

Corporate Social Responsibility Into The Future: A Review of the Literature



Dr. Karina Ochis
Professor of Management
Monarch Business School Switzerland

Dr. Jeffrey Henderson
Professor of Business Ethics
Dean of Monarch Business School Switzerland

Abstract

The discourse on CSR theory has gained a prominent position in general management literature because of societal issues including general unrest, high levels of insecurity, poverty and the backlash against globalization and big business. From a progressive stance, the field of CSR is a vibrant one that shows promising progression and variation. On the one hand, the developmental propensity of CSR is evident through the sanctioning of the CSR concept by transnational organizations and the comprehensive implementation of CSR practices in corporations. On the other hand, the literature developed extensively from its CST origins to the operationalization phase to modern micro-foundations.

The discussion undertakes an integrative perspective on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and a progressive perspective on the literature. It is argued that while the cyclical nature of CSR is evident through a return to a focus on micro-foundations found in Bowen's (1953) person-centric theory, the literature develops subsequently at new levels of analysis. It is further argued that the literature progressed through four stages from rationalization to operationalization as expressed by Henderson (2010) at the societal, institutional and individual levels of analysis.

Essential CSR concepts are discussed: the importance of CSR, terminology and literature development, catholic social teaching (CST), origins and context of modern corporate responsibility, foundational scholars, the contrarian argument, corporate social performance (CSP), stakeholder theory, corporate social responsiveness, rectitude and reason, corporate sustainability (CS), corporate citizenship (CC) and micro-CSR.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Catholic Social Theory, Corporate Social Performance, Corporate Sustainability, Corporate Citizenship, micro-CSR, Stakeholder Theory.

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Introduction

While the cyclical nature of corporate social responsibility (CSR) is evident through a return to the micro-foundations of Bowen's (1953) initial person-centric core of the theory, the literature has a subsequent development at each level of analysis. It is argued that the literature progresses through the four stages from rationalization to operationalization as expressed by Henderson (2010) at the institutional, organizational and individual levels of analysis. The discussion undertakes an integrative perspective on CSR and a progressive perspective on the literature.

The discourse on CSR theory has gained a prominent position in management literature due to general societal unrest, high levels of insecurity, poverty and the backlash against globalization and big business, to name a few. It can be said that CSR refers to the consideration and response of an organization to issues beyond the economic, technical and legal requirements, in a manner that will accomplish social benefits along with the traditional economic gains (Davis, 1973). The International Organization for Standardization (ISO), discusses seven core interdependent principles of being socially responsible, in an attempt to align corporate operations. These include: consumer issues, community involvement and development, human rights, labor practices, environmental considerations and fair operating practices (ISO, 2010). Similarly, Crane, Matten and Spence (2014) remark that core CSR characteristics beyond philanthropy include: voluntary practices and values, social and economic alignment, multiple stakeholder orientations and the management of externalities.

In support of the discussion, twelve sections that include essential CSR concepts are studied: the importance of CSR, terminology and literature development, catholic social teaching (CST), origins and context of modern corporate responsibility, foundational scholars, the contrarian argument, corporate social performance (CSP), stakeholder theory, corporate social responsiveness, rectitude and reason, corporate sustainability (CS), corporate citizenship (CC) and micro-CSR. Finally, the challenges and limitations of CSR theory development are exposed. It should be noted ahead of time that the literature on CSR is vibrant yet disjointed. Thus, the subsequent discussion focuses on the scholarship as developed from the 1920s onwards presenting the seminal authors largely considered by the academic community to be impactful and resilient.

The Importance Of CSR

CSR has proliferated in the worldwide discourse in all forms in the past two decades (Crane et al., 2014). The prevalent corporate irresponsibility and the diminished capacity of governments to regulate the self-interest of corporations

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has catalyzed an increased focus on the implementation of CSR practices (Mintzberg, 1983). Societal problems heightened by increased economic turbulence has amplified the general call for corporations to behave in a dignified manner (Wood, 1991).

