerg (2001) notes, “no discourse is unequivocally oppressive or always emancipatory”; discourses both “transfer and produce power” and “subvert and conceal it,” making power “fragile” (p. 124). Building on this, Parpart (2011) argues that “it is this fragility and the need to protect masculinist power that [fuel] disciplinary forces in a still militarized, securitized world. Yet this fragility also produces spaces and discourses that encourage resistance” (p. xxi).

According to Moghadam (2009), globalization may actually empower social change and resistance because the same technology and “global diffusion of world culture” that enable global institutions of governance also provide an “opportunity structure for social movements—one that enables them to take on a transnational form with a global reach” (pp. 120, 26). She points out that although these resistance

movements are all essentially “counter-hegemonic” and begin with a basic opposition to the inequalities spawned by neoliberalism, their forms of expression fall into two distinctly different modes: “violent and extremist” (e.g., al-Qaeda) or “non-violent and progressive” (e.g., the Global Justice Movement) (p. 120). Although it is essential to understand the common roots shared by fundamentalist and progressive movements, here I focus on feminist networks as exemplars of prodemocratic forms of resistance, which hold the most promise for finding more equitable and liberatory forms of globalization.

Certainly women have suffered disproportionately from the institutional exercise of power, but it would be inaccurate to portray them only as helpless victims of neoliberal growth strategies. In fact Marchand and Runyan (2011a) tell us that the “resistance literature” is rife with examples of women who “talk back” to the “negative effects of restructuring” and find many ways to “protect themselves, their families, [and] their communities . . . from market imperatives” (p. 11). One key outcome of this collective resistance is the emergence of transnational feminist networks (TFNs), a topic that Moghadam (2005a, 2005b, 2009, 2010) has studied extensively. Moghadam (2005b) defines *TFNs* as “structures organized above the national level that unite women from three or more countries around a common agenda” (p. 4). She traces the origin of contemporary TFNs to the mid-1980s, when, during a series of UN world conferences on women, women began to reach across “regional and ideological divides”—First World feminism versus Third World feminism, for example—to form networks around a shared purpose and set of goals (Moghadam, 2010, p. 22). This occurred, Moghadam (2010) contends, in response to three key global developments: First was the shift from the Keynesian principles of government accountability for “citizen welfare” to a neoliberal

ideology that supports “a new international division of labor that [relies] heavily on (cheap) female labor” (p.22). Second was the increased “burden on women’s reproductive and domestic roles” that accompanied the growth of poverty in the global South and certain segments of the global North (p.22). The third factor was the appearance of “fundamentalist and right-wing religious movements that threatened women’s autonomy and human rights” (p. 22).

These economic, social, and political shifts occurred in tandem with the explosion of information technologies that created both opportunities for sharing worldviews and mechanisms for organizing globally. The result: Over the past 25 years, numerous TFNs have emerged, including Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), Sisterhood Is Global Institute (SIGI), Women Against Fundamentalism (WAF), Women In Development in Europe (WIDE), and Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML). As Moghadam (2010) writes, TFNs exist for any number of causes but tend to cluster in four categories: opposition to religious fundamentalism, opposition to war and imperialism, “feminist humanitarianism” (helping “those in conflict zones and repressive states”), and opposition to neoliberalism (pp. 38-39). Taken as a whole, Moghadam asserts, the “overarching” purpose of TFNs is to achieve “gender equality and human rights for women and girls” (p. 23). And the approaches they take to effect change—including “direct action, grassroots organizing, research and analysis, lobbying efforts, coalition-building, [and] humanitarian action”—are as varied as the individual networks (p. 23).

The vibrancy and purpose of these feminist networks is immediately apparent on their information-packed websites. An excellent example is the DAWN website

(<http://www.dawnnet.org/>), which describes a bold vision for a world in which “the massive resources now used to produce the means of destruction are diverted to building ethical and socially responsive development alternatives” (2011). Founded in 1984, DAWN members have demonstrated a sustained commitment to bringing the strengths of scholarship and activism together to fight for those alternatives. The urgency of their mission was highlighted in a series of “development debates” the group hosted in 2010. A summary of the debates acknowledges the impact of TFNs since the 1980s but warns against complacency, arguing that a “fierce new world” has emerged in the first decade of the 21st century in the wake of the war on terror and the international financial crisis (DAWN, 2010, p. 2). And it reaffirms DAWN’s dedication to the critical work that lies ahead in a world full of “shaken premises, complicated contradictions, serious fractures, severe backlash, broken promises, and uncertain outcomes for the world’s women, especially women from the economic South” (DAWN, 2010, p. 2).

TFNs are by no means the only counterhegemonic form of organization; in fact, they can be seen as part of a large and growing global and anticapitalist justice movement (Moghadam, 2009; Tormey, 2004). However, the women’s movement “has been among the most successful social movements of the modern era”; and as an integral part of this movement, TFNs have been leaders in modeling effective forms of resistance to oppressive structures of power (Moghadam, 2009, p. 127). According to Moghadam (2005a), one of the most important contributions made by TFNs to the ongoing globalization debate is their insistence that “gender justice” stay in the forefront when the topic is global justice: “Global justice is . . . meaningless . . . without consideration of the gendered (and racial) make-up of working people” (p. 358). An equally important point

is that transnational feminists see globalization as “multifaceted”; as such, they are “not, strictly speaking, anti-globalization” as much as they are “against neo-liberal capitalism” (p. 357). Beyond their condemnation of neoliberalism, transnational feminists can fully envision a future of effective and democratic global governance. But realizing that future demands a shift in orientation “from a *project of markets to a project of people*” (p. 357).

Is this possible? As Peterson (2003) so clearly states, it all depends on what we value. Consider the world we might create if we treasured people more than markets, and nature more than wealth. Certainly the contrast between our current global reality and these visions of possibility makes clear the tragic costs of the choices we have made. What prevents us, then, from making better choices? The answer may well be our unwillingness to examine our belief in growth. That myth of growth is the subject of Chapter V.

## Chapter V: The Myth of Endless Accumulation

*I remember what money was like before technology changed everything. When I first worked for city government, we would all head to the bank every Friday afternoon and stand in long lines to cash our checks. ATMs arrived in 1984, the same year that my daughter Amanda was born. I know this because we had to stop for cash on our way to the hospital when I was ready to deliver. My husband hadn't yet learned how to use the newfangled ATM, so I had to get out of the car and do it myself. I failed. The labor pains distracted me, I forgot my password, and the machine ate my card.*

*That didn't dampen my love for ATMs and my joy at being forever freed from bank lines. From that point on, money became a conceptual experience, something I could track on my weekly pay stubs, first on paper and later online. And although accumulation wasn't new—I was a lifelong believer in the virtues of saving—it took on new dimensions. I learned to track everything virtually, including retirement savings, insurance cash value, accrued sick days, college funds, debt, and the holy grail of net worth. Eventually, after entering the corporate world, I began to accumulate something new and mysterious: stock options. A stock option, of course, doesn't really exist; it's a promise from the company to pay the employee the difference in stock price from the day the option is issued to the day it's exercised. If the stock price goes up, the employee makes money—an incentive for employees to work their hardest to ensure the company grows in value. In theory, stock options also encourage employees to stay at a job because the longer they stay, the more options (and potential wealth) they accumulate.*

*In 2006, contrary to these expectations, I quit my corporate job to establish my own consulting firm. For some (including our financial planner, who was incredulous), this was not a wise move: Conventional wisdom argued in favor of a predictable income and a stockpile of wealth. But I had grown weary of the game, and the lure of independence outweighed the so-called risks. In fact, to start my business, I had to move in the opposite direction, cashing in my stock options and obliterating my carefully accumulated savings. Ironically, in the end, my stock options paid to free me from both corporate life and the trap of accumulation.*

### **The Power of Myth**

“Ideas we have, and do not know we have, have us.”

—Hillman, 1995, p. 16

In the previous chapters, I have tried to describe how power, privilege, and growth intersect to create a single overarching imperative of enormous consequence to the future of our species and planet. To understand this, I found it necessary to move beyond the myopic perspective of the developed nations and place growth within the broader context of globalization and its roots in colonialism and Third World development. Through this broad historical lens, it is evident that growth has always been a key driver of change; but its power has increased over the last few decades as Keynesian philosophies have given way to neoliberal ideologies, further reifying growth and demonizing impediments—real and perceived—to the expansion of capitalist globalization. I also turned to feminist perspectives to help me examine in greater depth the discourses and mechanisms of privilege and patriarchy that have permeated Western and, increasingly, non-Western institutions. Finally, integrating the work of critical globalization and feminist scholars, I focused specifically on power, exploring how

power operates not only to perpetuate growth and exacerbate historic inequalities and environmental degradation, but also to open up new possibilities for resistance and change.

Now I would argue that a compelling narrative is beginning to emerge, a narrative that provides a more complete and unvarnished picture of the endless quest to accumulate and that places in the forefront—so they can no longer be ignored—the costs and casualties of growth. From this broad perspective, I am aware of the systemic connections between the seemingly disparate events occurring, as I write this, in the world around me: The impact of the 2008 financial crisis lingers, generating unrest, uncertainty, and mass demonstrations around the globe. Extreme weather patterns are making headlines, including unprecedented tornado damage in my home state of Massachusetts, raising new questions about climate change. And despite the decision to drop charges against the former head of the IMF for sexually assaulting an African-born chambermaid, questions persist about patterns of behavior that seem to exemplify the persistent legacies of colonialism and patriarchy (Eligon, 2011; Erlanger, 2011). Of course, each of these events has its own complex array of causes, but I cannot ignore how the threads of power, privilege, and growth are woven throughout. Reflecting on both the scholarly literature and the tangible evidence around me, new questions arise that are both pragmatic and ethical: If unbridled growth represents such a threat to humanity, why does it persist? Where did it originate? And what other forces might be at work concealing its lethal consequences?

This chapter investigates these questions with a focus on growth as an idea so powerful that it has attained the status of myth. Again, the term *myth* is not used in the



disparaging sense of a lie or something untrue, but rather in the sense of a broad “cultural story” that provides collective meaning and purpose for individuals and societies (Flowers, 2007, p. 5). Pearson (1989) argues that humans are inherently myth-making creatures; in fact, “our experience quite literally is defined by our assumptions about life. We make stories about the world and to a large degree live out their plots” (p. xxv). Although new myths are constantly being created, the most powerful human myths are those we carry with us from the past, especially those so far removed in time that we have forgotten their origins. Referencing Carl Jung’s pioneering work in this arena, Pearson calls these ancient myths *archetypes* and defines them as “deep and abiding patterns in the human psyche that remain powerful and present over time” (p. xxv). Similarly, Tucker (1995) suggests that archetypes, or “myth-complexes,” provide “sustenance” by meeting a deep human need for shared meaning and relationship (p. 145). Clearly there is much to learn by exploring the territory of myth. As Hillman (1995) says, from their multifaceted “images, puzzles, humor” we gain insight—they “are the path to richness” (p. 102).

The first point, then, is that myths and archetypes can be deeply fulfilling and inspiring. If we honor them, Pearson (1989) says, we learn they are “fundamentally friendly”; they “help us evolve, collectively and individually” (p. xxviii). Spretnak (1999) has a similar view, saying that “myth in its true sense is a communion with the deepest truths of existence” (p. 182). She claims that “we live within the most extraordinary mythic drama imaginable” (p. 182):

The story of the universe is a mythic drama of creativity, allurements, relations, and grace. . . . Our great spiritual traditions, speaking in thousands of languages, have set their sacred stories of ultimate mystery within the grand epic of orbiting planets, changing seasons, eclipses, moon tides, and meteor showers. In the midst

of all this action . . . the story of every person unfolds, nestled within the embedding stories of family, clan, community, bioregion, region, nation, continent, planet, and cosmos. (p. 183)

Within indigenous traditions, myths and archetypes often take the form of gods and goddesses (Pearson, 1989). Shiva (1988/2010), for example, describes the central role that the goddess of the forest, Aranyani, has played in maintaining Indian culture. Worshipped “as the primary source of life and fertility,” Aranyani personifies the “diversity, harmony and self-sustaining nature of the forest,” which forms “the organizational principles guiding Indian civilization” (p. 55). Although often discounted by Western rationality, feminist scholars also have ventured to describe archetypes that lie beneath the great accomplishments of the West. Pearson (2009), for example, writes about “the explorer,” valued particularly in the United States for “rugged individualism, self-reliance, and the urge to roam and explore” (p. 11)

The second point is that myths carry a shadow side that manifests when we forget they exist. This is when they become harmful: When archetypes “are denied,” Pearson (1989) warns, “they do not go away. Instead, they possess us, and what we experience is enslavement, not the liberation they ultimately hold out to us” (p. xxviii). For example, uncontested, the explorer archetype becomes excessively self-centered and “narcissistic,” fostering a fixation on heroic individualism, “exceptionalism,” and the “negative explorer behaviors we see in oppositional and oblivious loners” (Pearson, 2009, pp. 13, 12).

The literature is abundant with examples of unexamined and harmful myths about growth. For instance, in her essay “The Myth of Catching-up Development” (1993), Mies claims that “virtually all development strategies” are built on the assumption that “the model of ‘the good life’ is that prevailing in the affluent societies,” generating the myth that it is both necessary and possible for the Third World to “catch up” (p. 55). And

Shiva (1993a) describes how “two economic myths facilitate a separation between two intimately linked processes: the growth of affluence and the growth of poverty” (p. 268). The first myth, Shiva argues, is that growth equates to the accumulation of capital, which blinds those in power to how growth destroys both the biosphere and the benefits of subsistence economies. The second myth is the myth of consumerism, which holds that “if you produce what you consume, then you do not produce,” masking the relationship among growth, consumerism, and the creation of poverty (p. 269).

Tucker’s (1995) term *myth-complex* captures the myriad individual myths that lie beneath the mantra of growth. And I would contend that this myth-complex is knit together by an overarching myth, *the myth of endless accumulation*, which goes unacknowledged, giving it extraordinary power to dominate our lives. Pearson (2009) and Hillman (1995) agree that new insights become possible when we end our denial and begin to come to terms with myths of this nature in our lives. The real task, however, is not to dismiss the myth but to bring to it an “increased complexity of perspective” that allows the archetype, and with it our collective selves, to mature—to “grow up” (Pearson, 2009, p. 31). In particular, Pearson (2009) suggests that growing up requires the ability to develop greater “cognitive complexity” (to identify and reflect on our assumptions), greater “narrative intelligence” (to recognize and name the stories we tell ourselves to explain our world), and greater “moral intelligence” (to examine how our actions impact others and ask value-based questions like “Is what we are doing loving?” or “Is it kind?”) (pp. 32, 34, 35).

