Propositions on human behavior: looking under the hood

1. Living systems are made up of fundamental building blocks (e.g., quarks, electrons, protons, atoms, molecules) organized into organelles, cells, organs, etc.
2. Living systems replicate, diversify, compete, cooperate, invade one another, incorporate one another, combine, and evolve into systems of increasing complexity.
3. Complex living systems have nervous systems that can create the experiences of consciousness, memory, imagination, deductive logic, extrapolation, anticipation, prediction, and other mental functions.
4. These mental functions are generated by the interactions of some 80 billion individual agents (neurons), in the context of other types of cells and the factors they secrete, as well as other internal and environmental chemico-physical influences.
5. The resulting thoughts and actions, which are also influenced by perceptions and expectations of others’ thoughts and actions, are generally aimed at advancing the organism’s interests, as these are perceived by the organism and responded to by 80 billion+ agents.
6. Collaborations, organizations, governments, strategic plans, policies, legislation, enforcement actions, and everything else reflect these myriad, competing influences. Ultimately, better outcomes require that thoughts and actions reflect more accurate, efficient, coherent and integrated brain functioning.
7. Epidemiology should assign greater importance to understanding nutritional, microbiological, hormonal, environmental, behavioral, social, and institutional influences on the functioning of the nervous system and behavioral implications.

(Victor Schoenbach, from May 2013 presentation at Oregon State University)