

Reflecting on the Cone (2010) Corporate Citizenship Spectrum as a Framework for Research Relating to Corporate Partnerships in Higher Education



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Abstract

Participation by corporations in supporting higher education remains highly visible and controversial for academicians and practitioners. While best practices can be found, many gray areas exist in the actions and motivations for corporate citizenship behavior in relation to higher education. This paper reflects on the usefulness of the Cone (2010) corporate citizenship spectrum used in Clevenger's (2014) organizational analysis case study, which examines corporate citizenship through the inter-organizational relationships between a public U.S. doctoral research university and six of its corporate partners.

Cone's spectrum explores four categories: philanthropy, cause-related branding, operational culture, and DNA citizenship ethos. In large part, the spectrum works well to illuminate inter-organizational interactions. However, there are some nuances that challenge the divergence of the four topical areas as well as the convergence within each of the categories.

Keywords: *Corporate citizenship, corporate social responsibility, partnerships, qualitative research methods, higher education leadership, organizational ethics, triple bottom line, philanthropy.*

1. Background

All inter-organizational relationship research includes two key frames: "a set of dimensions describing the organizations and a set of dimensions describing the nature of relationships through which they are linked" (Cropper, Ebers, Huxham, & Ring, 2008, p. 9). Businesses exist as the economic cornerstone of the capitalistic democratic society. Corporations or businesses must be profitable in order for them to exist to partner and support institutions such as higher education. Additionally, for-profit

organizations typically possess a magnitude of resources that can benefit higher education through financial contributions, volunteer efforts, gifts-in-kind, and expertise. *Corporate citizenship* means that companies have certain responsibilities as part of a pluralistic society that they must perform to be perceived as 'good' and as contributing to communities in a beneficial way for all people, groups, and organizational stakeholders (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2017; Ciconte & Jacob, 2009; Clevenger, 2014, 2019; Cone, 2010).

The broad term of corporate citizenship encompasses many other concepts that have developed over time including corporate philanthropy, corporate responsibility, corporate social responsibility, accountability, sustainability, sustainable development, and global citizenship (Clevenger, 2014, 2019; Clevenger & MacGregor, 2019; Googins, Mirvis, & Rochlin, 2007; Waddock, 2004). Corporate citizenship is "the way a company takes responsibility and is accountable for managing its social and environmental impacts on society" (Pinney, 2009, p. 6). The World Economic Forum (2002) universally defines *corporate citizenship* as:

The contribution a company makes to society through its core business activities, its social investment and philanthropy programmes, and its engagement in public policy. The manner in which a company manages its economic, social and environmental relationships, as well as those with different stakeholders, in particular shareholders, employees, customers, business partners, governments and communities determines its impact. (p. 1)

Such "citizenship activities, therefore, encompass corporate investments of time and money in pro bono work, philanthropy, support for community education and health, and protection of the environment" (Gardberg & Fombrun, 2006, p. 329).

These categorical expectations and related corporate behaviors impact other entities such as higher education. Corporations have a significant financial impact on higher education through direct contributions and charitable contributions, which constitute a 10-year aggregated average of 15.5% of all funding dollars contributed and nearly 10% of higher education budgets (Kaplan, 2018). Additionally, according to data submitted to the National Science Foundation through the annual survey of Higher Education Research and Development Expenditures (via the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, or NCSES), in 2017 nearly 6% of all research and development spending came from business and corporate sources (NCSES, 2017a). Further, since 1953, such corporate allocation has steadily increased (NCSES, 2017b).

As the pressure for diversified resources continues to be valued and mandated, higher education leaders must understand how to engage, solicit, and steward corporations. Of the models and theories exploring corporate citizenship, Cone's (2010) multidimensional *corporate citizenship spectrum* has four categories identifying key corporate citizenship functions as *philanthropy*, *cause-related branding*, *operational culture*, and *DNA citizenship ethos*. Each category pulls together strategic inter-organizational relationship concepts and includes expectations as well as potential or perceived return on investment (ROI). Individual components have developed over time

and have been defined and studied but not previously formally linked in a spectrum for inter-organizational partnerships between higher education and a for-profit organization. (For a deeper discussion on this intersect, see Clevenger & MacGregor, 2019).