The first step toward understanding myths, these scholars seem to argue, is to make them visible by telling their stories. Through the process of storytelling, we can

engage our multiple intelligences, examine the “plots we and others are putting into action,” and inquire about the “moral and ethical issues” inherent in these narratives (Pearson, 2009, p. 38). Accordingly, in the next pages, I offer a brief sketch of the story of growth. I approach this task with humility, aware that the story is very old, stretching back so far in time that there is no possibility of discovering its true genesis. But that is no matter. My purpose is not to tell *the* story of growth—each storyteller would tell it differently—but to trace the outlines of *my* story as I have come to understand it. In this way, aware of the deep unconsciousness that surrounds this myth, I hope to brush away the assumptions that obscure insight, searching for the myth so that I can engage with it and find a way to reframe and redirect its power.

### **A Brief History of Growth**

“Without an orientation to past and future . . . identity and meaning are not possible.”

Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1991, p. 86

I begin this inquiry by looking back, seeking to understand the history of growth and the durable and evocative power of its underlying myth. Baldwin (1959) tells us that little attention was paid to economic history before Marx and Weber began writing in the 19th century. Since then, the tendency has been to link growth to the emergence of capitalism and modernist thought over the past five centuries, portraying the preceding period of medieval history “in rather dark colors” as comparatively backward and traditional (p. 6). I would argue that this historical perspective is insufficient for the purposes of this inquiry, that growth has played a role in human civilization for many centuries, stretching back to ancient times. With this in mind, I provide a broader context by first examining the premodern history of growth, with a particular focus on its roots in medieval society.

**Ancient and medieval roots.** This story begins with gold. As Venable (2011) writes, “Evidence for human exposure to gold dates from around 5000 BC, and it can be said that from this first encounter, humankind cherished gold as a precious symbol of wealth and majesty” (p. xvii). In fact there are considerable data to support Venable’s contention that gold, along with other precious metals, has long been the object of accumulation (see, e.g., Braudel & Spooner, 1967). This treasured substance has been integrally tied to power and status around the globe dating back to the ancient civilizations of Egypt, China, Ur, Persia, and the pre-Columbian empires in the present-day region of Peru. In addition, recent discoveries in lesser known locations—a 5th-century BC burial ground in what is now Bulgaria, for example—indicate that gold also was used to signify status in “early European societies previously thought to have consisted of simple egalitarian social orders” (Venable, 2011, xviii).

As Braudel and Spooner (1967) document, huge stockpiles of gold and silver were accumulated during the premodern period in both the East and West, the product of successive empire building and accelerated trade between these regions. They estimate that by 1500, before the discovery of American riches, European stockpiles of gold approached 3,000 tons. Even more notable is the archival data confirming the constant shortages of precious metals that plagued medieval societies as the accumulation of gold and silver became increasingly important to the acquisition and maintenance of power (Kindleberger, 1990; Lewis, 1958). For instance, Lewis (1958) discusses the endemic shortage of precious metals throughout the history of the Ottoman Empire, a shortage that eventually contributed to the empire’s decline beginning in the 17th century. And Kindleberger (1990) provides evidence of the recurring monetary crises between 1550

and 1750 within Mediterranean and European states caused by the practice of hoarding precious metals.

Gold is only the starting point in this early history. The Middle Ages was long perceived as a stagnant and backward period, but economic historians have since provided considerable evidence that the exchange of gold for goods and services was an essential part of the development of medieval city-states and early monetary, banking, and credit systems, all of which were precursors to modern capitalist societies (Bullard, Epstein, Kohl, & Stuard, 2004; Goldthwaite, 2009; Venable, 2011). Much of their scholarly work centers on the great Italian cities, particularly Venice and Florence, which played an essential role in the “commercial revolution” that took place “throughout the Mediterranean and western Europe” between the 10th and 14th centuries (Goldthwaite, 2009, p. 3; see also Bullard et al., 2004). In fact, Goldthwaite (2009) argues that this commercial expansion was “simply an acceleration” of practices that date back to 8th-century trade between Italian merchants and Muslim, Byzantine, and other “economically backward” European cities, in which European raw materials were exchanged for highly coveted Eastern “luxury goods” (p. 3). According to Goldthwaite (2009), this “commercial activity put Italians at the forefront in the growth and development of the European economy. . . . Here, in short, was the nascent spirit of European capitalism” (p. 8). Historian Frederic C. Lane (1964) would agree. He writes that Venice emerged as the first European city “to become capitalistic in the sense that its ruling class made their livelihood by employing wealth in the form of commercial capital . . . and used their control of government to increase their profits” (p. 4).

These economic shifts occurred in concert with equally important cultural and social changes. In particular, merchants and entrepreneurs instituting new practices around the buying and selling of goods encountered strong medieval prejudices against usury, which was proscribed by the Church, and avarice, one of the seven deadly sins (Baldwin, 1959; Goldthwaite, 2009). These matters caused great anxiety, occupying many of the greatest legal and theological minds of the era who sought to reconcile new economic practices with the age-old distrust of the “materialism inherent in the mentality of the entrepreneur” (Goldthwaite, 2009, p. 584). As Baldwin (1959) describes, much of this important work was done during the 12th and 13th centuries by legal and religious scholars who offered a series of arguments to validate “the moral position of the merchant” and to overcome the “problem” of usury by justifying “mercantile profit as a result of labor, care, and expenses” (pp. 63, 64). He also notes that most of the religious doctrines developed during this time relating to economic practice “were designed to be applied in the *forum internum* or confessional” (p. 10). Clearly entrepreneurs, steeped as they were in Church teachings, were anxious “about the morality of these activities” and turned to both the “sacrament of the confession and the institution of purgatory” to maintain “divine favor” (Goldthwaite, 2009, p. 584).

Looking back at this history from a 21st-century perspective, it is easy to dismiss what look like intellectual contortions, but the issues were of real concern to the people of the time. Moreover, as Baldwin (1959) points out, medieval scholars did not approach economic matters from a modern framework of analytic and instrumental rationality. Their method was “essentially normative”: They were assessing “the legal or moral fitness of the situation they found” (p. 8).

Noting the similarity of this normative approach to the tenets of phronesis (see Chapters IV and VI), I set out to look more closely at medieval thinking. I found the 13th-century writings of Thomas Aquinas especially valuable for insights into theories of value. Aquinas, like other theologians of his time, was particularly concerned with justice, “one of the dominating principles of the Middle Ages” (Baldwin, 1959, p. 59). As part of an effort to construct an “all embracing system of human ethics,” Aquinas sought to ensure “the penetration of justice into the world of economics,” focusing specifically on the “legitimate and ethical determination of price,” referred to as “just price” (Baldwin, 1959, pp. 8-9). According to Venable (2011), Aquinas’s “theory of just price held that in the realm of natural law, [a good] maintained an inherent quality, or value, related to its supply, the cost of its production, and its purpose or use in society” (p. 9). Furthermore, Aquinas saw the “manipulation of price for personal gain as unjust” (p. 9).

In his later writings on value, Aquinas focused more on the relationship between value and human need, relying heavily on Aristotle’s contention that the “value of economic goods” was established by their “capacity for satisfying human want” (Baldwin, 1959, p. 77). For example, Aquinas believed grain should be priced higher than shoes because grain “satisfied a greater need” (Baldwin, 1959, p. 74). As Baldwin (1959) points out, by linking value to human want, Aquinas’s theory of value established the notion of “utility,” providing a “psychological explanation that supports the function of demand of buyers” (p. 77). Many scholars argue that Aquinas’s theorizing on value provided the foundation for modern capitalism, including the economic theories of



Hume, Smith, Ricardo, and Marx, and the development of concepts like market price and the cost of production (see, e.g., Baldwin, 1959; Venable, 2011).

Aquinas's work provides an avenue into another important aspect of medieval economics: money. Having established human want as "the basis of the value of goods in exchange," he was interested in how to ascertain that an exchange of value is fair (Baldwin, 1959, p. 74). Building again on Aristotle's thinking, Aquinas argued that "the instrument of money was invented in order to give a numerical statement to human need" (Baldwin, 1959, p. 74). Among other things, Aquinas's work demonstrates an already-present ability to think abstractly about money beyond the tangible presence of gold, silver, or paper currency. In fact, in their extensive study of medieval European economies, Braudel and Spooner (1967) tell us that "imaginary" (abstract) concepts about "currencies were part of the everyday life across the whole of Europe" (p. 378). This was necessary, they argue, because each country had its own accounting system and standard "moneys of account" (e.g., the French *livre*), which made currency conversion essential to trade (p. 378). Similarly, Goldthwaite (2009) notes that in Florence, "the universal use of moneys of account for most calculations . . . took Florentines a long way toward thinking about money as an abstraction" (p. 587). Given these observations, we can speculate that medieval economies also carried the nascent seeds of Peterson's (2003) virtual economy (see Chapter IV). Yet I would venture a guess that Aquinas would be mystified (and perhaps horrified) by the extent to which value, wealth, and accumulation have become disconnected from the tangible world of things as well as the ethical world of justice.

By the 16th century, Goldthwaite (2009) notes, attitudes toward wealth had completely shifted to the “classical concept of magnificence”: “Wealth is good for the individual because it provides the wherewithal to make one happy and therefore . . . participate in civic life” (p. 585). But, as this narrative reveals, the practical and intellectual engagement with notions of wealth, accumulation, and growth began centuries earlier. The ancient fascination with wealth continued into the Middle Ages, a period that laid the economic and political foundation for cultural and social changes as well as innovations in business practices and processes (Goldthwaite, 2009). Still, as Goldthwaite (2009) argues, although the merchants in Florence and other medieval cities “appear[ed] strikingly independent,” their behavior was “strongly tied into the medieval tradition of guild corporatism”; they had yet to display the extreme individualism that would eventually characterize modern economic society (p. 590). This, together with the flowering of the capitalistic spirit Weber (1905/1992) describes, would come later. As Braudel and Spooner (1967) say, “Whatever definition we give to capitalism, it was a phenomenon of slow germination” (p. 451).

**Modernity, progress, and individualism.** Scholars generally agree that the Western mindset, commonly referred to as *modernism*, developed in response to a series of “historical watersheds” between the 15th and 18th centuries, including the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, and the Enlightenment (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 20). Introducing new humanist concepts, 15th- and 16th-century philosophers triggered a profound break with Church doctrine by suggesting that the human mind—not God—was the source of knowledge and order (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998; Reason & Bradbury, 2006). The 17th century was marked by the chaos of the

Thirty Years War and a prolonged period of economic decline and increases in poverty and mortality (Braudel & Spooner, 1967; Toulmin, 1992). Toulmin (1992) argues that the “political, social, and theological chaos” of the 17th century profoundly influenced subsequent developments by generating a deep need for certainty (p. 70). This “quest for certainty” was reflected in the thinking of contemporary philosophers like René Descartes, a “young intellectual [who] opened up for people in his generation a real hope of *reasoning* their way out of political and theological chaos, at a time when no one else saw anything to do but continue fighting an interminable war” (p. 71).

Descartes’ impact was profound, leading to a surge of interest in rational knowledge, mathematical precision, and scientific evidence that was reflected in the work of scholars ranging from Newton to Kant (Toulmin, 1992). “People were suddenly flush with enthusiasm to categorize, to define,” says Kaplan (1994, p. 69). This interest gave birth not only to modern science and philosophy, but also to the modern nation-state, which could now be classified and mapped using scientific techniques, placed within a “jigsaw puzzle of neat pieces without transition zones between them” (Kaplan, 1994, p. 69). By the end of the 18th century, building on Cartesian rationalism and scientific methods, “the major components of the modern worldview and modern condition were in place, yielding an era of technological and democratic reforms that continue to shape the lives of ever-increasing numbers of people worldwide” (Spretnak, 1999, p. 59).

The culminating belief of modernism, argues Havel (1992), is “that the world—and Being as such—is a wholly knowable system governed by a finite number of universal laws that man can grasp and rationally direct for his own benefit” (para. 2). Within this worldview, reality is objective and external; “truth” is discoverable through

empirical testing and measurement; and “knowledge accumulates, allowing humans to progress and evolve” (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006, p. 14). This last point is critical to understanding the growth imperative because progress is an ideal deeply embedded in the modernist mindset. According to Hatch and Cunliffe (2006), this ideal originated during medieval times, evolving over time into the modern concept of scientific progress, “a series of linear, cumulative steps toward the ideals of complete knowledge and human perfection” (p. 37). Critics of modernism talk about the “progress myth,” the belief that human civilization is leading the way to unprecedented material and moral progress (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006, p. 48). “Concealed within this notion,” argues Mumford (1986), is the assumption that “human improvement would come about . . . almost automatically [by] devoting all our energies to the expansion of scientific knowledge and to technological inventions” (p. 75). Consistent with this, growth is both a requirement and an outcome of progress that “places economic expansion and technological innovation at the center of importance” (Spretnak, 1999, p. 2).

Closely linked to the concept of progress is *individualism*, an ideal that has been extraordinarily influential in determining the beneficiaries of economic growth. As Smith (1999) argues, the self, or “the individual,” must be understood as a distinct “system of ideas” contained within the broader “cultural archive” of Western knowledge (p. 49). There is general agreement that individualism emerged along with social contract theory, most notably from the writings of John Locke (Nussbaum, 2006; Taylor, 1991). Nussbaum (2006) points out that modernist philosophy has drawn from only one facet of Locke’s theory—the idea of a contract between the individual and society for mutual advantage that is “strongly protective of individual entitlements to life, liberty,

property and religious freedom” (p. 45). Had Locke further developed his ideas about society and entitlements based on “benevolence and human dignity,” Nussbaum seems to imply, Western culture and history might have taken a different course. The principle of individualism found fertile ground in the West, particularly in the United States, a nation “planned for progress” by founders steeped in Enlightenment philosophies (Bellah et al., 1991, p. 67). The “American dream” of individual freedom and affluence, Bellah et al. (1991) argue, is the legacy of blending the two powerful ideals of economic growth and individualism.

As Taylor (1991) notes, a highly polarized debate over individualism has been raging for some time. Critics of individualism worry that modern society has encouraged “a purely personal understanding of self-fulfillment” that marginalizes political citizenship and uses economic growth to justify an unequal distribution of wealth (p. 43). Although he shares these concerns, Taylor argues that this debate has failed to articulate the difference between “deviant” manifestations of individualism and the alternative “ideal of authenticity” (“being true to oneself”), a moral force that can empower individuals to live in a “fuller and more integral fashion” (pp. 21, 15, 22). Critical of this “inarticulate debate” and warning against either the reification or demonization of individualism, Taylor insists that “modern freedom and autonomy [center] us on ourselves, and the ideal of authenticity requires that we discover and articulate our own identity” (pp. 13, 81). By reminding us to look inside ourselves, to explore our identity, perspectives, and values, Taylor is reiterating an important theme that weaves through this narrative on growth.