CSR Milestones Authors, Definitions, Themes			
Year	Author	Category	Focus
384-322 BC	Aristotle	Philosophy	Nicomachen Ethics-Values & Ethics
354-430	St. Augustine	Philosophy	De Doctrina Chistinana-Christian Doctrine
1224-1274	St. Thomas Aquinas	Philosophy	Summa Theologica - Christian Theology
1480s-1620s	The Spanish Scholastics	Theology	Catholic Social Theory-Meaning of Work
1891	Pope Leo XIII	Theology	Rerum Novarum-Economic Distribution
1918	M.P. Follet	Management	Group Organization-Leadership
1930	Kreps	Management	Social Audit-Stanford University
1952	Bowen	Ethics	Social Responsibility Of the Businessman
1958	Levitt	Ethics	CSR Dangers
1961	Pope John XXIII	Theology	Mater & Magistra-Social Progress
1965	Pope Paul VI	Theology	Gadium & Spes, Peace & Community of Nations
1970	Freidman	Economics	Profit-Centric View
1972	Drucker	Management	Concept of the Corporation
1973	Davies	Ethics	CSR Justification
1978	Frederick	Ethics	CSR1, CSR2
1979	Carroll	Finance	Corproate Performance
1979	Wojtyla-John Paul II	Theology	The Acting Person
1979	Sethi	Strategy	Social Issues
1983	Mintzberg	Strategy	CSR Justification
1984	Freeman	Strategy	Strategy-Stakeholder Theory
1986	Frederick	Ethics	CSR3, Corporate Social Performance
1987	Brundtland Commission	Definition	Sustainable Development Definition
1991	Goodpaster	Ethics	Ethics-Stakeholder Analysis
1991	Carroll	Strategy	CSR Pyramid
1991	John Paul II	Theology	Laborem Exercens-Common Use
1991	Wood	Literature Review	CSR Revisited
1995	Clarkson	Strategy	Corporate Social Performance
1999	Carroll	Strategy	CSR Evolution
2001	Margolis	Finance	Financial Performance
2002	Naughton	Theology	Purpose of Business
2002	Kennedy	Theology	CST-Work Centric
2002	Porter	Strategy	Corporate Philanthropy
2003	Porter & Kramer	Strategy	Competitive Advantage
2004	Garriga, Elisabet, Mele	Literature Review	CSR Theories
2005	de Bakker	Literature Review	Bibliometric Analysis of 30 Years of CSR
2005	Glazebrook	Strategy	Corporate Citizenship
2006	Fletcher	Ethics	CST-Purpose Driven Company
2006	Goodpaster	Theology	Common Good
2006	Kennedy	Theology	Common Good, Human Persons
2006	Naughton	Theology	Community of Work
2006	Porter & Kramer	Strategy	Competitive Advantage & CSR
2008	Lee	Literature Review	Review of CSR Theory
2009	Benedict XVI	Theology	Caritas in Veritate-Charity & Truth
2010	ISO	Definition	Launch of ISO 26000 Standard
2011	EU Commission	Definition	New CSR Definition
2013	Freeman	Strategy	Stakeholder Management
2013	Pope Francis	Theology	Evangelii Gaudium-Dignified Work-Common Good
2015	Naughton	Theology	Community Perspective
2018	Carroll	Strategy	Stakeholder Management

Source: Monarch Business School, 2022

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Lee (2008) accurately remarks that CSR has been adopted from several perspectives in a broad range of organizational contexts to different ends. In the private sector, CSR is often implemented to avoid government intervention, to manage the growing economic power of businesses, to build brands and to manage public legitimacy in large companies, as well as to build trust and personal relationships in smaller firms (Krizanova & Gajanova, 2016). In the public sector, CSR heightens the need for greater accountability to society through public bodies. In contrast, non-governmental organizations (NGO's) have exposed corporate misbehavior and mobilized pressures against irresponsible practices (Krizanova & Gajanova, 2016). Presently, the focus of NGOs is shifting from exposing corporate abuses to supporting the implementation of CSR systems. The private sectors face increasing expectations to address social problems and shoulder greater social responsibilities (Montiel, 2008). Societal actors expect corporations to remedy the wrongs for which they had been directly responsible such as pollution and inadequate product safety (Carroll & Shabana, 2010).

Proponents of CSR claim that implementing CSR is ultimate to the benefit of shareholders and presents a critical corporate advantage. A cluster of studies denotes a positive relationship between corporate social performance and corporate economic performance (Margolis & Walsh, 2001), however, a direct relationship is not guaranteed. However, one can say that employees and shareholders show a preference towards companies with strong social values and outstanding reputations (Baumgartner, 2020; Helm, 2007).