Figure 1 Cone's (2010) Corporate Citizenship Spectrum			
Philanthropy	Cause-Related Branding	Operational Culture	DNA Citizenship Ethos
Altruism	ROI Expectation	Stakeholder Management	Triple Bottom Line
Cone's Corporate Citizenship Spectrum gave visual representation to the range of purposes and motives of corporate citizens and delineates the various relationships corporations have with the non-profit world, including higher education. Parenthetical interpretations were added by the researcher for reader simplicity (Clevenger, 2014).			

1.1 Philanthropy

Philanthropy, Greek for *philanthropia*, means *love of humankind* (Walton & Gasman, 2008). As such, philanthropy provides financial or other resource support given to a higher education or a nonprofit organization to manage as needed, to further a cause, or to enhance the charitable well-being of humanity in an altruistic way (Ciconte & Jacob, 2009; Levy & Cherry, 1996). Organizations give resources (e.g., money, in-kind products or services, etc.) to manage with no expectations of tangible returns. Philanthropic responsibilities often reflect current expectations by business or corporations by the general public (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2017).

Philanthropy for causes such as higher education is categorized as either improvement or social reform, or both. *Improvement* supports the idea of progress and maximized human potential. *Social reform* addresses social problems and operations from a point of justice. Most corporations take a utilitarian view of philanthropic activities realizing they are part of a wider society and try to serve the greatest good for the greatest number (Shaw & Post, 1993). Additionally, Aristotelian virtue ethics undergird U.S. corporate behavior for citizenship with “such character traits (virtues) as liberality, magnificence, and pride” (Shaw & Post, 1993, p. 746) that would translate in today as “public spiritness, generosity, and compassion” (Shaw & Post, p. 746).

Corporations in the United States of America had an initial attitude and behavior toward philanthropic support of higher education as well as the nonprofit sector was a reactionary gesture of goodwill (Jacoby, 1973; Pollard, 1958). “Making contributions out of earnings is a new thing for most companies, and a problem” (Pollard, 1958, p. 181) because there were no formal systems in place. Additionally, corporations soon shifted

to *strategic philanthropy* as transactional or reciprocal pro-social behavior, for which they expected recognition and prestige in the community. “The guiding motive for corporate giving is enlightened self-interest” (Pollard, 1958, p. 182).

At the time, corporate executives asked two questions: “What do colleges [and universities] need in order to excel?” and “What’s our fair share?” (Pollard, 1958, p. 182). In many cases, shrewd corporate leaders want to be assured of efficient and effective management of financial practices. Executives often require financial statements from higher education institutions, but corporations realize they are expected to do their part. “In general, the impact has been to awaken management, and stockholders as well, to the importance of companies accepting responsibility for corporate citizenship” (Pollard, p. 193). Corporate executives lamented: “colleges do not meet the companies half way with clear cut proposals or statements of their needs” (Pollard, 1958, p. 196). Administrators and faculty at colleges and universities quickly learned how to prepare priority lists of ideas and needs (aka, case statements) and to meet expectations of business executives to garner financial resources and engaged support. Such a mutual relationship between higher education institutions and the communities in which they are located is called “town and gown” (Pollard, 1958, p. 210). However, a pragmatic question would be, “do colleges and universities become slaves of corporations?” when this power is exhibited. (For a deeper exploration, see Shaker and Borden, 2020, through their 30-year retrospective of philanthropy in higher education including corporate funding and support.)

1.2 Cause-related Branding

Cause-related branding is defined as corporate financial support or a partnership developed with a reciprocity, or specific return on investment (ROI), expected in the long-term (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2017). This scenario requires a mutual exchange of monetary support or other resources from a business for an intended purpose or outcome from another organizational partner in a tangible manner. In the higher education setting, examples include building and laboratory naming opportunities, athletic or academic sponsorships, endowed chairs, sponsored research, and specific initiatives. Performance is monitored carefully by both parties.