**Capitalism and the corporation.** Capitalism, of course, is one of the central characters in this story. Marx originally contended that “the capitalistic era dates from the 16th century” (Marx et al., 1978, p. 433). But he acknowledged that “capitalistic accumulation” was long preceded by “primitive accumulation,” which he defined as “an accumulation not the result of the capitalist mode of production but its starting point” (Marx et al., 1978, p. 431). Marx employed a mythical framework to discuss this early form of accumulation:

This primitive accumulation plays in Political Economy about the same part as original sin in theology. . . . In times long gone by there were two sorts of people; one, the diligent, intelligent, and . . . frugal elite; the other lazy rascals, spending their substance, and more, on riotous living. . . . Thus it came to pass that the former sort accumulated wealth, and the latter sort had at last nothing to sell except their own skins. And from this original sin dates the poverty of the great majority . . . and the wealth of the few that increases constantly. (Marx et al., 1978, pp. 431-432)

From primitive accumulation, Marx argued, capitalist accumulation emerged, characterized by the “transformation of commodities and money into capital” through the process of “commodity exchange” governed by a complex and “interdependent system of production, distribution, and consumption” (Appelbaum, 1988, pp. 81, 82, 83). Key to understanding this process is the notion of “*surplus value*,” which posits that workers “produce goods in excess of their own substance; the value of those excess goods constitutes their surplus value production” (Appelbaum, 1988, p. 101). Furthermore, as Marx argued, the “dynamics of capitalist production” require that surplus constantly be “maximized and invested in further growth” because workers’ “survival as capitalists” depends on it (Appelbaum, 1988, p. 105).

Volumes have been written on capitalism, but for the purposes of this chapter I rely on Tormey’s (2004) brief but insightful account to make further links between this

narrative on growth and the evolution of capitalism. “One of the distinctive feature of capitalism,” argues Tormey, “is that it serves a *particular kind* of market, namely that for labor” (p. 11). In precapitalist society, he explains, laborers lived mostly in subservience to a feudal lord, either as vassals or slaves. As feudalism was overthrown, men (rarely women) became “masterless” and for the first time were free to “procure a living for themselves, usually by selling their labor to someone who needed it” (p.12). Whereas precapitalist markets bought and sold *people*, the emerging capitalist markets bought and sold *labor*. Because industrialization was also on the rise, newly freed laborers often found work in factories or mines, which led to the replacement of subsistence farming (focused on meeting basic human needs) with new forms of production for profit (focused on the accumulation of money). The resulting system of capitalism, claims Tormey, has three defining characteristics: “private ownership over the means of production” (e.g., land, factories, etc.), “paid employment,” and the “creation of goods” or services “for profit via a system of exchange, e.g. the market” (p. 10).

It could be argued that the myth of endless accumulation found its fullest expression in capitalism. Moving beyond concerns for basic survival, and kindled by emerging modernist beliefs, capitalism embodies the logic of incessant accumulation:

Capitalism is about the creation of profit. Profit is needed not least to give owners the money they need to keep themselves alive. It is also needed to reinvest in their businesses, in particular in the new technology and equipment that will enable them to compete successfully with others and thereby maintain those profits without which any capitalist enterprise will fail. (Tormey, 2004, p. 15)

In this sense, capitalism is “a particularly *energetic*, or perhaps frenetic form, of market society. . . . Capitalism is in its own self-image a Darwinian struggle, a struggle with many winners and many losers” (Tormey, 2004, p. 17). Within this intensely competitive system, the entrepreneur is compelled to be the most productive and profitable contender

in the market. “Not to do so, as the history of contemporary capitalism painfully illustrates, is to confine one’s business to the dustbin of history” (Tormey, 2004, p. 21).

As I discuss in Chapter II, many scholars believe the impact of capitalism has been pervasive, transforming modern institutions into a coherent, interdependent, and long-standing world-system (see, e.g., Arrighi, 2005; Wallerstein, 2004). In this context, the corporation warrants further discussion because of the particular importance the institution has played in shaping globalization and growth. Among the earliest corporations were the powerful Dutch East India Company and the British East India Company, which, as Zakaria (2009b) points out, were “licensed monopolies” that carried out the colonization program on behalf of their home countries (p. 67). In the United States, the modern corporation first appeared as a private entity, chartered by government to perform a certain function, such as education, or to carry out a defined task, such as building a bridge (Bellah et al., 1991; Zaffron & Logan, 2009). Over time, American courts were persuaded to regard corporations as individuals. In 1886, the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad Company* bestowed corporations with many of the same rights as individuals, including the right to hire people, own property, and compete freely in the capitalist system (Bakan, 2004). Over the last two centuries, the marketplace developed ways to give investors the option to sell if they are not satisfied with a company’s performance. Because buy-and-sell decisions are made on the basis of return on investment, corporations can survive only if they “both earn a significant profit and grow that profit quickly” (Zaffron & Logan, 2009, p. 121). In this competitive environment, the imperative to grow requires corporations to expand aggressively across national borders. As a result, today’s most powerful and successful



corporations are transnational, reflecting the fact that corporate growth “now relies on penetrating new foreign markets” (Zakaria, 2009b, p. 45). Depending on one’s perspective, the modern transnational corporation is either “the single greatest invention in the past few centuries” (Zaffron & Logan, 2009, p. 119) or “among the principle instruments for devastating the planet” (Berry, 1999, p. 117).

**Late modernity.** Having taken a detour to explore some facets of Western modernity and capitalism, it is now time to pick up the threads of this story and bring it to a close. Because the key elements of the growth narrative over the past several centuries have been discussed in Chapters II and IV, there is no need to cover this territory again in great detail. The story of growth from the 16th century through the 20th century was largely a steady progression of colonization, followed by a period of development in the Third World by Western developed nations (McMichael, 1996). During this time, modernist notions of rationality, science, and technology, infused with a vision of progress and individual entitlement, provided fertile ground for explosive capitalist growth. From a world-systems perspective, capitalist accumulation fostered the hegemony of the Dutch and British, which gave way by the late 19th century to the domination of the United States (Wallerstein, 2004; Zakaria, 2009b). The economic, political, and technological supremacy of the United States continued through the 20th century, a period in which the United States held a constant share of global GDP, accounting for “roughly a quarter of world output” (Zakaria, 2009b, p. 181). During this “American Century,” the growth imperative woven into the fabric of the American mindset ensured the continued hegemony of the United States and proved “to be a social force with extraordinary, unexpected consequences” (Bellah et al., 1991, pp. 52, 70).

Although there were measurable advancements in prosperity, living standards, freedom, and perhaps even happiness for a large number of people across the globe during the modern period, these benefits generally accrued to those privileged in some way by class, race/ethnicity, nationality, or gender (Marchand & Runyan, 2011a; McMichael, 2010; Peterson, 2003). And those in power continued to perpetuate business, environmental, political, and social practices that maintained conditions of oppression and poverty for billions of people, primarily in the global South. Why these conditions have gone unrecognized or ignored or misunderstood by elites has been a concern of feminist and critical scholars working to expose the deeply embedded patriarchal and imperialist “structural hierarchies” that stretch back to colonial, feudal, perhaps even ancient times (Peterson, 2003, p. 8). Many of these scholars have joined with activists across the globe to counter prophecies of an inevitable apocalypse with a vision for a better world (Moghadam, 2009).

A number of scholars refer to the early 21st century as the period of late modernity or late capitalism (see, e.g., Moghadam, 2005a). From Wallerstein’s (2009) perspective, the turning point came in the late 1960s following a slump in the global economy, the growing unpopularity of the Vietnam War, and the “revolutionary upsurge” of 1968 (p. 149). These events, he claims, “severely undermined the legitimacy of the Old Left, [allowing] establishment forces to launch a counter-offensive of considerable magnitude” (p. 151). Taking the form of neoliberalism, the Washington Consensus, and explosive global growth supported by the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO, this “worldwide offensive” led by the neoliberal establishment appeared to be stunningly successful (p. 151). However, in retrospect, argues Wallerstein, that “offensive” was

merely a “late summer glow” that ran its course by the late 1990s (p. 149). What followed was a myriad of global economic and political events, including currency devaluations, revolutions, civil wars, regime changes, transnational protests, the 9/11 attacks, and the financial crash of 2008. The United States, mired in seemingly endless war, political squabbling, and financial difficulties, now faces rising powers in the East, leading some to conclude that American hegemony is being rapidly replaced with a “complex multipolar field” of global powers (Nederveen Pieterse, 2009, p. 163; see also Zakaria, 2009b). As Wallerstein (2009) says, from here, in this “moment of systemic anarchy, . . . we move into the uncertain immediate future” where “almost anything can happen” (p. 153).

**The shadow side of myth.** In this confusing and often frightening time of transition, the role of myth becomes clear: Rather than approach the future as a blank slate, we rely on our mythical archives for the coherence and certainty needed to navigate the currents of change. We forget our myths at our peril. As Hillman (1995) observes, when “myths go unrecognized we live them, or they live us, blindly. In this blindness we are each, as Freud said, enacting Oedipus, the tyrant, who could not see what myth he was living on, and dying from” (p. 192).

Among today’s chief promoters of the myth of endless accumulation are a number of well-known business gurus who claim that capitalism can be deployed to solve poverty and other social ills. Bill Gates (2008), for example, insists that capitalist growth can be made to benefit society’s “bottom billion”; in fact, he says, “the genius of capitalism lies in its ability to make self-interest serve the wider interest” (p. 2). This same thinking is echoed in the title of a book by C. K. Prahalad, *The Fortune at the Bottom of the*

*Pyramid: Eradicating Poverty Through Profits* (2010). “If we accept that globalization is like gravity and that there is no point in denying gravity,” Prahalad argues, our challenge is to find a way to eradicate poverty through the “democratization of commerce” (p. 20). Similarly, Michael Porter and Mark Kramer (2011) contend that social problems can be solved by “the principle of shared value”: “Capitalism is an unparalleled vehicle for meeting human needs, improving efficiency, creating jobs, and building wealth” (p. 4). Comparing shared value to the fair-trade movement, Porter and Kramer claim that the latter merely seeks to “increase the proportion of revenue that goes to poor farmers” (p. 5). They disagree with the idea of “redistribution,” arguing that improved “growing techniques” and stronger local institutions will expand “the overall amount of value created,” leading to “a bigger pie of revenue and profits that benefits both farmers and the companies that buy from them” (p. 5).

Is there any merit to this thinking? Without a doubt there is an urgent need to engage in dialogue about the future of capitalism, but these men seem less interested in inquiry than in projecting their authority and protecting the sacredness of growth, which by now is laced with the neoliberal “codes” of privilege and power (Peterson, 2003). My interest at this point is to call attention to how myth is deployed to meet these goals, and in doing so to listen for the echoes of its ancient, feudal, and early modern forebears. One can hear in the words of these business experts an enduring faith in progress, individualism, and capitalism packaged in the next overarching “grand solution”—perhaps Gates’s “creative capitalism” or Porter and Kramer’s “shared value.” This rational certainty calls to mind Marxism and other utopian dreams, and is reminiscent of Descartes’ own struggle to find certainty by “reasoning” his way out of the turmoil and

anarchy of his time (Toulmin, 1992, p. 71). Furthermore, the tone of *noblesse oblige* and the rejection of concepts like the redistribution of wealth reveal thinly veiled codes of patriarchy and colonialism and an underlying commitment to maintain historic hierarchies of power.

Equally intriguing is the recurring theme of value, both in the words of these business experts and in the day-to-day world of business (e.g., shareholder value, expanded value, maximized value, added value, shared value, etc.). Again, the notion of value can be traced back to Aristotle and the later work of Aquinas in the 13th century (Baldwin, 1959). Although we still speak of value today, in this shadow side of myth its meaning has been altered. Aquinas conceived of value as a measure of human want, within the context of a “system of human ethics in which the virtue of justice formed the foundation of the good life on earth” (Baldwin, 1959, p. 8). Moreover, value had a physical manifestation in the form of gold or money, which was created as a standardized measurement of human need. Today, as Peterson (2003) observes, the notion of value is increasingly determined by a “disembodied” virtual economy, an economy no longer grounded in either an ethical sense of human want or something tangible like gold or even paper currency (p. 164). In this virtual realm, dominated by the symbols of global finance, the *idea* of money, “increasing the value of money/capital in the disembodied circuits of financial markets,” has become paramount (Peterson, 2003, p. 164). What remains in the wake of this destructive mythology are the ideologies of consumption and self-interest, both pale and feeble remnants of a once-vibrant dialogue.

## The Consequences of Growth

“It is the existence of the shadow side that urges us to consciousness, as we can live the narrative in its optimal form only if and when we are conscious of what we are doing.”

—Pearson, 2009, p. 9

There are consequences to the stories we tell and the assumptions we make. As I discussed earlier, myths can be a potent source of inspiration; but when they slip into our unconsciousness, they can harm us. To recover from this, and to regain the ability to direct our lives, we have to come to terms with the negative consequences of our myths by naming and confronting the damage they have caused. With regard to growth, one place to begin is with the work that emerged from an informal meeting of international scholars, businesspeople, and civil servants in Rome in 1968. The Club of Rome, as the group came to be known, launched an audacious project on the “Predicament of Mankind.” Its objective: to investigate “the options available to mankind as societies enter the transition from growth to equilibrium” (Jay Forrester, as cited in Meadows, Richardson, & Bruckmann, 1982, p. 23). One of its first initiatives was to develop a groundbreaking computer model to generate data on global social problems. A 1972 report to the organization, *The Limits to Growth*, startled the global community with this prediction: “If the present growth trends in world population, industrialization, pollution, food production, and resource depletion continue unchanged, the limits to growth on this planet will be reached sometime within the next one hundred years” (quoted in Meadows et al., 1974, p. 29). These conclusions were fiercely assailed by both Western critics, who objected to the “images of a gloomy future,” and by developing nations, which argued that the global model was “an ideological statement from the developed world” (Meadows et al., 1982, pp. 22, 24). As Donella Meadows, the report’s lead author, later

said, “I was simply astounded at the number and power and loudness of people who . . . couldn’t allow that book to stand. . . . There’s a deep belief that growth is always good” (as cited in Kolankiewicz, 2001, p. 225).