Terminology And Literature Development

De Bakker, Groenewegen & Den Hond's (2005) bibliometric analysis indicates that CSR has arrived as a strategic management specialty, albeit the increasing number of differentiated positions associated with its central concepts. Hence, Lee (2008) claims that the literature progressed from a non-entity in the business world to becoming sanctioned by society, governments, corporations and non-governmental organizations. For instance, international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the International Labor Organization (ILO), the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have institutionalized the promotion and monitoring of CSR initiatives within their portfolios (Benn & Bolton, 2011). Also, the European Commission (2011) emphasized the importance of national and sub-national CSR policies and invited European Union (EU) Member States to present or update their plans for the promotion of CSR initiatives.

Benn and Bolton (2011) remark on the ongoing intense activity around defining and classifying the meaning and scope of CSR. To date, it appears that the concept of CSR has yet to be unified through various standards and that an extensive lexicon is developing (Bahman, Nazari & Emami, 2014). To a greater

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extent CSR still remains pre-paradigmatic. For instance, since the emergence of the concept, authors claim that the language and terminology associated with CSR is elusive and ambiguous (Carroll, 1991; Kreps & Monin, 2011). Also, as Windsor (2006) remarks prevalent ambiguity is evident on whether the term describes what is, what ought to be, or if CSR is merely an aspirational concept if the finances of the organization permit. In addition, as Montiel (2008) suggests, the practical application of CSR leaves managers baffled as more modern concepts such as Corporate Sustainability and Corporate Citizenship have become blurred with CSR. This supports Sethi's (1979) remark, according to which the lack of conceptual clarity facilitates the impossibility of a systematic evaluation of social responses that lead to organizational success or failure.

Corporate Social Responsibility Level of Analysis Matrix		
Level	Focus	Stakeholders
META	Societal	Government Agencies, NGOs, IGOs, Non-Profit Organizations
MESO	Institutional	Companies & For-Profit Entities
MICRO	Individual	End Customers, Community, Commons

Source: Monarch Business School Switzerland, 2022

Moreover, we can see that the CSR literature has developed in four stages at each of the three main levels of analysis, namely: societal (meta), institutional (meso) and the individual (micro). Henderson (2010) noted that the CSR literature developed in four stages from rationalization to operationalization. According to Lee (2008), during the first three decades, CSR underwent progressive rationalization. In terms of the level of analysis, researchers have gradually moved from the discussion of macro-social effects of CSR (meta) to the institutional-level analysis (meso) of CSR's effect on financial performance (Lee, 2008). Also, the current focus of the literature on micro-CSR indicates a further shift of the level of analysis towards the individual (micro) which has been conspicuously missing in the past. In terms of theoretical orientation, researchers have moved from explicitly normative and ethics-oriented studies to implicitly normative and performance-oriented studies (Lee, 2008). By the late 1990s, CSR integrated various concepts in strategy denoting an operationalization of the concept which became associated with organizational goals such as reputation, stakeholder management and eventually an innovation perspective. (Hess, Rogovsky & Dunfee, 2002; Porter & Kramer, 2003). The above-mentioned tendencies and the shift from the larger societal and institutional frame of analysis to the individual indicates a more holistic and progressive development of the CSR literature.

Early Origins From Catholic Social Theory

The underlying origins of CSR are frequently attributed to Catholic Social Theory (CST) (Henderson, 2010; De Bakker et al., 2005). CST includes the cluster of ideas on purpose (De Geus, 1999), congruence (Williams, 1993), values (Ferrell, Ferrel & Fraedrich, 2009), ethical decision-making (Goodpaster, 1991), professionalism (Kennedy, 2002) and theology (Cortright & Naughton, 2002). The recurring theme in CST literature is that profit should not be the ultimate goal of an organization but a mere regulator (Collins & Porras, 1996). The underlying thought of CST is that of giving, receiving and transforming value (Naughton, 2015), which is coherent with Freeman's (1984) recurring argument within CSR and stakeholder theory, that stakeholders interact to create and trade value.

Furthermore, a stream of literature initiated by Fletcher (2006) links the early management works of Peter Drucker, credited with being the originator of modern management practice, with CST. Fletcher (2006) identifies the following four predominant CST characteristics found within the management works of Peter Drucker: 1. company focus on long-term sustainability, 2. a primacy to human beings, 3. profit as a measure and the recognition of a web of social relationships with duties to the state, and 4. local communities and the intermediary organizations of society. The association between the thought of Drucker (1972) and CST would indicate that CST underlies not only CSR but management theory in general. The previously mentioned nexus, as Henderson (2010) notes, may fashion a paradigm shift on the relationship between business and ethics and supports the holistic argument that CSR and business are a unitary concept.