Cause-related branding collaborations stem from a range of motivations including: enacting educational reform, supporting economic development, promoting dual enrollment, improving student learning, saving on resources, obtaining a shared goal or vision, and creating international partnerships. This type of behavior of corporate support of U.S. higher education is labeled as *commercialization* or *commodification* (Bok, 2003; Stein, 2004; White, 2000). Several types of cause-related branding opportunities are created including cause-oriented activities, partnerships, sponsorships, endowments, regular access to the campus for brand promotions, and sponsored research and technology transfer (Bok, 2003; Fairweather, 1988; Lauer, 2000; Matthews & Norgaard, 1984; Miller & Le Bouef, 2009). All of these arrangements lead to tangible benefits for each party involved with mutual expectations of ROI. Such cause-related branding is innovative and helps a corporation maximize gains in the future (Freeman, 1991). From the higher education side—particularly for nonprofit

academic institutions or public ones—a question of ethics arises from such expectations of ROI. (For a deeper review, see Clevenger, MacGregor, & Sturm, 2021.)

Higher education is savvy about brand management and maximizing the cause-related branding strategy (Daw & Cone, 2011). Brand strength and value as well as connection, centers on the differentiation of the organization. Emotional ties and expectations create a specified cause and seek a reaction or outcome. Finally, the long-term goal is to build relationships and on-going engagement and commitment (Daw & Cone, 2011). The “three-dimensional value proposition” (Daw & Cone, 2011, p. 21) includes rational value of the head, emotional value of the heart, and engagement value of the hands. All three of these are key to creating successful cause-related relationships. Successful cause-related brand engagement shifts from altruistic activities to mutual benefits, from transactions to relationships, from organizational silos to integration, and from competition to cooperation to ultimately yield win-win strategic investments for both parties (Daw & Cone, 2011).

1.3 Operational Culture

Organizational culture promotes “appropriate attitudes, values, and norms” (Morgan, 2006, p. 145). Such organizational culture is manifested in the operational culture and practices of an organization. “When we observe a culture, whether in an organization or in society at large, we are observing an evolved form of social practice that has been influenced by many complex interactions between people, events, situations, actions, and general circumstances” (Morgan, 2006, p. 146).

Operational culture refers to companies that view educational institutions as a strategic key in their corporate identity and behavior so investment contributions (e.g., resources, volunteers, leadership, etc.) are given with high expectation of assisting with, or engaging in, implementation in a hands-on way. “Culture can be defined as a shared set of values that influence societal perceptions, attitude, preferences, and responses” (Robbins & Stylianou, 2003, p. 206). In *operational culture*, a stakeholder view of corporate social responsibility (CSR) is optimized (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2017; Cone, 2010). The *stakeholder view* is a consideration by the corporation of all people involved in its business, including not only shareholders but also employees, the family members of employees, customers, vendors, suppliers, and their communities (Bruch & Walter, 2005; Carroll & Buchholtz, 2017). The utilitarian perspective creates harmony to develop and maintain lasting relationships with all stakeholders. Key areas of concern in developing operational culture include philosophy, values, mission, strategy, structure, resource commitment, and style (Hall, 1991).

A stakeholder view of CSR is optimized (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2017; Cone, 2010). There are five key questions regarding stakeholders: (1) Who are the stakeholders of concern to the company? (2) What are the stakes of each stakeholder? (3) What opportunities and challenges do stakeholders present? (4) What responsibilities does the firm have toward its stakeholders? and (5) What strategies or actions should the firm take to best address stakeholders? (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2017).

Culture exhibits itself as observed behaviors, norms, values, corporate philosophy, written and unwritten rules, and overall climate in an organization (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Liggett, 2000; Morgan, 2006). The essence of culture is deeper and operates unconsciously in a company. Such invisible factors include the physical environment of an organization, its nature of time and space, the nature of its people, the nature of both an organization and the relationships of employees internally and externally, and the activities and behaviors of both the organization and its agents. Executives in the organization create a culture of corporate citizenship, including ethics (Herman, 2008). This focus is labeled “tone at the top” (Sirsly, 2009, p. 78), and “the tone of the organizational culture is the foundation upon which corporate social responsibility is also built” (p. 97).