However, the Club of Rome was not alone. The social movements of the late 1960s and the oil crisis that began in 1973 “jolted people” into recognizing the limitations of growth (Tormey, 2004, p. 57). Over time, despite (or perhaps as a result of) the ascendance of neoliberal ideology, many others joined the chorus of concern. In 1973, for example, E. F. Schumacher published his iconic *Small Is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*, in which he suggested that economics shift its focus to ensure “the maximum of well-being with the minimum of consumption” (p. 57). By the mid-1980s, buoyed by the founding of a number of transnational feminist networks (e.g., DAWN, WIDE, and SIGI), feminists around the globe began to speak out against unlimited growth (Moghadam, 2005a, 2005b, 2010). Their individual contributions—for example, Shiva’s book *Staying Alive* (1988/2010)—brought even more recognition of the consequences of growth. At roughly the same time, the global justice movement emerged, originating with Third World protests in the 1980s and later exploding onto the scene in the Battle of Seattle in 1999 (Moghadam, 2009). Today, critics of growth can be found among local activists, academics, and members of the popular press. Although their strategies may vary, most focus on four key themes: the ecological, spiritual, economic, and political consequences of growth.

**Ecological consequences.** The obvious place to begin is with the ecological consequences of growth because accelerating environmental devastation may well be growth’s most visible legacy. Thomas Friedman framed the central theme—the tension

between the forces of economic growth and the environment—by discussing a fictitious unit, the “Americum,” in a 2008 radio interview:

An Americum is any 300 million people in the world living like Americans. . . . In the 50s, there was only two and a half Americums in the world. . . . Today there are nine. There’s one in America, there’s one in western Europe, there’s one in eastern Europe and Russia, one in India, giving birth to another, one in China giving birth to another, one in Japan, east Asia, one in South America. . . . The good Lord didn’t create this planet for that many Americans. (p. 3)

Sharing Friedman’s concern is Al Gore, the winner in 2007 of the Nobel Peace Prize. In his speech at the award ceremony, Gore (2007) predicted a bleak future: “Without realizing it, we have begun to wage war on the earth itself. Now, we and the earth’s climate are locked in . . . ‘mutually assured destruction’” (p. 3). Thomas Berry (1999) echoes similar themes, saying that the “opposition between the industrial-commercial entrepreneur and the ecologist can be considered as both the central human issue and the central Earth issue of the twenty-first century” (p. 59).

Many scholars see this apparent attack on Earth’s natural resources as another manifestation of modernity and the Western mindset (see, e.g., Bellah et al., 1991; Berry, 1999; Reason & Bradbury, 2006; Shiva, 1988/2010). Berry (1999) theorizes that the roots of this worldview can be traced to the bubonic plague that ravaged 14th-century Europe, creating a lasting fear of and a “deep aversion to the natural world” (p. 77). In the centuries that followed, this apprehension developed into a mechanistic view of nature as something that should be controlled, dominated, and exploited (Berry, 1999; Toulmin, 1992). Later Descartes built his philosophy on the distinction between mind and matter, establishing a dichotomy between the superior human ability to reason and the inferior mechanical processes of the natural world (Berry, 1999; Toulmin, 1992). Given this history and worldview, Bellah et al. (1991) argue, European settlers were



predisposed to chose “exploitation” over “cultivation” in their quest to dominate the New World and pursue their ideal of progress (p. 265). Furthermore, according to Berry (1999), this mindset set the stage for the transition of 19th-century Western society from an “organic” to an “extractive” economy, enabled by new technologies with the capability to achieve the “unqualified human conquest of the forces of nature” (p. 138).

Much has been written in recent years about the ecological consequences of the quest to dominate nature. Friedman (2008b), who is profiled in Chapter II, continues to write extensively on the subject. These concerns also have been a focus for Canadian scholar Thomas Homer-Dixon (2006), who argues that energy, environmental, and climate “stresses,” combined with overpopulation and economic instability, are a volatile mixture pushing us toward almost certain “catastrophe” and collapse (pp. 9, 7). Also important here is the work of ecofeminists (see, e.g., Griffin, 2008; Mies & Shiva, 1993; Spretnak, 1999), who have long argued against a modernist worldview that seeks to control nature, women, and other marginalized peoples in pursuit of economic gain. Griffin (2008) describes this mindset as an attitude of *dominion*, “the denial of our dependence on nature and the belief that we can use force to get whatever we want all over the world” (p. 137). Spretnak (1999) links growth, exploitation, dominance, and patriarchy, arguing that the “roots” of modernity are “deeply entwined with . . . imposing order over *nature and women*” (p. 79). Perhaps the best known is Shiva (1988/2010, 1993a, 2000), who for decades has written and talked about how Western contempt for women, tradition, and nature has produced and justified the devastating agricultural and development practices imposed on the Third World.

**Spiritual consequences.** Many would argue that the Cartesian dichotomy between mind and matter has profoundly diminished spiritual life (see, e.g., Havel, 1994; Reason & Bradbury, 2006; Shiva, 1988/2010; Spretnak, 1999). Berry (1999) insists that “in a very real sense,” Descartes “*desouled* the Earth” by fragmenting the relationship between human consciousness and the natural world (p. 78). And Shiva (1988/2010) contends that Enlightenment ideology elevated the “sanctity” of reason, progress, and science over “the act of living and of celebrating and conserving life in all its diversity” (p. xxix). As a result, Havel (1994) says, “man as an observer is becoming completely alienated from himself as being” (Science and Modern Civilization section, para. 3).

Reflecting on these existential concerns, Reason and Bradbury (2006) point to new discoveries in fields like quantum science that suggest that “matter and consciousness are not ontologically separate” and that humans are in fact part of “a cosmos which is far more interconnected than we have hitherto suspected” (p. 8). Their hope: that we are witnessing the appearance of an alternative worldview in which “reality emerges through a co-creative dance of the human bodymind and the given cosmos,” recognizing that “human persons do not stand separate from the cosmos; we evolved with it and are an expression of its. . . creative force” (p. 8). As these new discourses and worldviews emerge, Havel (1994) shares this vision for a revitalized spirituality:

The only real hope of people today is probably a renewal of our certainty that we are rooted in the earth and, at the same time, in the cosmos. . . . Universal respect for human rights . . . will mean nothing as long as this imperative does not derive from the miracle of Being, the miracle of the universe, the miracle of our own existence. (Toward Self-Transcendence section, para. 3)

Although new to Western thought, this mindset has been embedded for centuries in ancient wisdom traditions. Feminist scholars, for example, point to the early practices of goddess spirituality that were focused on achieving balance between the tensions of

feminine and masculine energies (Murdock, 1990; Shiva, 1988/2010; Spretnak, 1991). This primordial wisdom is essential today, says Murdock (1990), when “we need the moist, juicy, green, caring feminine to heal the wounded, dry, brittle, overextended masculine in our culture” (p. 156). As Spretnak (1991) argues, the ancient “earth-based spirituality” practiced by indigenous cultures is a critical resource for those seeking alternatives to a mindset of economic accumulation (p. 89). However, Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) warns that these wisdom traditions are threatened by centuries of colonialism, development, and now globalization, which have destroyed the fabric of many indigenous communities. The survival of indigenous culture and spirituality, she writes, will require the “greater project” of recovering and recentering “indigenous identities,” a project with critical implications for the future (p. 97).

**Economic consequences.** Arundhati Roy’s (2001) description of her home country, India, illuminates the disparities, paradoxes, and tragedies that are the economic consequences of growth. Living in India, she explains, has a “schizophrenic” quality:

It’s as though the people of India have been rounded up and loaded into two convoys of trucks (a huge big one and a tiny little one) that have set off resolutely in opposite directions. The tiny convoy is on its way to a glittering destination, somewhere near the top of the world. The other convoy just melts into the darkness and disappears. (pp. 2-3)

Many of those unfortunate enough to be on the “huge convoy” live in Delhi, Roy explains, a city of 12 million, where “close to forty percent . . . live in slums and unauthorized colonies. Most of them are not serviced by municipal services—no electricity, no water, no sewage systems. About fifty thousand people are homeless and sleep on the streets” (p. 21). For Roy, the daily contrast between this destitution and the “glittering” life of India’s elites is “hard to reconcile oneself to” (p. 2). To illustrate “the utter illogic” of India’s “current national enterprise,” she provides this stunning example:

“In the lane behind my house, every night I walk past road gangs of emaciated laborers digging a trench to lay fiber-optic cable to speed up our digital revolution. In the bitter winter cold, they work by the light of a few candles” (p. 2).

These realities have been the impetus for a segment of the global justice movement called anticapitalism (Tormey, 2004). Tormey (2004) describes *anticapitalism* as an “umbrella term for myriad causes, ideologies, movements, parties and worldviews” whose objectives range from simple reform to revolutionary change in economic systems (p. 73). He insists that all reformers are not against growth. Even Marx, Tormey (2004) contends, a “creature of the Enlightenment,” believed that human progress requires modernization and industrialization as precursors to socialism and communism (p. 110). “Interventionists” want to soften the impact of globalization through social programs (e.g., health care and education), global governance (e.g., institutions like the World Bank and the IMF), or social democracy (e.g., approaches, often derived from Keynesian economics and European social policies, that advocate for a state role in the redistribution of resources) (p. 79).<sup>8</sup> By contrast, more-radical anticapitalists—among them anarchists and the “deepest ‘green’” groups—are ardently antigrowth, rejecting industry, production for profit, hierarchy, and bureaucratic structures (p. 124).<sup>9</sup>

Whatever their ideological stance, there is broad agreement among anticapitalists that economic neoliberalism is responsible for the most detrimental effects of globalization (D. Cohen et al., 2001; Tormey, 2004). In particular they argue that transnational corporations are among the principal beneficiaries of globalization and the

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<sup>8</sup> Among the interventionists Tormey (2004) identifies are Bill Gates and Bill Clinton.

<sup>9</sup> I would include ecofeminists in the latter group.

most pernicious actors driving it (D. Cohen et al., 2001). Many other critics of unlimited growth share their thinking; in fact, the-corporation-as-villain is a pervasive theme in antigrowth narratives (see, e.g., Bellah et al., 1991; Berry, 1999; Enloe, 1989, 2004; Kaplan, 1994; Mies & Shiva, 1993; Spretnak, 1999). As Tormey (2004) argues, “One of the more disturbing facets of neoliberalism has been the encouragement to regard the *whole* of life as a resource for corporate profits” (p. 35). Zaffron and Logan (2009) add that this mindset has led corporations to “externalize” their costs—jargon for passing on the costs of human and environmental damage to “governments and communities in the developing world” (p. 121). The documentary *The Corporation* (Achbar, Abbot, & Bakan, 2003) concludes that many corporate behaviors (e.g., lack of concern for the feelings and safety of others, dishonesty, and the inability to experience guilt) would be considered psychopathic in an individual. Faced with this stark assessment of corporate behavior, leadership consultant Peter Block suggests that corporate leaders confront a fundamental existential question: Do corporations “have a purpose, other than growth?” (as cited in Zaffron & Logan, 2009, p. 123).

**Political consequences.** Probably the most important political consequence of growth is the declining role of the nation-state. Most scholars agree that the nation-state is an invention of modernism, originating with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, which recognized the sovereignty of the state over existing religious and ethnic groups (Kaplan, 1994; Spretnak, 1999; Zakaria, 2009b). Initially a Western concept, the nation-state is now the internationally accepted form of organization for national governance (Kaplan, 1994; Wallerstein, 2004). Increasingly, however, nations face complex problems that are not confined to national boundaries. Zakaria (2009b) explains: “While economics,

information, and even culture might have become globalized, formal political power remains firmly tethered to the nation-state, even as the nation-state has become less able to solve most of these problems unilaterally” (p. 31). Furthermore, as Stone and Rizova (2007) note, since the end of the Cold War, growth has fundamentally contributed to the erosion of the powers of the state as new economic sectors have opened up to “capitalist penetration,” led by multinational corporations operating as prominent “non-state actors” in cross-state decision making (p. 541).

Admittedly, the idea of the nation-state is problematic for some, in particular indigenous communities and ethnic minorities who have suffered under imperialist expansion and colonial rule (Smith, 1999; Spretnak, 1999). On the other hand, many feminists argue that the nation-state “still matters as an institutional actor” because of the important role it plays in ensuring “reproductive rights and family law” (Moghadam, 2005a, p. 357). And a number of other serious consequences are associated with the weakening nation-state. First, along with the freer flow of goods and capital across state boundaries, new international patterns of migration have emerged. “Host societies,” facing an influx of what they see as “stigmatized ‘outsiders,’” are tightening their boundaries (Stone & Rizova, 2007, p. 539). Essed (1996) notes that the “the iron curtain that once cut through Europe is now placed around Europe,” creating a “Fortress Europe” mentality (p. 113). As a result, nationalism has intensified in many regions as the encroachment of the “Other” and “foreign corporations, bankers and armies” contributes to a sense that peoples within a nation “do not control their own fates” (Enloe, 1989, p. 45). As Cockburn (1998) argues, “the notion of nation always suggests a project of

power,” and the ideology of nationalism, essential to the maintenance of power, becomes a potent force when the concept of nation is threatened (p. 37).

Second, the “impotence of the states” to mitigate forces of economic growth have produced dramatic and increasing inequalities of power and wealth both within and between nations (Stone & Rizova, 2007, p. 541). As Nussbaum (2006) says, “There are staggering differences between the rich and poor nations”; furthermore, “there are urgent forward-looking issues of justice on the table as people think critically about the operations of the global economic system, which is controlled by a small number of nations but has a decisive impact on all” (pp. 20, 21).

Finally, the weakening of the nation-state is also associated with increased global conflict and violence. Kaplan (1994) presents a chilling vision of a world plunged into chaos as elites seclude themselves from a mass of humanity trapped in a downward spiral of environmental destruction and violence. In a recent examination of the “horrors of contemporary wars,” a DAWN report (2010) discusses the systemic relationship between “development and human security,” observing the disproportionate impact of war on women and children (p. 3): “As violent conflict kills, maims and destroys peoples, economies and livelihoods, development goals and achievements are reversed in climates of insecurity” (p. 4). In this environment, women with no “alternative means of employment” find themselves forced to live, and even participate, in a constant state of militarization (p. 4).