Modern Origins And Context Of Corporate Responsibility

The decade of the 1920s is often selected to debut the discourse on modern CSR, representing the first era in the concept development due to several institutional factors (Hoffman, 2007). Perhaps, the most significant aspect that catalyzed the discourse on CSR was the managerial emphasis on profits as the sole aim of business (Hay & Gray, 1974). According to historian Chandler (1986), the modern corporate American enterprise was fully developed by 1917 and emerged to the height of its prestige in the 1920s (Krooss, 1970). At a time when Taylorism and Fordism were predominant, the revisionist movement within scientific management sought to make management practice responsive to human needs (Wren, 1979; Graham, 2000). The human relations movement founded by sociologist Mayo (1947) set the stage for CSR development. Mayo (1947) ascribed to universal cooperation, which dictated a full commitment to the cooperation of managers and employees who should recognize their interdependence.

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Contemporary management thinkers urged for employee welfare. For instance, Tead (1935) recommended employee representation to democratize industry. Alternatively, Mary Parker Follett (1924) opposed employee representation plans due to their adversarial framing and instead supported integrative cooperation and employee ownership. Other management scholars, such as Lillian Gilbreth, instituted novel personnel practices, including: performing job analyses and design, instituting selection and training methods (Graham, 2000). The end of the decade saw the establishment of permanent personnel departments within corporations offering a variety of employee-centered programs (Eilbirt, 1959). These scholars, among others, shaped the attitudes and practices of managers in the 1920s through their consultancy or writings and, thereby, contributed to the changing view of the social responsibility of business. In this context, the manager of the 1920s appeared to have developed an emergent concept of social responsibility from a corporate rather than an individual perspective, probably because of the decline of individual ethics in American history and the rise of social ethic required for industrial harmony (Scott, 1959).

The modern industrial corporation had to become sensitive to the demands of other institutional groups in an attempt to gain legitimacy within American society. Managers developed concepts such as service or trusteeship to satisfy both internal and external constituents (O'Connor, 2001). The Social Gospel movement and the philanthropical responsibility of the self-made rich, reflected the progressive era of social responsibility (Walton, 1970). In addition, the need for improved public relations led to the expansion of the gospel of production into the concept of service during the 1920s (O'Connor, 2001; Gantt, 1919). Tead (1935) placed the notion of management as trusteeship in the broadest perspective according to which, in a democracy, institutions should develop a relationship with their wider community. The role of the manager was that of a custodian of human fulfillment (O'Connor, 2001). In contrast, Heald (1957) also identified the business as a partnership, which stressed the cooperation between management and the firm's immediate stakeholders such as labor, consumers, suppliers and community. These concepts were implemented via certain activities such as consumer credit and public relations, thereby legitimizing the role of the modern corporation during the 1920s and beyond (Hoffman, 2007). This is illustrated in the quote by Heald, "With the evolution of organized corporate social activities by the new managerial class of the 1920s, the concept of CSR began its maturation" (Heald, 1970, p. 19).

Foundational CSR Scholars

According to Frederick (1978), one of the earliest recorded definitions of CSR that propelled the discipline of social issues in management (SIM) was provided by John Maurice Clark (1916). On the one hand, Clark (1916) links business ethics to the ethics of humanity and thus business people, as humans, are

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responsible for their actions. Clark (1916) also highlights the moral imperative of business people to search beyond the law when considering social issues. Furthermore, Kreps (1962) made a notable addition to the foundations of CSR by introducing the social audit as early as the 1930s during his lectures at Stanford University. The audit identifies CC issues to be evaluated and measured. The social audit as an institutional and organizational measure refers to “the intelligent use of natural resources [...] or the extent to which the dollar sign has been placed on [...] the aspirations of the American people” (Carroll & Beiler, 1975, p.593). In fact, Kreps identified many of the issues of importance to today’s discourse of CSR and Corporate Citizenship:

“None of these test(s) indicates whether business is making a wise use of our natural resources, preventing soil erosion and wasteful exploitation. Nor do they permit evaluation of the impact of business, business publicity and business standards on the spread via newspapers, magazines, motion pictures, and radio of scientific economic fact. Nor is any measurement made of the extent to which the dollar sign has been placed on sacred religious, aesthetic, cultural, and ethical aspirations of the American people.” (Carroll and Beiler 1975, 593)

This example, in itself shows, that the concept of the *social audit*, which is generally assumed to be a modern fabrication of the last fifteen years, was actually introduced approximately seventy years ago. (Henderson, 2010)

