Epistemological development of corporate social responsibility: The evolution continues

BY NORMAN CROKER & LISA BARNES

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This paper investigates the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) / Corporate Social Performance ('CSR /CSP') from its inception to 2013, in the literature.
Design/Method: Using a bibliometric technique, we examine CRSs epistemological orientation and determine whether it is primarily comprised of authors building on each other's work ('progressive') or by the development of alternative constructs ('variegational') or whether both orientations exist side-by-side within a dynamic, multidimensional concept.
Findings: The article reviews bibliometric analysis of the epistemological evolution of the CSR concept within the management literature from 1972 to 2002 using a dataset to that time of approximately 500 articles. Since then, the evolving CSR /CSP literature has transitioned the main CSR debate from a 'whether or not to' to a 'how to' implement CSR debate and the body of literature has grown to over 8,000 articles. We find that the progression of the CSR construct is both variegational and progressive and identify that the predominant theoretical theme is based on stakeholder theory.
Research Implication: The results of this research, identifying that the epistemological evolution of the CSR concept within the recent management literature can be characterized as being both variegational and progressive, adds a valuable contribution to the ongoing and increasing body of knowledge relating to CSR.
Originality: The results of this study maybe of practical importance to scholars in identifying relevant foci for their future research into the CSR construct.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Social Responsibility of Business, Epistemological Orientation of Literature, Bibliometric Analysis

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INTRODUCTION

During the past decade, the evolving Corporate Social Responsibility ('CSR') literature and the increasingly important accountability and sustainability imperatives for good corporate governance in management research and practice throughout the world have transitioned the main CSR debate from a 'whether or not to' to a 'how to' implement CSR debate; that is, CSR has moved from ideology to reality (Lindgreen, Swaen & Johnston, 2009). Ten years ago, de Bakker, Groenewegen & den Hond (2005) empirically analysed articles containing the words 'Corporate Social Responsibility / Performance', or their acronyms within the management literature from 1972 to 2002 to determine the epistemological evolution of the CSR concept using a bibliometric technique. They concluded that the fields of CSR and corporate social performance ('CSP') had become well established; were becoming increasingly integrated into regular business and management studies; their development was both progressive (that is, scholars building on each other's work) and variegational (that is, new constructs and linkages potentially obscuring progress); but it was difficult to conclude which view provided a better description of actual developments (p. 310).

Whereas de Bakker, Groenewegen & den Hond's (2005) analysis of CSR's epistemological evolution to 2002 referred to a combined CSR /CSP dataset of about 500 articles, by 2013 the equivalent dataset was about 8,000 articles. There is a gap in the literature relating to CSR's epistemological evolution within the management literature during the past decade. Additionally, there remains an unanswered question being whether the actual developments within the field of CSR (and CSP) research are primarily progressive or variegational; or alternatively, that the literature supports a conclusion that both forms of research and theory development continue to exist side-by-side within a dynamic, multidimensional concept.

Following a review of some significant developments in the CSR literature over the past decade and a brief review of the use of bibliometrics for analysing a body of literature; the research questions and research hypotheses are developed and stated. The structure of the rest of this article is: a description of the methodology for data collection and analysis; validation of the coding schema by reference to de Bakker, Groenewegen & den Hond's (2005) results; a presentation of the findings; a discussion of the results and finally a peroration including implications for theory and a conclusion.

EVOLUTION OF THE CSR CONCEPT DURING THE LAST DECADE

That a corporation has, in addition to its financial responsibility to its shareholders, a social responsibility ('SR') to society has been the subject of controversy and debate for the last 50 years (Fifka, 2009) since the emergence of a SR concept in the 1960s. Contemporaneously, Friedman (1970) put forward the opposing 'traditional' business view that the one and only SR of business is "*to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits …"*. Four decades later, it remains "*a tortured concept, both theoretically and empirically*" (Godfrey, Hatch & Hansen, 2010: 316), carrying much historical baggage not conducive to clarity (Maak, 2008), which nonetheless managers are expected to address (Lockett, Moon &