As American hegemony wanes, as resource shortages and environmental concerns intensify, and as ethnic, religious, and tribal communities assert their identities, many argue for the development of global democratic governance structures that can deal

effectively with these complex global issues (Kaplan, 1994; Zakaria, 2009b). In 1995, Tucker lamented the inability of nation-states to look beyond their narrow-minded interests to confront the global “crisis of survival” predicted by the Club of Rome, calling for a new leadership “*of and for the whole*” (pp. 127, 130). In 2004, Tormey noted that little had changed: “The process propelling us toward *economic* globalization has not hitherto been matched by a process of *political* globalization” (p. 42). Appealing as the concept of global governance may be, Roy (2001) suggests it may be another utopian dream. Specifically she notes the tendency for public officials to call for “the right institutions of governance” as if they would make “the globalization project work for the poor” (p. 18). However, she argues, “the point is, if all this were in place, almost *anything* would succeed: socialism, capitalism, you name it. Everything works in Paradise” (p. 18). Instead Roy takes this view:

What we need to search for and find, what we need to hone and perfect into a magnificent, shining thing, is a new kind of politics. Not the politics of governance, but the politics of resistance. The politics of opposition. The politics of forcing accountability. . . . The politics of joining hands across the world and preventing certain destruction. In the present circumstances, I’d say that the only thing worth globalizing is dissent. (pp. 32-33)

### **Hidden Commitments**

All of you undisturbed cities,  
haven’t you ever longed for the Enemy?  
—Rilke, 1981, p. 41

Adult development researchers Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey (2009) suggest that the increasing complexity of the world around us demands a corresponding increase in human cognitive abilities. The abilities they are referring to are not about the content of knowledge (*what* we know), but a “quantum shift” in thinking itself (*how* we know), meaning the “mental complexity” required to reflect deeply, think independently, explore



other perspectives, and take responsibility for our feelings and actions (p. 27). The problem, they theorize, is that many adults do not move beyond a level of thinking they refer to as “the socialized mind,” which is shaped by and operates in alignment with taken-for-granted ideas and expectations of one’s environment (p. 17). As Kegan (2000) argues, contemporary life “requires that we be more than well socialized; we must also . . . win some distance from our own internal authorities so that we are not completely captive of our own theories” (p. 68). Individuals who achieve greater levels of mental complexity, Kegan and Lahey (2009) note, are not only “self-authoring”; they also are able to “step outside” their “ideology or framework, observe the framework’s limitations or defects, and *re-author* a more comprehensive view” (pp. 27, 26).

Of course, there’s a hitch to realizing this level of awareness, which is also relevant to this inquiry on the power and consequence of myth. In their research on human development, Kegan and Lahey (2009) noticed an interesting phenomenon they call the “immunity to change” (p. 32). Typically, they observe, individuals who want to make a personal change do so using a process that begins with an explicit set of commitments (e.g., wanting to be more open and flexible), followed by an action plan to implement the change. Impeding the change is a parallel set of “hidden commitments” (e.g., the need to be in control or be viewed as an expert), based on unacknowledged assumptions the individual has made about what is required to operate, succeed, or just survive in his or her social and organizational environment (p. 35). As Kegan and Lahey argue, because they go unrecognized, these hidden commitments hold the person “captive, in their thrall,” even though they operate in opposition to his or her stated goals (p. 35). Looking further into this phenomenon, Kegan and Lahey observed that

challenges to hidden commitments can trigger a level of anxiety and inner conflict that will thwart personal change; hence their conclusion that humans have a built-in “immune system” that protects against perceived threats to identities and worldviews (p. 37).

Personal change, therefore, requires both the cognitive ability to recognize and name a hidden commitment that no longer serves our goals and the courage to deal with the anxiety of shifting into new ways of thinking and knowing. The paradox—captured so brilliantly by Rilke (1981) in the quote at the beginning of this section—is that only by inviting fear and uncertainty, perceived as “the enemy,” into our lives can we overcome our natural immunity and become conscious, mature, self-authoring adults.

This framework gives us a valuable way to reflect on myths, particularly myths that have slipped into our unconscious mind, becoming a collective hidden commitment that may no longer serve the common good. This is also a useful perspective from which to revisit and evaluate the first and second questions posed at the beginning of this study:

- Where are we going in our endless pursuit of growth and accumulation?
- What are the consequences of unremitting growth, and in what ways are these outcomes good or bad for humans and the ecosphere?

To answer these questions, it was necessary to look back, to follow the thread of growth—a story that may have begun with the legendary desire for gold but that has been so long forgotten that we are no longer even aware of its presence. What emerged from this historical inquiry is a deeply embedded but rarely distinguished set of discourses—a hidden commitment to the myth of endless accumulation—with enormous power over both our daily lives and future actions. For example, it appears that if asked, many scholars, practitioners, journalists, and business and government leaders would agree (if

they think of it at all) with Prahalad's (2010) assessment that global growth is like "gravity": inevitable, desirable, unquestionable (p. 20). Despite the vigorous efforts of local and transnational resistance movements, then, and notwithstanding the evidence of harmful ecological, spiritual, economic, and political consequences, and even in the face of inspirational rhetoric committing to sustainable business practices, democratic processes, and equal opportunity, the *real* commitment continues to be the pursuit of ever-increasing growth and accumulation.

My third study question asked: Who gains and who loses if we maintain or alter the discourses of growth, and by which mechanisms of power? From my perspective, this is the hardest question, the one most likely to provoke anxiety, denial, anger, and fear. For those who have chosen to take as their point of reference only the developed nations (and within that point of reference, the perspective of those most prosperous and, presumably, most powerful), there seems to be little doubt that growth has been overwhelmingly beneficial for a vast portion of humanity. However, those who have been harmed by growth have a very different and important vantage point—one that elevates the discussion beyond the self-referential thinking of the "socialized mind" and encourages greater complexity of thought (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Only from this critical vantage point can we begin to see the ugly (and inconvenient) realities and hidden commitments of growth. From here, not only do the winners and losers become apparent; so does the unspoken, unacknowledged commitment to perpetuating historic hierarchies of privilege. In the end, like every other human system, growth serves a purpose; if growth is like "gravity," it is only because we make it so.

I have arrived at my fourth study question: What should be done, and what are the implications for practitioners committed to a just and sustainable world? Clearly this is a question that relies on practical wisdom for an answer. No clear-cut rational solutions can be applied here; difficult moral issues must be addressed, and ethical decisions carefully considered (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Grint, 2007). Furthermore, as a practitioner, this question compels me to draw on my experience and examine my values before I can determine the actions I might take in this context. Practice, praxis, and action, then, are the focus of the final two chapters of this study. Chapter VI addresses the subject of practical wisdom in more depth, identifying the key elements of phronesis most relevant to me as a practitioner engaged in this inquiry. Finally, in Chapter VII, I use the lens of practical wisdom to focus on my own experiences in the business world, to explore key questions of practice, and to look for a way forward in addressing the problematic issue of growth.

## Chapter VI: Practical Wisdom

*He came into my office, closed the door, and sat down in front of my desk. “I’m worried about you” he said. “You seem very stressed.”*

*I knew this was true but hadn’t realized how obvious it had become. Our company was being bought by another corporation; and as the head of organization effectiveness, I felt responsible for guiding us through the tumultuous process. This was my first time working through an acquisition, and I had discovered that there was virtually nothing I could do. “They” were taking over; there was no way to anticipate what would happen; we were all powerless and uncertain. My personal life was also stressful: Not only did I have to attend to the needs of my three small children, but we were renovating our kitchen and the house was in constant disarray.*

*The day before I had gotten lost on the way to a company picnic and had left a frustrated voicemail for my manager, letting him know I was turning around and going back to the office. Now he was sitting in front of me, looking worried, and asking me what was wrong. I started to cry. Actually, I started to sob uncontrollably—I think I went through an entire box of tissues. Between sobs, I unloaded everything from the frustrations at work to not being able to find my son’s shoes before I left the house that morning.*

*After I calmed down a bit, he said, “Here’s what we’re going to do. You’re going to go home for a week. What I want you to do is to drop your kids off at school in the morning and then do anything you want, as long as it’s not work. And this will not be counted as vacation.”*

*And so I found myself home for a wonderful week of enforced relaxation. That may not seem like much, but this level of caring is so rare that it stands out as a golden moment in my career. What made it particularly memorable were the voicemails he left me during the week with suggestions about how I might use this unexpected gift of time. “Today,” he said in one message, “I think you should go to a fabric store and look for curtains for your kitchen.” Another day he called to say, “Why don’t you go to a café with a book and read for a while?” Although the opportunity to rest was essential, it was this remarkable kindness that restored my well-being. I felt cared for, treasured, even loved. For that, I am grateful, and it has cemented a lifelong relationship with someone who has been my manager, my mentor, and, above all, my friend.*

### **Phronesis**

“Those in power finally [have to] accept what the world’s people have been saying all along that there now has to be a revolution in kindness.”

—Roddick, 2005, p. 393

This chapter begins to explore the question “What should be done?” Specifically how can we use practical wisdom—Aristotle’s phronesis—to address the problem of unremitting growth? Fortunately to introduce this subject, I have the help of famed business strategist Michael Porter and former U.S. Secretary of Labor Robert Reich (2011). To set the stage, Porter, a staunch advocate of capitalism, was interviewed recently on the radio about his article “Creating Shared Value” (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Reich, well-known for his criticism of capitalism and for his liberal politics, was there too to provide an opposing point of view. Listeners who tuned in for a debate were not disappointed: By the end of the show, the vivid contrast between Porter’s and Reich’s views was evident.

During the 46-minute broadcast,<sup>10</sup> Porter laid out his case for modifying capitalism, returning repeatedly to the central themes of his article. Noting that capitalism is now “widely perceived as profiting at the expense of communities,” and that corporations have been “driven by the unhealthy professionalism” of managers who think only about short-term profits, Porter argued that the system of capitalism has evolved into a “narrow, simplistic model in which the most important opportunities to make money are overlooked” (Porter & Reich, 2011). These new capitalist opportunities, he continued, can be found in the most acute social issues of our time. Unwavering in his faith in capitalism, he insisted that shareholder value would increase greatly in the right regulatory environment, an environment that rewards companies for directing their “self-interest” toward real needs (e.g., health care and education) instead of creating artificial needs for consumers. Declaring that government is failing at the task of addressing social ills, he asked, “What if we could get corporations that are good at marketing to actually turn all of that energy to meet genuine societal needs?” At one point he commented, “There are communities in America that do not have capitalism”; his implication, of course, that poor communities might be better served if they were “seen as a market” by corporations.

Reich’s response was clear: “I think it’s a wonderful vision,” he said. “I wish it could be implemented. I wish pigs could fly” (Porter & Reich, 2011). He went on to describe his own experience “fending off” companies looking for regulatory loopholes even if those loopholes would cause harm to others. “We have before us a bill of particulars that adds up to an indictment of the way corporations have been running,”

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<sup>10</sup> The interview with Porter and Reich can be heard at <http://onpoint.wbur.org/2011/02/15/capitalism-porter-reich>

Reich said. To a certain extent Porter agreed with Reich's assessment, commenting that corporations operate "in a world where they are not respected"; then he reiterated his claim that "shared value" would mean a "fundamentally" different way of conducting business. Finally, toward the end of the program, Porter became quite animated as he turned to the subject of redistributing wealth, which he sees as a flawed attempt to achieve social progress by forcing "someone else to bear the costs." Instead of forcing redistribution, he argued, the focus should be on "expanding the pie." Here Reich got the last word: "The 3,000-pound gorilla" he observed, is the fact that over the last 30 years, there has been significant redistribution—upward—from working people to the "captains of American industry."

By now it should be evident that my sympathies lie with Reich. But although I believe Reich's comments provided an effective counterpoint to Porter's, my greater interest is in the issues addressed only tangentially (if at all) during the interaction. In particular, what struck me was the number of underlying assumptions that were *not* discussed and, absent any discussion, how perfectly rational they seem. Naturally, self-interest is the primary driver of business; yes, poor communities would benefit by being viewed as potential markets; of course, everyone will profit if we focus on "expanding the pie"; it's true that government has been ineffective, so wouldn't business be a better model? Reich's remarks indicate that he would take issue with these assumptions; in fact, he may have made a greater impact by using restraint and allusion. However, the need to imply neutrality on issues loaded with such important ethical and human implications is an indication of the pervasiveness of the language of business and a lasting legacy of instrumental rationality.



So, I experimented: I considered Porter's thesis and then asked a series of practical and values-based questions:

- Does Porter's approach make sense?
- Is it a wise approach?
- Does his approach consider what is good for all humans and nonhumans?

To each of these, my answer was no. But why? What was missing?

Looking further, it became clear to me that the underlying problem with Porter's approach is that it lacks three critical elements: a consciousness of other views (e.g., nonbusiness, non-Western, nonelite), the wisdom that comes with an open mind and broad-based experience, and, most important, the sense of caring that is essential to value-based thinking. I think each of these is a pillar of *phronesis*, or practical wisdom, and worthy of further exploration.

**Consciousness.** Beginning with consciousness, it is clear that the exercise of practical wisdom implies a reflexiveness that is not only a "critical self-reflection on one's biases" but also an awareness that our thoughts have consequences in action because they are ultimately about "*doing something*" (Schwandt, 2001, pp. 224, 223). As Flyvbjerg (2001) argues, "Thought is the ability to think differently in order to act differently" (p. 127). Thinking differently in order to act differently requires identity work and the willingness to embrace disjuncture when lived experience challenges worldviews (Jarvis, 1999; Sinclair, 2007). Only by doing this can we begin to distinguish our habits of thought from consciously generated values and aspirations. Only by doing this can we understand how power really operates and what possibilities it engenders or inhibits for our individual and collective selves.

In contrast to this, I am reminded of Arendt's famous remark about "thoughtlessness" drawn from her observations of Nazi Adolph Eichmann at his trial in Jerusalem. "It was this absence of thinking," she wrote, "that awakened my interest. . . . Might the problem of good and evil, our faculty for telling right from wrong, be connected with our faculty of thought?" (as cited in d'Entreves, 2008, sect. 5.3). Building on this chilling remark, I also wonder about the relationship between thoughtlessness and the blindness of privilege. Undoubtedly those of us engaged in the day-to-day work of capitalist globalization generally are unaware of the normalizing discourses that dominate our lives and render the disadvantaged invisible. For those of us committed to consciousness and justice, then, it becomes imperative to engage in the deliberate practice of reflection and thoughtfulness. As Reason and Bradbury (2006) say:

This pedagogy of the oppressed, to borrow Freire's term, must be matched by a "pedagogy of the privileged": inquiry processes which engage those in positions of power, and those who are simply members of privileged groups. . . . We need to learn more about how to exercise power . . . to find ways in which politicians, professionals, managers can exercise power in transforming ways. (p. 10)

**Wisdom.** Wisdom, the second key element of phronesis, is a rich and multifaceted subject, deserving of more attention than I can provide in the space of this study. But several qualities of wisdom are particularly relevant to this discussion. First, wisdom incorporates qualities of being sensible, astute, and prudent, which equates with an understanding that life is unpredictable, sometimes harsh, and sometimes joyful. Grint (2007) notes that a wise person appreciates ambiguity, understanding that "cause and effect may not be clear cut" (p. 237). Second, wisdom precludes excessive idealism, righteousness, and fundamentalism, instead fostering "humility" and the knowledge that there "may not be a right answer, let alone a quick answer, to a problem" (p. 241). So instead of attempting "to force society toward a scientifically derived and technically

executed Utopia”—for example, religious fundamentalism or neoliberalism—the wise person will “see what we have and ask, how can we improve this?” (p. 241).