Moreover, Bowen’s (1953) contribution to CSR is considered the foundation of simian literature (Carroll, 1979; Wagner-Tsukamoto, 2018; Bazillier & Vauday, 2014). Bowen (1953) conceptualizes CSR as the obligation of business people to pursue a course of action that is suitable for society. The responsibility factor lies with the individual through voluntary assumption (Henderson, 2010). Bowen’s (1953) focus on CSR research was on the macrosocial institutions for promoting CSR being ahead of his contemporaries in discussing the operationalization of CSR and not the moral obligation to do so, which for him was inherent. Through his approach, Bowen (1953) echoed the quest characteristic of his time for a workable middle course between the two extremes of socialism and pure *laissez-faire* capitalism (Acquier, Gond & Pasquero, 2011). Lee (2008) skillfully notes that Bowen’s (1953) seminal CSR work was commissioned by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, being part of a larger body of work on Christian Ethics. Therefore, one can argue that the major work identified by scholars as the debut of modern CSR is theologically-oriented and is supportive of the CST origins of CSR.

The Contrarian Argument

Prior to the common operationalization of CSR in the late 1970s, authors questioned the obligation of business to practice CSR. Whereas Follett (1918; 1924), Smith (2003), Drucker (1972), Freeman (1984) and Frederick (1978) agreed on the social welfare focus, the contrarian argument included authors such as Friedman (1970), Levitt (1958) and Galbraith (1967). The notable contrarian perspectives of Levitt (1958) and Friedman (1970) cautioned against proselytizing CSR champions. Friedman (1970) called CSR a fad and a syndrome in a derogatory manner. Contrarians, who perceived CSR as a subversive doctrine, argued for civil welfare to be the government's responsibility and for business to focus on business and profit. Friedman's famous pronouncement that "the business of business is business" still echoes in many corporate boardrooms along with Levitt's earlier pronouncement that the "business of business is profits" (Levitt, 1958; Friedman, 1970). Otherwise said, contrarians believed that through the assumption of CSR business received the undesired responsibilities of non-elected civil servants (Levitt, 1958; Friedman, 1970). While the literature eventually transcended the contrarian argument, the debate on CSR was at the time in its infancy and the contrarian view appears to have had a disproportionate counter-effect on the adoption of CSR. Still today, the contrarian view remains present thanks to the early and continuous efforts of well-established scholars such as Friedman.

Corporate Social Performance

The response to the contrarian argument facilitated, in the early 1970s, an attempt to reconcile the two sides to establish a positive link between CSR and corporate financial performance. Theorists attempted to make organizational outcomes more explicit and to further the normative discourse on CSR to a more observable and concrete level. First, Sethi (1979) introduced CSP of which he identified three dimensions, namely social obligation, social responsibility and social responsiveness and recommended a broad classificatory scheme for CSP due to the complexity of the socio-cultural interactions and the differences in responsibility. Sethi (1979) is amongst the first to recognize the emergent gap between society's expectations and the actions of the business. The work of Sethi (1979) is instrumental in acknowledging that it is the purpose of business to narrow this gap. Sethi's (1979) CSP is proscriptive, prescriptive and anticipatory, indicating that from its early stage, CSR depicted its holistic underpinnings. Sethi's work set the stage for scholars such as Carroll (1979) and Wood (1991).

Second, Carroll (1999) determined that CSR required the identification of social responsibilities, social issues and of a response mode. Carroll (1999) aggregated a coherent framework, which represented a notable development in the literature

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known as the Carroll Model. Accordingly, the corporation's social responsibilities are identified by evaluating where the company lies within a responsibility spectrum. Social responsibility, which is contingent on the nature of a business, is classified into related categories: economic, legal, ethical and discretionary. Carroll (1991) revised his initial model and combined it with stakeholder management, denoting the ever-evolving nature of the theory.

Third, Wood (1991) aggregated the existing literature streams and built an integrative CSR framework for society and business. Wood (1991) introduced three broad categories as assessment tools for investigating the degree to which ideologies of social responsibility motivate actions taken on behalf of the organization: CSR principles, processes of corporate social responsiveness and outcomes of corporate behavior. However, as Henderson (2010) notes, the lines between CSR and CSP become blurred through Wood's (1991) conceptualization.

In addition, Wood (1991) reinvigorated the Iron Law of Responsibility, initially proposed by Davis (1973), according to which business people who do not accept social responsibility obligations as they arise will inevitably lose their power. The Iron Law of Responsibility depicted by Wood (1991) is coherent with the main ideas on power of the late 19th century, according to which power excludes the exalted (Jouvenel, 1945). However, it ought to be noted that the Iron Law of Responsibility has not found wide support in subsequent academic research (Lee, 2008).