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Visser, 2006). By the end of the century, however, the CSR concept had theoretically "*transitioned significantly to alternate themes such as stakeholder theory, business ethics theory, corporate social performance and corporate citizenship*" (Carroll, 1999: 292) although, possibly, a failure to distinguish among ethical, strategic and altruistic forms of CSR had generated controversy and confusion between these themes (Lantos, 2001). The debate over the applicability of these alternate themes continues to the present time (Heath, 2011; Krishnan, 2011). Windsor (2006) argues that CSR's conceptualisation remains embryonic and contestable between ethically responsible and economically responsible approaches: that is, the CSR debate "*concerns principal-principal relations*" between the CSR principle, being that society is the superior principal, and the principle underlying the strictly fiduciary principal-agency role of management. Others, such as Sternberg (2009: 5) argue that CSR is *"conceptually incoherent, practically unworkable, and wholly unjustified* ... [and] *would undermine the accountability and organisational objectives that are central to corporate governance"* but that ethical (or SR) business is simply when its focus is on maximising long-term owner value whilst respecting distributive justice and decency.

The focus and justification of this research is to fill the literature gap relating to the epistemological evolution of CSR over the decade when the literature has transitioned from 'whether or not CSR is correct and necessary for business' to 'how and why to implement CSR', especially in relation to large international companies. The importance of this research as a contribution to the CSR literature is identified by Okoye (2009: 623): "*the articles which map CSR theories and definitions over time are an invaluable tool in pointing out the direction of CSR*" and endorsed by Miles (2012: 926) who adds "*it is fundamental to this process to revisit old arguments and old debates … to work towards a common core…*" These statements endorse the statement by de Bakker, Groenewegen & den Hond (2006: 16) in a subsequent research note on the use of bibliometric studies that "*they provide a valuable contribution in the ordering of an increasingly accessible and broad body of knowledge*".

THE USE OF BIBLIOMETRICS FOR AN ANALYSIS OF A LITERATURE

de Bakker, Groenewegen & den Hond (2005) sourced their CSR and CSP datasets from ISI Web of Science Social Science Citation Index ('WOS') and ABI/Inform ('ABI') from 1969 to 2002, by searching the databases on the following categories: title, keywords, and abstract using five CSR /CSP search terms and limited their search to CSR and CSP because these two concepts were identified by them as being central to the discussion of CSR. Two authors (Alcañiz, Herrera, Pérez & Alcami, 2010; Herrera, Alcañiz, Pérez & Garcia, 2011), extended this work to 2006 with their datasets being sourced in 2006 and also limited to the ABI and WOS databases. Whereas the epistemological evolution of the CSR concept for at least the past 8 years is not addressed, forming the justification for this research, this is not to say that there has been no bibliometric research into CSR-specific and related literatures in the interim. In addition to the work cited above, there are numerous examples of other authors who have conducted bibliometric studies to explore the CSR and related literatures for various research aims. These studies confirm scholarly interest in, and the relevance of, bibliometric research and include, for example:

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- Lockett, Moon & Visser (2006) examined 114 CSR-related articles from seven journals, from 1992 to 2002 finding the field was in a continuing state of emergence;
- Egri & Ralston (2008) examined 321 corporate responsibility articles from 13 journals from 1998 to 2007, finding them to be predominantly quantitative analyses of empirical data;
- Huang & Ho (2011) analysed the WOS database for 'corporate governance' finding a growth pattern of slight growth during the 1990s, then accelerating growth to 2008;
- Aguinis & Glavas (2012) performed a bibliometric analysis and reviewed 588 CSR-related articles to develop a research agenda, finding 271 (47%) were empirical and 305 (53%) were conceptual;
- Leonidou & Leonidou (2011) analysed 530 articles drawn from 119 journals from 1969 to 2008 on environmental marketing and management, finding a predominantly data-driven trend;
- Huang & Lien (2012) investigated the development of Corporate Governance research;
- Fetscherin, Voss & Gugler (2010) mapped the evolution of foreign direct investment research in China; and,
- Fetscherin, & Usunier (2012) investigated the evolution of corporate branding research.