As a practitioner, much of this discussion seems to confirm Charles Lindblom’s (1959) contention that political and social decision making actually works through an incremental process of “muddling through” rather than the individualistic heroics commonly depicted in most leadership literature (p. 84). From my perspective, this is the kind of wisdom needed to grapple with complex and “wicked” social problems, like growth, that have uneven effects and ambiguous solutions (Rittel & Webber, 1973). It also incorporates the ability to shift perspectives, hold multiple views, and reframe issues for clarity and understanding—all essential to the “moral debate” about what is “good” or “bad” for individuals, communities, and society at large that is at the heart of dialogue, respectful struggle, and democratic process (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 63).

**Caring.** Important as they are, I would argue that consciousness and wisdom are incomplete and shallow without the benefit of caring, compassion, and kindness. As Mayeroff (1971) suggests, “To care for another person, in the most significant sense, is to help him grow and actualize himself” (p. 1). Here feminists have contributed a long history of scholarship, from the spirituality and passion of ecofeminists like Mies and Shiva (1993) and Spretnak (1991) to the ethic of caring and relational theory of Gilligan (1977) and Fletcher (1999). In the face of the brutal devastation of our planetary resources, Mies and Shiva (1993) argue for a “new cosmology . . . which recognizes that life in nature (which includes human beings) is maintained by means of co-operation, and mutual care and love” (p. 6). To achieve this, they argue, we also must abandon the idea

that our “freedom and happiness depend *on an ongoing process of emancipation from nature*” (p. 6).

Starting from an entirely different point, Nussbaum (2006) comes to similar conclusions. In her lengthy examination of issues of justice, she contests the longstanding Western assumption that human dignity derives from “the possession of reason,” a specific capability acquired by individuals that distinguishes them from other species and from nature (p. 7). Instead she cites Aristotle, who saw “the human being as a ‘political animal,’ that is, not just a moral and political being, but one who has an animal body, and whose human dignity, rather than being opposed to this animal nature, inheres in it” (p. 87). Starting with this premise, Nussbaum assumes “benevolent sentiments from the start” (p. 91). And she argues for a “political conception of the person” that

includes the ideas of a fundamental sociability and of people’s ends as including shared ends. . . . Prominent among the moral sentiments of people so placed will be compassion, which I conceive as including the judgment that the good of others is an important part of one’s own scheme of goals and ends. (p. 91)

For Nussbaum, then, the notion of compassion is more powerful than self-interest because compassion arises from a shared respect for the inherent dignity of all persons. This point is critically important, and I return to it later in this chapter. In effect it refutes a fundamental pillar of Western thought and capitalism. This new perspective, Nussbaum concludes, is an essential frame from which to examine the looming problems of justice and “asymmetries of power” that characterize our time (p. 92).

What I take from Nussbaum and others (Fletcher, 1999; Gilligan, 1977; Mayeroff, 1971; Mies & Shiva, 1993) is that compassion, caring, and kindness represent a choice, a worldview, a “default” framework through which to explore issues of values and justice.

The exercise of compassion does not preclude emotions like fear or outrage, but it always compels us to respect and try on the point of view of others. Of course, it is one thing to experience kindness or feelings of benevolence toward friends, family members, and community members, but what about those who cause harm? What about those who oppress? Freire (1970/2000) tackles this one, arguing eloquently that this is “the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well. . . . And this fight . . . will actually constitute an act of love opposing the lovelessness which lies at the heart of the oppressors’ violence” (pp. 44-45).

Taken individually, consciousness, wisdom, and caring might be viewed as altruistic, perhaps idealistic, in this hard-nosed world of Darwinian competition. But together, as practical wisdom, they constitute a force, an ethical, values-based approach to confronting the complexities of the world. This resonates with me as both a scholar and a practitioner because it allows for the best and highest use of my capabilities in service of a vision I share with others for a better world. I believe this concept is consistent with the spirit of feminist optimism I discuss in Chapter II, expressed by Braidotti (2007) as “a sort of optimism of the will, . . . converging on the ethical project of contributing to the construction of social horizons of hope” (p. 72). Reaching further back in time, it also brings to mind Weber’s classic essay “Politics as a Vocation,” which captures the spirit of practical wisdom I first learned (although I could not name it at the time) as a young practitioner in city government. “Politics is a strong and slow boring of hard boards,” Weber (1919/1946) said. “It takes both passion and perspective” (p. 128):

Surely, politics is made with the head, but it is certainly not made with the head alone. . . . It is immensely moving when a *mature* man . . . is aware of a responsibility for the consequences of his conduct and really feels such responsibility with his heart and soul. He then acts by following an ethic of

responsibility and somewhere he reaches the point where he says: “Here I stand; I can do no other.” That is something genuinely human and moving. (p. 127)

### **Toward an Ethical Capitalism**

“We began to see the evolution of capitalism itself.”

—Henderson, 2006, p. xxi

There is something inspiring about Weber’s (1919/1946) reference to taking a stand. In fact, I would argue that a willingness to stand up for one’s beliefs and principles, for “what’s right,” runs very deep, at least in Western cultures and particularly in the American culture. And I think Pearson (2009) would agree (see Chapter V), finding in Weber’s description another archetype, “the warrior,” who is both soldier and a “crusader for social justice, . . . the politician or community advocate who takes tough stands” (p. 17). But Pearson also writes about today’s “pernicious” overuse of “warrior metaphors,” suggesting that the overuse is symptomatic of a society suffering from a “warrior ‘trance’” and producing increasingly “counterproductive” and destructive behaviors (p. 19). Furthermore, she says, these behaviors have become generalized to all ends of the political spectrum, producing dualistic righteousness and little dialogue. The “antidote,” Pearson contends, is to balance the strength and courage of the warrior archetype with the compassion and wisdom of “the caregiver” archetype, recognizing that the feminine qualities of kindness and care generally are undervalued in patriarchal societies (p. 22). Referring to Jung’s work, Pearson argues that by “holding” the tension of these “polarities,” we might see “the emergence of a third thing that resolves the issue in a new and unexpected way” (p. 22).

I make this point because two contradictory forces—caring and aggression—are built into the term *ethical capitalism*, an expression that may seem oxymoronic to many. Frankly, I have no idea if ethical capitalism is possible, but I like the inherent challenge

of the opposing elements, the possibility of vigorous debate. More important, I believe that the act of taking a stand for ethical capitalism, choosing to live with the tension of these competing forces, may open the door to new and perhaps surprising alternatives for action. Exploring the nature of ethical capitalism is, of course, also an expression of practical wisdom. In that spirit, I offer a few examples of the many scholars, practitioners, and activists who have accepted the challenge of bringing forth more conscious, wise, and caring forms of capitalism.

I begin with Buckminster Fuller, the legendary iconoclast, writer, and inventor. Shortly before his death in 1983, I had the opportunity to hear “Bucky” speak and was forever inspired by his vision for a sustainable world. I was particularly affected by his genuine compassion for all of humanity and his conviction that no one need be left out from the promise of a healthy and fulfilling life. “It no longer has to be you or me,” he declared. “Selfishness is unnecessary” (Fuller, 1981, p. xxv).

One measure of Fuller’s impact is the extent to which his work has inspired others. Activist Lynne Twist (2003), for example, recalls her own encounter with Fuller. What changed her life, she writes, was hearing him argue against the prevailing “belief that there’s not enough to go around, and that we need to fight and compete to garner those resources for ourselves,” suggesting instead that “the human family had clearly reached a point where there actually was enough for everyone everywhere” (p. 59). Then Twist describes how her unusual alliance with the Achuar, a remote indigenous people in Ecuador, brought her to an even deeper level of awareness:

Theirs was a culture with no money in it . . . no ownership, no accumulation of goods. . . . Still there was no suggestion of scarcity; no lack and no fear that there wouldn’t be enough of what they needed. . . . They lived (and still do) in the experience and expression of *enough*, or what I call *sufficiency*. (p. 68)

Since her introduction to the Achuar, Twist has dedicated her work to overcoming the great “toxic myth of scarcity” and instilling a mindset of sufficiency “that reminds us [that] there is always enough” (pp. 48, 75). She is one of the founders of the Pachamama Alliance, whose purpose is to serve the “indigenous people of the Amazon rainforest . . . and, using insights gained from that work, to educate and inspire individuals everywhere to bring forth a thriving, just and sustainable world” (Pachamama Alliance, 2011). Her work also has been a springboard for initiatives like the Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream symposiums, international programs to “train . . . agents of change to meet humanity’s greatest crises” with the goal of “bring[ing] forth an environmentally sustainable, spiritually fulfilling, and socially just human presence on the planet” (Awakening the Dreamer, 2011).

As I discuss in Chapter IV, feminist activists also have been on the forefront of resistance for decades, exemplifying the spirit of practical wisdom in action (Moghadam, 2005a, 2005b). It is worth reiterating Moghadam’s (2005a) point that transnational feminists tend to oppose extreme neoliberalism, rather than condemn globalization and all forms of capitalist activity. And their organizations—groups like DAWN and WIDE and WLUML—tend to be pragmatic and value-driven in their determination to make the global enterprise more caring and more woman-child-nature friendly. It’s important in this context to mention again the work of scientist and environmental activist Vandana Shiva. In addition to her other accomplishments, Shiva founded Navdanya (2011),<sup>11</sup> “a women centred movement for the protection of biological and cultural diversity” that fosters “a network of seed keepers and organic producers spread across 16 states in

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<sup>11</sup> According to the group’s website (<http://www.navdanya.org/>), *navdanya* refers to the “nine crops that represent India’s collective source of food security.”



India.” Like other successful advocacy programs, Navdanya has spawned a number of initiatives, among them Diverse Women for Diversity, a program committed to preserving biodiversity and protecting food sources, and Bija Vidyapeeth (“School of the Seed”), an organic farm in northern India where classes on sustainable farming are taught.

Moving from activism to philosophy, Martha Nussbaum is an important thought leader whose work has influenced a number of other scholars (see, e.g., Jackson, 2009; Sen, 1999; see also Chapter II). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, one of Nussbaum’s (2006) principal contributions has been to reconceptualize theories of social justice that have been used to rationalize Western notions of self-interest. Like Fuller, she argues that today’s problems will be better solved if viewed through the lenses of compassion, care, and cooperation. In this light, Nussbaum considers some of the world’s most difficult “unsolved problems of social justice”—for example, extending justice and full citizenship to “people with physical and mental impairments” and “to all world citizens” regardless of their “accidents of birth or national origin” (pp. 1-2). Staying true to the spirit of practical wisdom, Nussbaum says that her work is “both critical and constructive.” She proposes a “political doctrine” beginning with the “intuitive idea . . . of human dignity” that countries like Germany, India, and South Africa already have incorporated into their constitutions (p. 155). From this perspective, quality of life is not measured in terms of economic growth (e.g., GNP), but by a “list of *central human capabilities*, that is, what people are actually able to do and be” (p. 70). Nussbaum’s list of capabilities (which she considers a work in progress) includes “life,” “bodily health,” “emotions,” “affiliation,” and “play” (pp. 76-77). It also includes “practical reason,” the

ability to “form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one’s life” (p. 77).

In the field of economics, Amartya Sen (1999) incorporates this concept of human capabilities into his discussion on the ethics of capitalism (see also Chapter II).

Traditional economic theory, Sen argues, is focused on the “the role of human qualities in promoting and sustaining economic growth, [but this] tells us nothing about *why* economic growth is sought in the first place” (p. 295). By contrast, the human capability approach recognizes that the purpose of development and capitalism is the fulfillment of human needs and that “human beings are not merely means of production, but also the end of the exercise” (p. 296).

Sen (1999) also addresses the relationship between social values and the operation of markets and capitalism. He notes that it is hard for “any reasonable critic” to oppose the basic notion of the market, which is simply “a basic arrangement through which people can interact with each other and undertake mutually advantageous activities” (p. 142). In addition, he argues:

While capitalism is often seen as an arrangement that works only on the basis of the greed of everyone, the efficient working of the capitalist economy is, in fact, dependent on powerful systems of values and norms. Indeed, to see capitalism as nothing other than a system based on a conglomeration of greedy behavior is to underestimate vastly the ethics of capitalism, which has richly contributed to its redoubtable achievements. (p. 262)

By articulating the “ethics of capitalism,” Sen hopes to reclaim the original values of capitalism. He references the “early defenders of capitalism,” who saw “mutually beneficial behavior” and the rational “pursuit of interest” as a “great motivational improvement” over tyranny and destructive human behaviors (p. 263). Acknowledging the obvious limitations of today’s “capitalist ethics,” particularly in addressing “issues of

economic inequality” and “environmental protection,” Sen nevertheless maintains that the capitalist system is “extendable by an appropriate development of ethics sensitive to these concerns” (pp. 263, 267).

Herman Daly’s exploration of steady-state economics *Beyond Growth* (1996) and Tim Jackson’s more recent *Prosperity Without Growth* (2009), which was discussed in Chapter II, are two more examples of the thoughtful reexamination of economic orthodoxy that is currently under way. In this vein, it’s also important to mention the work of Hazel Henderson, who heralds the emergence of a “cleaner, greener, more ethical, and more female” economy in her book *Ethical Markets: Growing the Green Economy* (2006, p. xv). Although Henderson deplors the traditional capitalist system, she is a passionate advocate for the development of new forms of capitalism that support environmental and universal human needs. That the transformation of capitalism is possible, she believes, is supported by new research in physics, brain science, and ecology that has “invalidated most of the core principles of traditional economic theory,” including the “bleak view of rational behavior” that assumes that “humans maximize their self-interest in competition with others” (p. 230). She goes on to offer a number of examples demonstrating that “humans enjoy sharing and cooperation as much as competing” (p. 231). One of Henderson’s core themes is the need to develop new measures of success to support new ways of understanding wealth and growth. According to Henderson, these new indicators would expand the concept of economic success from just economic growth (measured, e.g., by GNP) to “a broader integration of value and values that ensures the health and viability of the places in which we live” (p. 3).