As organizations adapt, cope, manage, and survive in their environment, consideration of interrelated cultural concepts may be adjusted to ensure survival, including: mission, vision, and values; short- and long-term strategies; resources of people, time, and technology; and capital. Interaction with other organizations requires conceptual understandings, common language, organizational learning, definition of roles and boundaries, establishment of power and status, intimacy, rewards and punishments, and ideologies. Manifestation of all of these functions are deep in the behavior of the organization through myths, heroes, ceremonies, symbols, rituals, and specialized language (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Cultural paradigms are formulated dealing with humanity and the relationship to nature, the nature of reality and truth, the nature of human nature, the nature of human activity, and the nature of human relationships. Each of these underlying assumptions and functionalities created the conscience and decision making of organizations (Liggett, 2000). Additionally, organizational culture provides the basis for organizational ethics and decision making.

The term *stakeholder* first appeared in 1963 in an internal memorandum at the Stanford Research Institute to refer to primary interest parties such as “shareholders, employees, customers, suppliers, lenders, and society” (Freeman, 1984, p. 32). The stakeholder concept grew into strategic management of corporate planning, systems theory, corporate social responsibility, and organization theory (Freeman, 1984). In the mid-1980s, corporations supported community projects and educational institutions as citizenship duty to help enlighten and stabilize society and to generate positive corporate image for the communities of its employees and customers (Elliott, 2006; Freeman, 1984). “Businesses provide sufficient value to society if they operate efficiently, use resources judiciously, provide employment, and deliver goods and services that support a healthy economy” (Benioff & Adler, 2007, p. xi).

Principles of stakeholder management include the managers acknowledging and monitoring all legitimate concerns, listening to and communicating with stakeholders about all issues, adopting processes and modes of behavior to protect the interest of stakeholders, recognizing the interdependence of all efforts, cooperating with all entities both public and private, avoiding activities that jeopardize human rights, and navigating potential conflicts (The Clarkson Centre for Business Ethics, 1999).

A key in stakeholder management is *stakeholder engagement* (Mirvis, 2010; Saia, 2001; Sloan, 2009). “Stakeholder engagement can be defined, in very general terms, as the process of involving individuals and groups that either affect or are affected by the activities of the company” (Sloan, 2009, p. 26). Regular dialogue allows stakeholders to express relevant interests and concerns. Stakeholder engagement can “guide choices about the portfolio for a company regarding social and environmental investments and visibly convey that the enterprise is interested in the points of view of its customers, employees, and other stakeholders (Mirvis, 2010, p. 19). The most progressive companies in the U.S. who have developed stakeholder engagement as a core competency are Campbell Soup Company, General Electric, IBM, Lockheed, and Unilever Martin (Clevenger & MacGregor, 2019; Mirvis, 2010; Sloan, 2009). “The goal is to have relationships that create sustainable, high-performance organizations—not only economically and financially, but socially and environmentally as well” (Sloan, 2009, p. 25).

“Time contributed by volunteers on behalf of businesses represent a significant contribution by companies to their communities” (Frishkoff & Kosticka, 1991, Chapter 5, p. 1). Employees volunteering for other organizations (such as higher education) increases productivity, encourages team-building, improves interpersonal communications, broadens skill base, enhances understanding by employees of a broader culture, and shows the commitment by a company to the community and world (Freeman, 1991; Sheldon, 2000). “Organizations that have service as a core value of their culture will see both intrinsic and extrinsic returns. ...companies that provide the opportunity will find that it energizes employees and executives” (Benioff & Southwick, 2004, p. 17). Shaw and Post (1993) indicated that engagement “contributes to employee morale” and “loyalty” (p. 747). Additionally, Vitaliano (2010) said, “By adopting socially responsible policies...companies can reduce turnover” (p. 569). Volunteerism has become a central component of the organizational culture motivation. However, a reflective admonition is: can the effort be genuine and authentic, or is it disingenuous to take the credit for work by others.

1.4 DNA Citizenship Ethos

Finally, the *DNA citizenship ethos* considers the triple bottom line of sustainability from *Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development*, more commonly known as the *Brundtland Report*. The triple bottom line of sustainability includes attention to people, profit, and planet (United Nations, 1987). Today, businesses and corporations—and many higher educational institutions—aim to focus on all three areas simultaneously and typically are involved in the programming with the organizations receiving funding or other resources. The purpose of profitability is only done while also equally considering the actions of the company on the environment and all stakeholders. This DNA citizenship ethos is ingrained in the mission and philosophy of a company and is concerned with society—both people and the environment—as much as making profit (Cone, 2010). Morgan (2006) explained corporate DNA this way:

The visions, values, and sense of purpose that bind an organization together can be used as a way of helping every individual understand and absorb the mission and challenge of the whole enterprise. Just as DNA in nature carries a holographic code that contains the information required to unfold the complete development of the human body, it is possible to encode key elements of a *complete organization* in the cultural and other codes that unite its members. (p. 99)

Members, therefore, acting collectively, create the DNA of an organization. In this instance, the *DNA citizenship ethos* means that the corporations from the ground up—or in the actual essence and existence of the corporation beyond just culture—consider the triple bottom line of sustainability as strategically integral into how it goes about doing business (Martin, Samels, & Associates, 2012; Reichart, 1999; Saul, 2011). This DNA citizenship ethos is ingrained in a corporation (or a college or university) via the mission and philosophy and is concerned with society—both people and the environment—as much as making a profit (Cone, 2010). The process of companies with an ingrained DNA ethos partnering with the best organizations, signals other funders and organizations to follow, improves performance of the partnering organization involved, advances knowledge and concepts contributing to society and long-term interests, and creates value both economically for the company and socially for all stakeholders as well as the environment. Considerations of compliance and disclosure, social responsibility and environment, sustainability, and strategic issues development are incorporated into the conceptual framework yielding a “zone of mutual benefit” (Bright, Fry, & Cooperrider, 2006, p. 21). Albeit naysayers would dually label this the potential ‘zone of corruption.’

More recently, this attention to the triple bottom line has been referred to as “social, environmental, and economic responsibility and sustainability (SEERS)” (Greenberg, McKone-Sweet, & Wilson, 2011, p. 12). Corporations even have designed a special accounting system to measure and to report all efforts in the triple bottom line (Edwards, 2008). The DNA citizenship ethos may be equated with potentially transformative innovation. “Business organizations engage in transformation innovation when they embrace social, environmental, ethical or similar initiatives” (Bright et al., 2006, p. 28). Additionally, “eighty percent or more of all executives, across all business types and industries, confirm that environmental, social, and governance investments create financial value for their companies” (The State of Corporate Citizenship, 2012, p. 3). Finally, geographic boundaries have disappeared, and corporations must prioritize issues that affect quality of life locally, nationally, and globally (DaSilva & Kerkian, 2008).

Corporate social responsibility of ethics, human rights, financial accountability, consumer product and professional service liability, profitability, and environmental concerns create an integral landscape of the scope of a company and consideration in their role in a pluralistic society today. One may argue that newer companies that consider people, profit, and planet from their start have ingrained all facets of concern into their make-up, or DNA. An example is Google (Bishop & Green, 2008). A mix of high social benefit and high economic benefit provide a progression for maximizing

long-term, sustainable citizenship. “In the long run, then, social and economic goals are not inherently conflicting but integrally connected” (Porter & Kramer, 2002, p. 7).

Utilization of the Cone Spectrum

Clevenger (2014) utilized the Cone (2010) corporate citizenship framework for a study to help to identify categories of motives and interest in *An Organizational Analysis of the Inter-organizational Relationships Between a Public American Higher Education University and Six United States Corporate Supporters: An Instrumental, Ethnographic Case Study Using Cone’s Corporate Citizenship Spectrum*. An instrumental, ethnographic single-embedded case study viewed organizational participants from 2006 to 2010 and included a public American higher education research University, the University’s foundation, as well as two small, two medium, and two large (i.e., *Fortune 500*) U.S. corporations. Research questions used to explore this relationship:

- (RQ1): Why does a higher education institution accept corporate citizenship engagement and financial support?
- (RQ2): Why do U.S. corporations engage as corporate citizens in relationships with a higher education institution?
- (RQ3): What ethical concerns arise in the engaged inter-organizational relationships between corporations and a higher education institution?