Stakeholder Theory

Freeman's (1984) introduction of stakeholder theory represents an inflection point in the development of the CSR literature. Stakeholders, from a broad perspective, are individuals or groups who have an interest, some type of ownership, rights, or may impact or be impacted by the company projects and objectives (Carroll, Buchholtz & Brown, 2018; Freeman, 1984; Damak-Ayadi & Pesqueux, 2005). Stakeholder theory considers the relationships between businesses and their stakeholders as units of analysis (Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar & De Colle, 2010) and focuses on their alignment (Sisodia, Wolfe & Sheth, 2007).

Stakeholder theory has become particularly relevant in the discourse on the operationalization of CSR (Matten, Crane & Chapple, 2003). The introduction of stakeholder groups as units of analysis provided CSR scholars with a measurement framework insufficiently addressed in the previous literature. Henceforward, several authors attempted to integrate CSR with stakeholder theory (Hess, Rogovsky & Dunfee, 2002; Porter & Kramer, 2002; Smith, 2003). For instance, Wood's (1991) integrative CSR framework depicts stakeholder

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management as a relevant function of the corporate social responsiveness dimension, which aims to broaden the obligations of firms to include more than financial considerations. However, the integration sparked the debate on the stakeholder paradox according to which managers have to perceive themselves in a dual role, simultaneously as trusted servants of the corporation and its shareholders and members of a wider community responsible for many other stakeholder groups (Goodpaster, 1991).

Freeman and McVea (2001) refute the paradox and view stakeholder management in a holistic sense integrating economic, social, political and ethical considerations in a prescriptive and descriptive theory. Stakeholder theory offers a single strategic framework for the management process of achieving the organization's objectives through the diverse harnessing of collective support (Freeman & McVea, 2001). The premise is that a firm can sustain itself only through value-based management that balances the multiple stakeholders' interests in the long-term (Freeman & McVea, 2001). Freeman (1994) explicitly rejects reductionism and non-integrative viewpoints and does not ascribe to a clear differentiation between CSR, stakeholder theory and business because all branches have elements of the others embedded within them. Similarly, a non-integrative view catalyzes reductionism, which, as Freeman and Moutchnik (2013) indicate, should be avoided if unitary progress is to be achieved. However, as Henderson (2010) claims, the theory of CSR is in continual evolution. The same can be stated of the theory on stakeholders, the two theories finding new ways to accommodate each other.

Corporate Social Responsiveness, Rectitude And Reason

Frederick (1978) identifies different periods in the development of CSR and makes notable additions to the CSR lexicon. CSR1 refers to the original concept of CSR, whereas CSR2 indicates the period of Corporate Social Responsiveness as the capacity to respond to societal pressures and the act of responding (Frederick, 1986). In addition, CSR3 refers to Corporate Social Rectitude, which integrates the concept of ethical analysis. Frederick (1986) introduces rectitude as the moral correctness in actions taken and policies formulated as a reaction to what he perceived as timid previous literature in the eras of CSR1 and CSR2. Frederick (1986) adequately condones scholars who ascribed to CSR2 who dismissed the need for the social betterment explicit in CSR1. Authors argue that the entire period of CSR2 is redundant since CSR3 is a predominant return to the ethical values of CSR1 (Henderson, 2010; Tien, 2014). Frederick (1998) displeased with the status of the literature, releases CSR4 as Corporate Social Reason, a new CSR stage based on natural sciences and biology. Fredrick (1998) attempts to break away with the traditional CSR paradigm and to incorporate a nature-based religious impulse (Tien, 2014).

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While the above classification of CSR periods had not been adopted congruently within the literature, Frederick's (1998) arguments are relevant for the present discourse in three main ways. First, it exhibits the cyclical nature of the literature from CSR1 to CSR4, linking CSR with the religious impulse, thus showing similarities with CST. Second, the ultimate revival of the integration in CSR4 denotes the orientation towards holism inherent to CSR. Third, the discourse on CSR4 facilitated the existence of a space for the emergence of other institutional concepts such as Corporate Sustainability and Corporate Citizenship.