One of the alternative metrics Henderson (2006) suggests is the UN's Human Development Index, which uses three criteria—health, education, and living standards—to measure quality of life across nations. She also supports a more radical metric, the Gross National Happiness (GNH) index adopted by the nation of Bhutan. According to the Centre for Bhutan Studies (2011), the concept of the index dates back to 1972, when King Jigme Singye Wangchuck announced that the “happiness of the people” should be “the guiding goal of development.” In 2008, after decades of development, the government of Bhutan launched the final GNH index, which incorporates nine indicators to measure national well-being.<sup>12</sup> In 2005, the *New York Times* profiled the quirky but intriguing index under development by the “happy little kingdom” of Bhutan (Revkin, 2005). Since that time, the idea has begun to gain mainstream recognition in the West; in fact, the British government was recently persuaded to implement a “national happiness index” (R. Cohen, 2011). As columnist Roger Cohen (2011) notes, despite an initial “deluge of criticism,” there is now a compelling “case for trying to measure the happiness of a society, rather than its growth and productivity alone” (p. 1).

There also are examples of scholars and practitioners who have focused their practical wisdom and advocacy on the world of business. For example, Jonas Ridderstråle and Kjell Nordström's book *Karaoke Capitalism: Management for Mankind* (2003) provides a challenging and provocative examination of the ethics of capitalism (see Chapter IV). Focusing on the management of business, Rakesh Khurana and Nitin Nohria (2008) argue that “it's time to make management a true profession” by implementing a “code of conduct” that would “forge an implicit social contract” between

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<sup>12</sup> The indicators are psychological well-being, time use, community vitality, culture, health, education, environmental diversity, living standards, and governance.

business leaders and “other members of society” (pp. 70, 72). To accomplish this, they propose a “Hippocratic Oath for Managers” that commits them “to serve the public interest by enhancing the value [their business] enterprise creates for society” (p. 72). Lynda Gratton (2004, 2007) has long explored new possibilities for business organizations, advocating democratic and people-centric focuses and championing more collaborative forms of leading and working. Finally, Amanda Sinclair (2007) looks at leadership, particularly the growing overlap between business and the leadership industry. She suggests that “leadership is often accomplished through [a] collusive seduction” that reinforces patriarchal and repressive business practices (p. 5). Instead, she argues, leadership should be liberating, “aimed at helping to free people” from these “oppressive structures” (p. xv). “I make the case,” she continues, “for thinking about leadership as a way of being that is reflective and thoughtful about the self” and that values relationships and connections with others (p. xv).

There are certainly many other scholars and practitioners worthy of mention that I do not include in this brief overview. My intent here is simply to illustrate the variety of work under way and to share the vitality and hope that are generated when action is informed by the consciousness, wisdom, and care of phronesis. This discussion also underscores my belief that real change is an emergent phenomenon and not, contrary to the myths promulgated by most management experts, something engineered and implemented by a small group of experts. Certainly these robust examples stand in stark contrast to Porter’s suggestion, discussed at the beginning of this chapter, that self-interest is a panacea for our most serious social ills. Although the individuals and groups described here clearly have very different aspirations, they all are motivated not by self-

interest but by human decency and kindness. They have no grand scheme. What unites them is a commitment to a common vision and set of values that honors life in all its forms. Kenyan activist Binyavanga Wainaina (2009) calls this “noble good,” suggesting that there is something noble, and therefore redeemable, about being human. In that spirit, looking past the cynicism and determinism around him, Wainaina poses two questions that capture the essence and compassion of practical wisdom: “What is your noble good? What do you serve?”

## Chapter VII: The Reflective Practitioner

*I'm standing on the stage of an auditorium, looking out at rows of (mostly) men in suits. To my left on the stage are six men—the executive board headed by the company's chairman. Above me are 35 video monitors, each showing a small group of executives located in other hubs around the globe: Atlanta, Chile, Hong Kong, Sydney, Toronto, Warsaw. Together, these live and remote audiences constitute the top 200 leaders of the company where I am a member of the human resources team. The meeting's topic is the company's quarterly earnings report, usually presented as a monologue by the chief financial officer. My presence here today is an experiment. Somehow I am supposed to transform this meeting into a genuine dialogue.*

*It's time to start the meeting. I look over at the members of the executive board. Clearly no one is going to introduce me; I have to do it myself. I begin by explaining that the board wants to have a genuine dialogue about business issues and that I've been invited to facilitate that dialogue. Then I explain that in my role as facilitator, I will be soliciting questions from the audience. I turn toward the board members and ask them to keep their remarks brief to ensure maximum participation. At that moment a rather remarkable thing happens: The chairman looks at me and says, "Hey, we didn't tell you to say that!" Apparently I have broken protocol by giving the board instructions. Then he begins to laugh. And then the rest of the board members start laughing, along with the audience, and the ice is broken. The session takes on an air of lightness, humor, and candor that continues until the end. The questions flow smoothly as I alternate from the live audience to the video audiences around the world. When*

*we close, it's clear that we've accomplished what we set out to do. There is a buzz and a new energy in the room. I receive a personal note of thanks from the chairman and kudos from around the globe.*

*This story is just a prelude. Later someone important to me told me that what I'd achieved that day really was no big deal; after all, I just had to ask a few questions. I was stunned. I still remember the icy cold that came over me when I heard those words, the feeling of belittlement. The satisfaction I'd been feeling was gone. Afterward I went through a period of grief and pain, and turned inward on myself. It was several weeks before I could go back and confront what had happened.*

### **The Language of Business**

“Our problems lie inside our lives, yes; but our lives are lived inside fields of power.”

—Hillman, 1995, p. 15

Something interesting has been happening in my practice since I embarked on this study. I've begun to attract a new clientele: women and men who come to coaching in the aftermath of something painful that has occurred in their work life. Each of their stories is different, but I've noticed two common themes: First, whether a story is about a perceived failure to produce results, an ineffective boss-employee interaction, or a hurtful peer-to-peer relationship, the plot always revolves around the client's relationship with a visible set of human characters. Second, their stories also invariably include an invisible set of characters that play an even more important role than the human actors. As I discuss in Chapter V, these unseen characters take the form of “hidden commitments” (e.g., the need to be seen as highly competent), which rest on deep-seated assumptions and fears (e.g., success rests on competence; poor performance means incompetence and



failure) that must be avoided at all costs (Kegan & Lahey, 2009, p. 58). In other words, what seems to grip these individuals—to terrify them actually—goes well beyond how they are perceived by others; their real fear is that they might actually *be* ineffective or undisciplined or uncooperative or aggressive or too nice, as if an inadequacy has somehow entered their DNA and now defines them.

Kegan and Lahey (2009) suggest that the route to greater mastery involves moving beyond the implicit expectations of the “socialized mind” to higher levels of “mental complexity” by confronting fears, naming assumptions, and consciously rewriting more-empowering narratives (p. 24). I appreciate their insights and the clarity of their description, which corresponds to my own experience of successful coaching interactions (both as coach and client). However, in the context of this study, I would like to take the process further by drawing attention to a third element I notice in these coaching stories: the presence of a larger “container,” or set, of overarching discourses that are so pervasive they seem as natural as breathing. At the most tangible level are the metrics and processes that define the organization’s expectations for behavior, including performance goals, leadership competencies, and an array of performance management and feedback tools. Clearly these processes define both the explicit and implicit terms of organizational success; and when they are internalized (as they usually are), they become a powerful normalizing force within an organization. But my interest goes beyond organizational norms to the broader set of discourses that have been the subject of his study: the discourses of privilege, power, and growth. When these discourses are unacknowledged, they determine *for us* what we value in our societies, our organizations, our family and friends, and ourselves.

Now that I'm aware of these discourses, I hear them in my interactions with my clients, in the language we use to communicate with each other. We call this the language of business. Listen to almost any business conversation, and the values are clearly articulated: rationality, drive-for-results, metrics, profit, shareholders, financial performance, business objectives. These discourses are also present in discussions of "soft" topics—teamwork, collaboration, influence—because (as everybody knows) the reason to improve teamwork or encourage collaboration or have influence is to further business objectives. In human resources we talk about *human capital*, *aligning people to the business strategy*, *the business agenda*, *performance management*, *organizational effectiveness*, *change management*, all terms that give HR the precious "seat at the table" with "the business" (code for those who do the real work of making money; everyone else is "overhead"). Further, because business has been reified as the most efficient and effective institutional form, this language is not limited to the corporation; I hear much of the same emphasis on masculine heroics and rational processes from my clients in nonprofit and governmental organizations.

Embedded in this language is what Peterson (2003) calls the "code of 'civilization'" (p. 151), an archive of beliefs, assumptions, and expectations that I think of as the growth imperative. The code is "paternalistic and colonizing; it represents the particular model of western 'success' as the inevitable and superior model—the one on top—to which all should aspire" (p. 151). I hear the code in how my clients measure their worth in terms of their financial results and their list of heroic accomplishments. I hear it in their relentless, mind-numbing dedication to their BlackBerries and e-mail and itineraries. I hear it in the anger, fear, and anguish that they cannot express at work

because it would compromise their professional reputation. I hear it in their descriptions of insensitive managers and unkind coworkers whose behavior they overlook because self-interest and business results are more important than the human need for love. And finally, I hear it in those clients who direct their anger and criticism at themselves because, according to the code, they *are* a failure, deserving of whatever abuse or punishment is directed at them.

Equally revealing are the things we don't discuss. For instance, I rarely hear clients talk about their business purpose. A great deal of energy goes into the activities that make a company grow (e.g., sales, branding, client segmentation, cost cutting, and marketing), but I almost never hear pragmatic and ethical questions like these: Where are we headed as a company? Is our company good or bad for people, animals, and the environment? How do our actions impact others? Are our actions kind? (Pearson, 2009). As I argue in Chapter V, I believe our hidden commitment to growth stops us from asking these questions. Moreover, because this commitment is invisible, so too are the consequences of our actions—the devastation we wreak on the environment, the protections we give to hierarchies of privilege. This means that even if we acknowledge these problems, they appear to be external, inevitable, beyond our control. It also means we fail to ask the most difficult questions: How do my actions perpetuate injustice and misery? If I am benefiting from this, who is being hurt? What is the future I want for myself and the world around me, and how do my actions align with that future?

## A Feminist Vision

“UNLESS someone like you  
cares a whole awful lot,  
nothing is going to get better.  
It’s not.”

—Seuss, 1971, p. 58

Like my clients, I wrestle with these same questions. I do this as a feminist committed to a better world, and as a practitioner in leadership and change, knowing my efficacy rests on my engagement with these concerns. Shortly I will offer a few thoughts on the implications of this study for practitioners; however, first I want to consider the matter of feminist vision. In Chapter III, I note that one of feminism’s greatest gifts is the refusal to accept the inevitability of neoliberal capitalism and its narratives of privilege, power, and growth. Furthermore, this stubborn “optimism of the will” is sustained by a strong commitment to a vision for the future, expressed in a variety of ways across the spectrum of feminist scholars (Braidotti, 2007, p. 72). In this spirit, I would like to share my own emerging feminist vision.

My vision is best understood by placing it in the context of my life and the multiple aspects of my identity: woman, daughter, sister, wife, mother, grandmother; middle class, white, middle-aged, East Coast American; businesswoman, practitioner, expatriate, scholar, neighbor, community member, teacher, and student. From these many perspectives, I have witnessed both the worst and the best of human possibility. I am saddened and deeply disturbed by growing global inequity, injustice, and violence, and unconscionable planetary devastation. But I am uplifted by my many experiences of caring, generosity, ingenuity, and joyfulness, the finest expressions of humanity. My vision celebrates and builds on these affirmative experiences and the promise of a just and inclusive world that nurtures the best of what we are capable of doing and being, a

world committed to freedom and the opportunity to define, explore, and fulfill our human possibility.

In my feminist vision, we have matured, and so have our notions of growth and progress. I borrow here from Hillman (1995), who suggests that growth “grows up,” not by denying its existence but by adding new meanings to it, meanings that are more compatible with the mature needs of our societies. The idea of growth persists, but the idea is neither dominated by images of accumulated wealth nor oblivious to its impact on the biosphere. Instead it calls to mind a different set of images: healthy children, verdant forests, fulfilling lives. Growth now serves a “project of peoples,” transforming capitalism along the way (Moghadam, 2005a, p. 357). Growth is something we aspire to as individuals and communities and societies. Growth implies a love of life. Relationships become the site of growth, a classroom where we learn to care, be vulnerable, and apply our intelligence in mindful ways. The outcomes of growth manifest in our relationship with our inner selves and in our mutually respectful interactions with others.

I envision a reexamination and a reinvigoration of what we choose to value—perhaps, as some suspect, in the wake of a catastrophe that shakes us out of our collective stupor, or as new voices and perspectives gain momentum, visibility, and power. In my vision, we have learned to place human need, connection, and compassion above self-interest, consumerism, and financial indicators of value, recovering what Havel (1994) calls our “lost integrity” (Two Transcendent Ideas section, para. 5). I see a world that honors and respects all women, men, and children; a world that measures its progress in

terms of human freedom and well-being above other measures of technological and financial advancement.

In my vision, as we have recovered our connections with one another, we also have learned to reconnect with nature and Earth's other inhabitants, honoring the "web of life" and the mystery of the cosmos of which we are an integral part (Shiva, 1993b, p. 74). We have come to terms with the damage we have done, allowing for the grief that follows. We have turned our remarkable intelligence and creativity away from manufactured needs to the real needs of our societies and planet. We have discovered a new passion for securing a safe and bountiful home for our children and their children.

In my vision, we collectively grow up and wake up. We move beyond our childish dreams of domination and the adolescent pursuit of power. We examine the myths and core assumptions that drive our beliefs and behaviors. We discover the courage to ask the hard questions and resolve the dilemmas that confront us. We talk about power, reflecting on how we have benefited and who we may have harmed. We find strength in new ideas, gaining mastery and making them actionable. We replace judgment with curiosity, learning to listen and hear other points of view. We come to terms with fear. We engage in dialogue on ethical questions. We make life-sustaining choices and consider the impact of our actions beyond our immediate selves, families, and communities. We learn to respect, forgive, and show kindness to one another. We are thoughtful, generous, and wise.

## The Vulnerable Practitioner: Reflections on Leadership and Change

“I think what we are seeing are efforts to map an intermediate space we can’t quite define yet, a borderland between passion and intellect, analysis and subjectivity . . . art and life.”