Triangulation of data was provided by 36 interviews, more than 12,609 pages of documents and audio-visual materials, and a University campus forensic observation of 407 photographs of all spaces named for businesses, alumni, friends, or honorific for prior faculty, administrators, or politicians. Research questions yielded several findings that developed into themes. Three RQ1 themes included: *viable resources*, *student enrichment*, and *real-world connectivity*. Four RQ2 themes included: *workforce development*, *community enrichment*, *brand development*, and *research*. For RQ3, three themes emerged. First, *generally no ethical dilemmas* were found. Second, several *general ethics discussion topics* created five clusters of interest: *public relations*, *solicitation*, *policies and stewardship*, *accountability and transparency*, and *leadership behavior*. Third, *five disparate ethical concerns* were shared; none involved any of the corporate participants. Four other themes emerged relating to *culture*, *economic challenges*, *alumni connectivity*, and *geography*. (For a comprehensive discussion of these findings, see Clevenger, 2019.)

Figure 2 combines themes from the three research questions and develops a pattern regarding overall mutual interactions. This plotting provides a summary of the motives and related ROI expectations that both the University and the businesses have of engaging in inter-organizational behavior. All motives fell into two main categories: Cause-related Branding or DNA Citizenship Ethos. As evidenced in this study, the University operates in the DNA Citizenship Ethos space, so it would be reasonable for it to attract similar-minded companies with mutual interests. The categories of Philanthropy and Operational Culture were not predominant categories for the inter-

organizational relationship between the University and the overall relationships with these six particular companies.

2.1 What Works

Aldrich (1979) said, “Relations between organizations are not as easy to classify as those between biological organisms, as multiple purposes and multiple consequences of organizational actions defy straightforward categorization as leading to symbiotic or commensalistic relations” (Aldrich, 1979, p. 266). The Cone (2010) corporate citizenship spectrum provided a comprehensive framework with a wide range of categories. These categories were exhaustive (Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Merriam, 2009). Many other authors have offered various parts of the context woven into this spectrum, but none seem to be as comprehensive.

Figure 2 Plotting the Themes from Research				
Research Question	Philanthropy	Cause-Related Branding	Operational Culture	DNA Citizenship Ethos
	Altruism	ROI Expectation	Stakeholder Management	Triple Bottom Line
Higher Ed. Motive #1		Viable Resources		
Higher Ed. Motive #2		Student Enrichment		
Higher Ed. Motive #3				Real-world Connectivity
Corporate Motive #1		Workforce Development		
Corporate Motive #2				Community Enrichment
Corporate Motive #3		Brand Development		
Corporate Motive #4		Research		
Ethics Issue #1				Generally None
Ethics Issue #3				General Ethical Discussion Leading to Five Topic Clusters
Ethics Issue #3		Five Disparate Ethical Dilemmas		
The major themes from the three research questions are combined and plotted onto the Cone corporate citizenship spectrum. The overarching inter-organizational relationships and behavior are mainly categorized as Cause-related Branding and DNA Citizenship Ethos—both carry high business performance motives (Clevenger, 2014).				

The Cone spectrum considers all angles of corporate citizenship, including what Gardberg and Fombrun (2006) describe as “activities [that] have been categorized in

terms of financial commitment, beneficiary, target audience, form, duration, and scope” (p. 335). The framework has what Guba (1978) and Patton (2002) consider good *convergence* to identify distinct categories. Content in each category of the Cone (2010) corporate citizenship spectrum is meaningful, and content categories have internal homogeneity. The concepts represent over a century of behaviors and concerns relating to the behavior of a company in society. These agendas and motives provided a framework to study the inter-organizational relationships with the University and six corporate partners.

2.2 What Does Not Work

To begin, some scholars believe that Cone’s work is not accessible and is biased because it was designed for consulting purposes. For other scholars, the Cone (2010) *corporate citizenship spectrum* is challenging to understand nuance differences in the Operational Culture and DNA Citizenship Ethos categories. Ideally, category content must be mutually exclusive with no overlap (Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Merriam, 2009); this concern is labeled *external heterogeneity* by Guba (1978) and Patton (2002). Three specific areas of concern include management behavior toward constituents, employee actions in volunteerism versus engagement, and how deep environmental issues are addressed. All three are discussed in the Operational Culture and DNA Citizenship Ethos categories—but there are differences. Cone said, “If a company has purpose in its DNA, that will direct how it engages with stakeholders—internally and externally” (C. Cone, personal communication). An average citizen may not understand the differences in the categories. Practitioners working in the corporate relations arena can likely distinguish the nuances and depth between the two categories. However, deeper elaboration could help in clarifying significant differences. Likely a main difference stems from the origins of the two concepts. The Operational Culture was a reactionary effort with stakeholder management initiated in the 1970s (Brown, 2004; Carroll & Buchholtz, 2017; Cone, 2010; Hall 1991). Today Operational Culture can be both pre-planned or reactionary. The DNA Citizenship Ethos requires a corporation to have considered the Triple Bottom Line concepts of people, profit, and planet at the establishment of the company and programming from the ground up. This concept emerged in 1987 from the United Nations Brundtland Report (Martin, et al., 2012; Reichart, 1999; Saul, 2011; United Nations, 1987). Thus the DNA term is appropriate as values and goals are ingrained in the culture and related behaviors of an organization.