Corporate Sustainability

Sarvaiya and Wu (2014) remark that CS definitions proliferated during the past decade. While there is not much coherence in the definitions, managers worldwide acknowledge the importance of sustainability (Meuer, Koelbel & Hoffmann, 2019). At an institutional level, CS became popularized in the 1980s through a report from the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987), which highlighted the responsibility towards future generations. Whereas some authors construct two narratives of CSR and CS or highlight a theoretical difference (Schwartz & Carroll, 2008; Wu, 2011) and even suggest a contradictory relationship (Steurer, Langer, Konrad & Martinuzzi, 2005) others recommend that the concepts converged gradually (Dewangga, Goldsmith & Pegram, 2008). Wilson (2003) proposes that the evolution of CS evolved from a myriad of disciplines such as economics, ecology, social justice, moral philosophy, strategic management and business law in a dialectical concept that defies a precise analytical definition. The gradual connection between CS and CSR is attributed to their operationalization through stakeholder theory. Wilson's (2003) assessment denotes the inherent holism characteristic of the theory and the impossibility of applying reductionism to CSR at the institutional level.

A similar propensity towards holism may be observed at the organizational level through the emergence of concepts such as the triple-bottom-line (TBL), emergent from sustainability risk management. Elkington (2004) coined the phrase TBL to recognize natural capital and social capital in conjunction with financial capital. The TBL of social, environmental and economic objectives requires coordination between internal and external stakeholders of the business and has become commonplace to describe CS reporting (Yilmaz & Flouris, 2010).

Corporate Citizenship

Corporate Citizenship, often presented as the successor of CSR, suggests that the role of the corporate element in CC is profound and in need of reappraisal (Matten et al., 2003). CC emerged in the literature with a prominent focus on the social role of business, however, the proliferation of the terminology is not confined to the corporate sphere (Crane & Matten, 2005). A landmark for the CC process was the signing of a joint statement on CC at the World Economic Forum by the CEOs from thirty-four of the world's largest corporations (Crane & Matten, 2005). According to CC, global corporations constitute significant social mechanisms that impact communities over time. The relationships that corporations form by way of their license to operate make them capable and even responsible through stewardship to uphold the interests of the general public (Wulfson, 2001). The implementation of CS arises through codes and principles that evolved into operating practices and strategies maintained at the institutional and organizational levels through various guidelines (Benn & Bolton, 2011).

Micro-CSR

In the past five years, the individual level of analysis within CSR literature experienced a rapid progression. Micro-CSR, which has roots in psychology, positive organizational behavior and human resources, views individual employees as essential for implementing organizational CSR initiatives (Morgeson, Aguinis, Waldman & Siegel, 2013). Micro-CSR literature considers drivers, evaluations and the reactions of individuals to CSR initiatives (El Akremi, Gond, Swaen & De Roeck, 2018). The micro-CSR focus covers adjoining themes such as the collaboration between leaders and employees and employee motivation towards CSR initiatives (Rupp, 2011). In practice, micro-CSR initiatives are associated with employee commitment, loyalty, increased productivity, stronger company image and employer brand (Johannsdottir & Olafsson, 2015).

The emerging interest in micro-CSR research denotes a literature turnaround to the person-centric CSR view initially proposed by Bowen (1953). As Wood (1991) noted, it is essential to return to the origins because if CSR is not understood at an individual level, it cannot be implemented at an institutional level. The response of micro-CSR scholars to this request indicates the circular nature of the theory development and the need for an integration of the levels of analysis. (Henderson, 2010) If, as Wood (1991) states, the CSR institutional level cannot function optimally without integrating the individual level, then the holistic nature of the theory is evident. To further the argument of Freeman and Moutchink (2013), according to which there cannot be a separation between

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CSR and business, there cannot be an implementation of institutional and organizational CSR practices without an initial focus on micro-foundations, which exist at the individual level.

Furthermore, the current status of the research on micro-CSR indicates that the four-stage process of CSR theory development, identified by Henderson (2010), exists at each analysis level. The propensity of the literature to progress from the rationalization to the operationalization of the domain, which was previously noticeable at the institutional and organizational levels, emerges at the individual level as well. For instance, Gond, El Akremi, Swaen & Babu (2017) claim that the literature on the need to address the micro-foundations of CSR is saturated and insists on the need to discuss the mechanisms underlying individual sensemaking and reactions to CSR. The orientations appear to indicate the debut of the discussion on the micro-CSR operationalization (Johannsdottir & Olafsson, 2015). Therefore, it may be predicted that the literature on micro-CSR will follow a similar pattern to the institutional and organizational levels of analysis.