Thus, although none of these analyses reported a descriptive or prescriptive orientation, implying that identification of such orientations to examine CSR's epistemological development must be performed with care, it can be seen that this paper builds upon an emerging research methodology to investigate bodies of literature. The results of such investigation can contribute to identifying future directions for CSR research.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

de Bakker, Groenewegen & den Hond (2005) conducted their analysis on a CSR dataset of 505 articles, a CSP dataset of 155 articles and combined CSR /CSP dataset of 549 articles sourced from WOS and ABI in May 2004 (plus 6 articles which were individually sourced) for the period from 1969 to 2002; of which 111 were common to both datasets. As the CSR /CSP dataset had so much overlap with the CSR dataset they "*chose to focus* [their] *analysis on the CSR dataset to maximise the contrast with the CSP dataset*" (p. 300). For these 505 CSR articles and 155 CSP articles, they were able to find and retrieve abstracts or copies for 471 CSR articles and 151 CSP articles and thus these articles were those used for epistemological coding and analysis. They note that there was disagreement between the coders for 86 CSR articles and 34 CSP articles (18.3% and 22.5%, respectively) and record that the papers were recoded based on full papers "*as far as these could be retrieved*" (p. 295) such that their eventual combined CSR /CSP dataset was approximately 500. Their conclusion for the overall epistemological orientation can be summarised: Theoretical = 48.7%; Prescriptive = 14.3% and Descriptive = 37%.

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We hypothesise that this relatively changing relationship will continue in the decade to 2013. These relevant factors identified in the literature generate the research questions and hypotheses:

RQ1 Is the development of the overall epistemological orientation of CSR /CSP literature variegational or progressive, or both, and what are the emerging dominant themes?

RQ2 Is the proportion of the theoretically oriented *empirical exploratory and predictive* CSR /CSP literature continuing to grow at the expense of the *descriptive* orientation?

$RH1_D$ The development of the overall epistemological orientation of corporate social responsibility literature continues to be both variegational and progressive.

$RH1_T$ The dominant themes in the field of corporate social responsibility research continue to be either stakeholder theory or theories based on stakeholder theory.

RH2 The proportion of the theoretically oriented *empirical exploratory and predictive* CSR /CSP literature continues to grow at the expense of the *descriptive* orientation.

DATA COLLECTION AND CODING

Data Collection for Bibliometric Analysis

The procedure for data collection, performed during May-June 2014 – 10 years after de Bakker, Groenewegen & den Hond (2005) conducted their search in May 2004 – followed their procedure but differed in that, although we kept a separate record of the CSP and CSR articles, we focussed only on the combined CSR /CSP dataset. Also, we had noticed that there were numerous other journals that were not well covered by the ABI and WOS databases. Therefore, we expanded our dataset sources to include the ABI, WOS, EBSCO Megafile Complete ('EBSCO') and Emerald databases and from the *Harvard Business Review* and *Business Horizons* journals in that order; using the same five search terms: '*corporate social responsib*', 'corporate social responsive*', 'CSR', 'corporate social performance',* and '*CSP',* also in that order. We note that this expansion has not made the dataset 'exhaustive'. However, we consider that expanding the data sources, thereby increasing the breadth of source journals, has made the results more representative.

Following the removal of duplicates, a final manual analysis of this CSR /CSP dataset was then performed to remove 7 categories of documents that did not meet the data requirements of being peer reviewed, academic research papers. These were:

1. Summaries, Calls for papers, unreferenced Introductions and Editorials;
2. Book Reviews;
3. Dissertations, Errata, Book extracts, Abstracted articles;
4. No abstract and no PDF;

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5. Opinions, Commentaries, Reviews, non-academically oriented interviews;
6. Conference proceedings (predominantly in WOS-sourced articles); and,
7. Letters to the Editor.

Nearly all of the articles which included the acronyms CSR /CSP were either irrelevant because the acronym referred to something else (for example, Call-centre Service Representative, etc.) or were duplicated with articles which included the words also and were discarded. Non-English articles with neither an English abstract or English summary were also discarded. More than half of the raw dataset was discarded during the initial electronic and subsequent manual removal of duplicates and non-relevant articles to result in a 'clean' aggregated dataset of 8,201 articles. A further 192 items were found to be irrelevant during the coding process and discarded, resulting in a final aggregated dataset of 8,009 articles. The fully cleaned dataset is tabulated by reference to the search category criteria for the period 1949 to 2002 and 2003-2013 in Table 1.