2.3 Analysis Across Embedded Units

Focusing on one university and six corporations provided for what Bernard and Ryan (2010), Johnson and Christensen (2008), and Yin (2009) call cross-unit analysis. Cross-unit analysis across embedded units allowed for comparison of similarities and differences in motivations and expected ROI for corporate engagement among the six corporate participants. Having two small, two medium, and two large companies provided enough data to find some similarities and several differences. At the onset, it was noted that less information would be available from Small Companies A and B and Medium Company A because they are privately held. The public companies—Medium Company B and Fortune 500 Companies A and B—have to provide greater

transparency as required by the U.S. government. Six corporations in varying industries and different sizes allowed for an understanding of the functional areas described in the Cone (2010) corporate citizenship spectrum. However, ideally having many more companies could provide a deeper comparison; thus, there is opportunity for further expanded research.

Importance for Higher Education

Cone's theory keeps up with 21st Century thinking as a holistic model. In the United States, both higher education and the corporate community need to work together to make the most of their relationship to succeed in the years to come (Clevenger, 2014, 2019; Sheldon, 2000). Organizations do not operate in a vacuum but interact with their external environment through other organizations in inter-organizational relationships and contend with other environmental factors such as politics, social constraints, the economy, and the American culture (DeMillo, 2011; Rhodes, 2001). Ebers (1999) said, "Inter-organizational relationships are subject to inherent development dynamics" (p. 31). Many dynamics may be planned, negotiated, and controlled. It is a presupposition that an organization is internally stable enough to interact with other organizations. Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) and Shafritz, Ott, and Jang (2015) promoted organizations interacting with one another. Touraine (1977) explained that an organization "is dependent upon both technical constraints and social objectives, but it is autonomous in that it is a decision center that can establish exchanges with the outside as well as internal norms of functioning" (p. 242). This inter-twining provokes organizations to seek best practices to create win-win inter-organizational relationships.

Higher education continues to face resource challenges, and therefore must create win-win relationships for needed resources (Clevenger, 2014, 2019; Clevenger, MacGregor, & Sturm, 2021; Cohen, 2010). Corporations are a fertile environment to create cooperative relationships to support the academy. Corporations often desire to give back to society—including through higher education. It is helpful for higher education leaders to understand the functionality and processes to engage corporations. Saul (2011) admonished higher education to capture, market, and sell value providing much needed impact to funding stakeholders—including corporations. However, higher education institutions need to help to create a framework and better understanding of how corporations can work with their organizations as "companies are not experts in working with educational institutions" (Sanzone, 2000, p. 323). Higher education and corporations need to be able to speak a more common language to express needs and goals and to be able to express in what capacity each will contribute.

Conclusion

The Cone (2010) multidimensional *corporate citizenship spectrum* provides entry points and purposes for the four important facets that higher education institutions can capitalize on including philanthropy, cause-related branding, operational culture, and DNA citizenship ethos. Both higher education and corporations must be attuned to values and needs of each other, justify the abilities and resources of an institution to be

successful in partnering, and differentiating their potential collaborative abilities against competitors. Professional resource development staff and higher education leaders would benefit to be able to define and articulate the ability by a corporation to create impact, ability to provide efficiencies, and clearly manage expectations. Higher education needs to directly address motives for engagement by companies, present value-based propositions—not cost-plus, understand the culture and dialogue of industries, sell solutions, sell outcomes—not programs, create mutually beneficial partnerships, and engage with like-minded organizations to create sustainable, win-win inter-organizational partnerships.



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