Challenges And Limitations Of CSR

The ample rhetoric on CSR and adjacent concepts catalyzed a sparked debate on the need, operationalization and implementation of the concept (Davis, 2001; Lee, 2008). First, the operational meaning and practices of CSR are supremely vague (Sethi, 1979; Lee, 2008). The concept of CSR has yet to be unified (Windsor, 2006; Bahman et al., 2014). The lack of a coherent measurement system augments confusion permits speculation and encourages rhetoric.

Second, the current state of CSR, CSR communication and adjacent concepts can be viewed from an instrumental perspective in which business objectives prevail over societal ones (Brammer, Jackson & Matten, 2012). The discrepancy between talk and action emerges in CSR communication practices (Elving, Golob, Podnar, Ellerup & Thomsoon, 2015). Corporate attempts to hide unethical behavior behind self-promotion marketing campaigns are frequent in instrumental operationalizations of CSR through various forms of cause marketing which often lack substance (Burns & Christiansen, 2011; Elving & Van Vuuren, 2010).

Third, CSR literature has paid disproportionate attention to larger organizations in contrast to SMEs and family businesses (Morsing & Perrini, 2008). SMEs, which are, through their nature, less visible than corporations, are reported not to implement CSR initiatives because they are not co-interested through their branding or marketing (Nielsen & Thomsen, 2008). In addition, CSR practices in SMEs and family-owned businesses are insufficiently researched (Mitchell, Agle, Chrisman & Spence, 2011). Corporate CSR practices are not fully applicable to SMEs because of significant dissimilarities in ownership and control separation.

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Forth, globalization catalyzed the discourse on cultural differences in the CSR development literature, implementation and reporting across countries (Matten & Moon, 2008). For instance, comparative research between the US and Europe indicates a notable difference in CSR implementation practices across companies (Matten & Moon, 2008). In addition, Jamali and El Safadi (2019) highlight the peculiar national contexts of Middle Eastern countries in which the assumptive logistics of CSR are expressed according to structural obstacles that hinder their application such as nepotism, poor human and worker rights and a general lack of accountability. Western market values have proliferated in Middle Eastern countries, however, the CSR discourse needs to adapt to encompass the broader Islamic view and depart from its inherent CST tradition.

Synthesis

The discussion reviewed the historical developments within the CSR literature from the pre-modern foundations to the contemporary adaptations. The development of the CSR literature should be considered from an integrative standpoint, encompassing several perspectives, including the progressive, diverse and normative ones. An integrative perspective is coherent with Freeman's et al. (2010) holistic approach to CSR, business and stakeholder theory. Similarly, Bowen's (1953) stance on CSR according to which the responsibility factor lays with the individual businessman through voluntary assumption supports the holism argument.

From a progressive stance, the field of CSR is a vibrant one that shows promising progression and variation. On the one hand, the developmental propensity of CSR is evident through the sanctioning of the CSR concept by transnational organizations and the comprehensive implementation of CSR practices in corporations. On the other hand, the literature developed extensively from its CST origins to the operationalization phase to modern micro-foundations.

Alternatively, proponents of the diverse perspective claim that the continual introduction of new concepts within the literature obscured its cohesive development (Carroll, 1999; Mohan, 2003). The prevailing ambiguity of concepts such as Corporate Sustainability and corporate innovativeness (Sarvaya & Wu, 2014) indicates that the aforementioned claim is not without merit. Nevertheless, from an integrative perspective, a period of ambiguity in concept development is inherent. Therefore, the progressive perspective includes and integrates the diverse one.

In addition, the normative perspective claims that the inherent nature of the CSR concept permits little literature development (Matten et al., 2003). Recent developments in CSR literature, such as the focus on the micro-foundations of CSR and the constant return to the normative core of the theory support the

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normative perspective towards CSR development. This cyclical nature of theory development is evident in two notable ways. First, as Henderson (2010) remarked, the literature progressed through four main stages to reach its present status. Henceforward, this four-stage orientation is evident at each literature level, namely the institutional, organizational and individual ones. At each of the levels mentioned the literature appears to follow the four-stage loop from questioning the importance of the concept at that specific level to its operationalization. For instance, the progression of the research on the micro-foundations of CSR is indicative of the previously mentioned phenomenon. Second, the constant call for a return to the person-centric core of the theory is evident. For instance, in the midst of the operationalization phase Wood (1991), called for a return to the person-centric approach initially evoked by Bowen (1953), which appears to be predominant in the current discourse on micro-foundations. Whilst the literature returns to its normative care, it shows progression in evolving from one analysis level to another.



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