—Behar, 1996, p. 174

In her remarkable book, *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart* (1996), Ruth Behar suggests there is a vast difference between the textbook description of anthropology and the actual practice of the discipline. “Nothing is stranger than this business of humans observing other humans in order to write about them,” she says (p. 5). She describes her work as the “most fascinating, bizarre, disturbing, and necessary form of witnessing left to us” (p. 5). Comparing anthropology to a voyage, she notes that

the voyage is never simply about [the] trip. . . . Loss, mourning, the longing for memory, the desire to enter the world around you and having no idea how to do it, the fear of observing too coldly or too distractedly or too raggedly, the rage of cowardice, the insight that is always arriving too late, as defiant hindsight, a sense of the utter uselessness of writing anything and yet the burning desire to write something are the stopping places along the way. At the end of the voyage, if you are lucky, you catch a glimpse of the lighthouse, and you are grateful. Life, after all, is bountiful. (p. 3)

Behar’s intent is to raise questions about the traditional role of the anthropologist as an observer. She wonders if the tendency to focus on methods and process helps “drain anxiety from situations in which we feel complicitous with structures of power, or helpless to release another from suffering, or at a loss as to whether to act or to observe” (p. 6). Unsure about where her profession is heading, she shares these thoughts from her colleague Clifford Geertz: “We lack the language to articulate what takes place when we are in fact at work. There seems to be a genre missing” (as cited in Behar, 1996, p. 9).

Reading these reflections, I feel a kinship to Behar, a sisterly affection for someone who has captured the experience of *my* work. The geography may be

different—much of Behar’s work focuses on Cuban culture, while mine centers on businesses, organizations, teams, and community groups, and their leaders—but I also am on a voyage of human inquiry. For many of us in this field of leadership and change, there is a similar tension between textbook and practice, between the objectivity we’re taught and the subjective human need to connect, to act. Like Behar (1996), we often want to “enter the world” of relationships around us but have “no idea how to do it”; we know the fear of being too involved or too cowardly; we are frustrated by “the insight that is always arriving too late”; and we lack a language that captures the rich and varied experience of our work (p. 3). And like Behar, many of us choose to open ourselves up to the human experience rather than disappear behind the tools, techniques, and methods of our practice. Thanks to Behar, I now have a term that captures the nature of this experience: *vulnerable practitioner*. Below I offer a few reflections on what that means to me.

**The practitioner’s story.** This chapter began with a story. Before I go on, I’d like to finish it. . . . I was shattered when a colleague dismissed what I thought was an important accomplishment. About two weeks later, we met again. She knew something uncomfortable had transpired between us and was more than willing to talk. I was angry and hurt, and behind closed doors I unloaded all of that emotion. What I still appreciate—what stands out in my memory—is the compassion she showed me, saying repeatedly, “I’m sorry. I’m so very sorry.” We talked for a long time, and there was learning for both of us. Because we come from different countries, we talked about our cultural differences, the conflicting perspectives we brought to the situation. We didn’t try to change anything or come to an agreement; instead we decided to honor our



differences and let them be. We left, each of us more sensitive to the other's views and needs, and with a deeper respect for and trust of the other.

My colleague and I had resolved our differences, but I had yet to address my reaction to her words. Why had the experience been so painful for me? Why did I turn inward in such a punishing way? This study has helped me explore these questions, giving me a number of insights into vulnerable practice.

***First insight: Relational practice is not valued.*** The work of feminist scholar Joyce Fletcher (1998, 1999) led me to my first insight. As I discuss in Chapters III and IV, Fletcher (1998) has been instrumental in developing a relational theory of adult growth and development built on the premise that “growth and development occur best in a context of connection [that is] characterized by mutual empathy and mutual empowerment” (p. 167). She calls this behavior “relational practice” (p. 163). In her research, Fletcher observes that organizational culture is heavily influenced by a gendered “framework” that “values...rationality, abstraction, and linearity” and that determines what is considered “real work” (e.g., problem solving and “technical competence”) and success (e.g., “outcomes that [are] tangible, measurable, and concrete”) (p. 175). In this organizational context, Fletcher argues, relational practice is not valued; in fact, it is “disappeared” because “by its very nature” the behavior of relational practice violates the “truth rules” of the organization (p. 175). *Disappearing* for Fletcher (1999) is the process by which relational practice is “rendered invisible [by] a network of formal and informal practices, processes, and structures, as well as a set of common understandings and norms that make up the work culture” (p. 6).

Reading this, I realized three things about the experience I shared in my story. First, my success at facilitation was an example of the effective use of relational practice to achieve greater human connection. Second, I have an abiding belief in the value of relational practice. I believe that most human problems can be solved through human relationships. Conversely, I tend to think that the root of most human problems is a lack of human relationships. In fact, I believe that my *value* comes from my ability to create an environment that fosters relationships between people. Third, I realized that what hurt me about my colleague's words was the realization that she neither honored nor valued the importance I place on relational practice. The pain I felt came in part from the experience of being disappeared.

***Second insight: Relational practice operates in an organizational context of power.*** I say the pain came *in part* from the experience of being disappeared. I understood the pain of being dismissed, of being made invisible, but that didn't fully explain why I had become so self-critical afterward. Why had I turned on myself? I found the answer in feminist theories. Remember that one of the distinguishing characteristics of those theories is attention to power, the belief that power is always present, embedded in discourses that privilege masculinity (e.g., hegemonic masculinities) and that in turn determine the governing codes of behavior (Moghadam, 2009; Peterson, 2003). As Fletcher (1998, 1999) notes, these dynamics of power also are embedded in organizational discourse—what I call the *language of business*.

And then I realized that power too had played a part in my reaction to my colleague's words. I saw that underneath it all, I doubted if my work at the meeting really mattered. What was the big deal about getting a group of people to talk to one

another? I really hadn't done much beyond ask a few questions. The truth is that I speak the language of business. I've spent my career figuring out the rules for success, and I'm pretty clear it's about the results I produce not how I get there. I know how relational behaviors are devalued in organizations. By making the mistake of thinking that my relational practice mattered, I had set myself up for a fall. Now I saw in myself what I described earlier in my clients: Within the rules of *this* game, my actions were inconsequential. And therefore so was I.

***Third insight: There is a larger context.*** The last insight comes from what is unsaid and, as Hillman (1995) puts it, "unthought" (p. 17). Once I recognized organizational discourse at work, and the dynamics of gender, power, and privilege, I could see how I had internalized the code for succeeding in business to the point of punishing myself for failing to meet the established standards of success. What I didn't see at first was the broader context, the impact of the growth imperative. The myth of endless accumulation is an invisible character in my story because, as Marx said, it has the power of a "pretended law of Nature," as invisible as gravity (Marx et al., 1978, p. 421). In fact, the growth imperative is everywhere in my story. It explains my initial pride in my work and my eventual dissatisfaction with that work. It was even the topic of the meeting that day. My "achievement" was generating more conversation about a quarterly earnings report, about growth.

What if we had used the time at that meeting to talk about *not* growing? What if relational practice was truly valued? What if we developed more-respectful relationships and began to have more direct and open conversations? Yes, we use relational practice to coach individuals and teams, to manage change; but all of these activities are focused on

achieving business strategies. Only rarely do we talk about the fundamental purpose of the business. Clearly it's time to start talking about the larger context.

**New directions for leadership and change.** From these insights, I've developed a few thoughts and recommendations for practitioners of leadership and change. This is not intended to be a comprehensive list; in fact I hope the ideas here will be expanded by others who also are committed to their practice.

***Support relational practice.*** Most leadership and change professionals are in the business of relationships, so discussing relational practice seems a little like preaching to the choir. However, because of its foundation in feminist theories, relational practice is distinct from many other methods. Fletcher and Jacques (1999) summarize that distinction this way: Relational practice “*situates relational activity within a gender/power context*” (p. 6). They go on to call attention “to the gender/power dynamic inherent in relational interactions, whereby shouldering the responsibility for relational growth is something that marks one as feminine and allowing it to be shouldered by another is masculine” (p. 6). By bringing this dynamic into the open, relational practice enables respectful and empowering relationships, and it helps us develop “empathy, vulnerability, an ability to experience and express emotion, an ability to participate in the development of another, and an expectation that relational interactions will be sites of growth for both parties involved” (Fletcher, 1998, p. 167). Relational practice models “growth-in-connection” (Fletcher, 1998, p. 175), one of the tenets of my feminist vision. Relational practice also nurtures the consciousness, wisdom, and caring necessary for practical wisdom.

***Become students of power.*** Relational theory is one means of accessing the subject of power, but it is not the only one. Members of organizations tend to have a very primitive view of power, generally associating power with hierarchy or some characteristic of an individual. Much of the popular literature on leadership and change also tends to overlook power or to portray it as an “entity,” something that can be acquired (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 116). As a result, practitioners often fail to address power in an intelligent and useful way. Instead practitioners should be exploring the nature of power as something that is “exercised” across a diffuse network of relationships (Foucault, 1979, p. 26; see also Flyvbjerg, 2001). This may include an examination of the prevailing organizational discourses or the subtle messages of power and privilege embedded in organizational culture. More than anything, practitioners should talk openly about power with their clients, acknowledging that it’s an important topic and making it a safe one.

***Foster mindful conversations on growth and ethical capitalism.*** Leadership and change practitioners can play a more powerful role in fostering ethical capitalism, social justice, and environmental sustainability, but to do so may demand a reexamination of how they see their role. Leadership coaches, for example, are expected to help their clients achieve their business agenda, usually by introducing new behaviors or changing existing ones. Team coaches and organization development professionals are expected to help teams and businesses define strategies, clarify roles, enhance team processes, and have tough conversations about things that are getting in the way. What is missing, however, is an awareness of the pervasive part the growth imperative plays in driving destructive and unjust business practices. By not addressing these larger issues,

practitioners become complicit in the system they purport to change. In other words, leadership and change professionals committed to systemic global change must stop seeing themselves as neutral facilitators of organizational strategy and have some opinions of their own. In doing so, practitioners would benefit from exploring the concept of phronesis and expanding their capacity to generate and facilitate ethical conversations that address organizational purpose and power.

***Reexamine cherished processes, methods, and tools.*** Many of the most cherished practices of human resource and leadership and change practitioners are based on modernist notions of instrumental rationality and are designed to control employees and drive economic growth. The list is long, but one pertinent example is change management. According to Marshak (2005), *change management* is an “organizational change practice” that emerged in the late 1980s, when large accounting and management consultancies “expanded their traditional practices to include ‘reengineering’” (pp. 20, 21). Change management is predicated on values that are “almost always intended to advance the competitive and therefore economic and financial well-being of the organization and its shareholders” (p. 22). In many respects change management has usurped the arena of change, overshadowing the field of organizational development, which is predicated on a more humanistic and participatory set of values. In my experience, most human resource professionals simply aren’t aware of the differences in approaches and the benefits of a more open, participatory process that leaves room for inquiry and the exploration of values and purpose.

## Future Directions

“There are many things that I am [but] more than any other thing, I am a writer. It’s a thing I love to do. And I think that the writer’s role is to be something to society, to be some kind of free agent who [is] allow[ed] to look for things, to have insight, to be able to say things sometimes that people are not prepared to say. . . . And that’s a thing that you need to protect, and it’s worth more than anything.”

—Wainaina, 2009, p. 15

Early in this inquiry, I used the metaphor of a tapestry to describe the key themes woven through this text. When I visualize the tapestry now, I see the threads of globalization, ethical capitalism, progress, feminist thought, respectful struggle, power, consciousness, and change woven together in a blend of colors. But my eyes are drawn to the two boldest colors and thickest strands in the cloth, the strands holding the fabric together—growth and endless accumulation. I can now see that the tapestry is very old but still not completed. Despite the effort I’ve already put into it, I feel compelled to continue weaving.

Others were laboring at this task long before me, telling the story of globalization and growth, power, and endless accumulation. I am grateful for the contribution of these many scholars, educators, activists, and practitioners. My premise as I began this study was that the *idea* of growth alone was worthy of examination. Also I sensed that an understanding of myth might explain why the growth imperative persists despite the evidence of its negative consequences. I was accurate on both counts: I discovered that the quest for growth, and hence the myth, extends back further in time and has even greater power than I had imagined.

Looking ahead, there are several changes I would like to see that reflect my interest in both transforming the discourses of business and building more bridges between the scholars and practitioners. First, I hope to see a great deal more research and

inquiry into the topic of ethical capitalism, across a range of disciplines, not just economics.

Second, reflecting on Wainaina's words, I believe that writers, activists, practitioners, and scholars need to speak out about growth, and that they have to be willing to say unpopular things. Exposure to new ways of thinking is especially important to business schools. As Robert Reich says, many of these schools have "been on the forefront of training managers and creating executives to think exactly the wrong way" (Porter & Reich, 2011). Undergraduate business and human resource programs also would benefit from fresh thinking and new curricula.

I also see an opportunity to build bridges between scholars and practitioners by fostering exchanges of feminist scholars, activists, and practitioners within business organizations. One way to make this happen is to strengthen the connections between existing networks, such as professional women's business organizations (e.g., the European Professional Women's Network) and transnational feminist networks (e.g., WIDE). These exchanges also would create opportunities for more of the public dialogue so badly needed to address the critical problem of growth.

I set out to create a theoretical study that addressed these questions: Where are we going in our endless pursuit of growth and accumulation? What are the consequences of unremitting growth, and in what ways are these outcomes good or bad for humans and the ecosphere? Who gains and who loses if we maintain or alter the discourses of growth, and by which mechanisms of power? What should be done, and what are the implications for practitioners committed to a just and sustainable world? In this exploration I've looked for answers in a number of different ways. Because the idea of



growth is so pervasive, I took a broad historical view, eventually reaching back to antiquity and the Middle Ages. My disciplinary framework also was expansive, encompassing critical globalization studies, feminist theories, world-systems theory, mythology, anthropology, sociology, economics, political economy, philosophy, historiography, organization development, and psychology. Having explored the genesis of the growth ideal and the evocative power of its myth, I then examined its personal impact on me and the clients I serve.

To help me with this inquiry, I also built on Aristotle's notion of *phronesis* to develop a personal philosophy of practical wisdom. Looking at the issue of growth through this lens, it became clear to me that a focus on relational practice is critical to regain both our "lost integrity" and our hopes of survival as a species (Havel, 1994, Two Transcendent Ideas section, para. 5). If only. If only we can shift our focus to a more humanistic and connected way of being, we might dream of growth in deeper, wiser, and more soulful dimensions. Some might ask if this is possible. In my view, possibility isn't the question: A compelling vision is the work of a lifetime, an imagined future that captures our heart and asks us to continually stretch toward its realization. So I move forward, reenergized and inspired by the scholars and activists I have met along this journey, fully aware that there is much work to be done and no time to waste.

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