Table 1: Cleaned data sorted by data source and relevant periods

Period	ABI	WOS	EBSCO	Emerald	HBR-BH	Totals
1949 - 2002	412	194	214	15	18	853
2003 - 2013	2,140	2,108	2,414	482	12	7,156
Totals	2,552	2,302	2,628	497	30	8,009

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Number of papers. Figure 1 shows the number of articles up to and including 2013. It is clear that 2003, far from showing a trend downward, continues the upward trend with slight plateaus in the years 2001-02 and 2009-10 at an accelerating rate through to 2011. However, the trend downward from 2011 to 2013 is dramatic and warrants further particularisation. Accordingly, we have tabulated the articles per year from 2000 to 2013 in Tables 2a and 2b.

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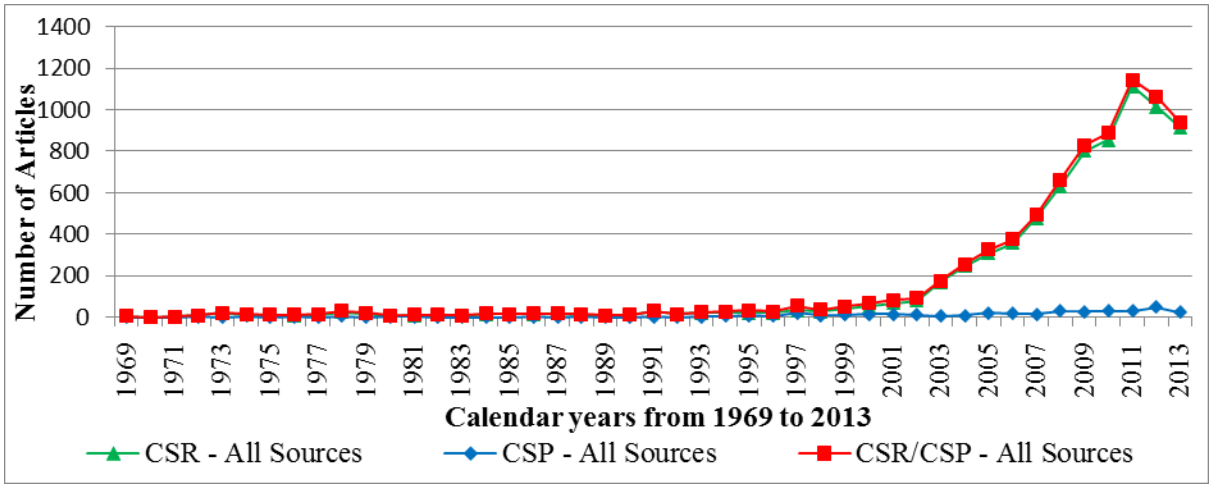


Figure 1: Articles per year to 2013: All sources – CSR, CSP and CSR/CSP

As can be seen from Table 2a, the downward trend from 2011 is significant over two years. Whereas the downward trend from 2012 to 2013 of 99 articles from 1,014 to 915 (9.8%) can be explained by the 12 and 18 month embargos, the reduction from 2011 to 2012 of 100 articles from 1,114 to 1,014 (9%) cannot be so explained, particularly since we sourced our data in May 2014 so the embargo effect would have been minimal. Whether this (a) marks a turning point in interest in CSR as a subject of research; or (b) indicates that authors no longer see a need to use the term; or (c) identifies 2011 as an extraordinary year; is not discernible from the data. However, we also confirmed de Bakker, Groenewegen & den Hond's (2005) observation of a trend to replace the 'Corporate Social Responsibility' words with the 'CSR' acronym in the years immediately prior to 2002, finding that the acronym only appeared in 3% of the article from 1986 (the first year it appeared by itself) to 2002. The frequency then increased to 7.5% in 2011 and the average for the 11 years from 2003 to 2013 inclusive was 6% confirming that the trend did continue after 2002.

Table 2a: Articles per year – to 2002 & 2003 to 2013: All sources – CSR, CSP & CSR/CSP

Year Dataset	To 2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	All Years
CSR	719	170	247	307	357	479	633	800	855	1,114	1,014	915	7,610
CSP	134	7	8	21	19	14	31	28	32	31	49	25	399
CSR/CSP	853	177	255	328	376	493	664	828	887	1,145	1,063	940	8,009

Another striking point from Figure 1 and Table 2a is that interest in CSP reflected by the number of articles in the CSP dataset, which had peaked at 21 in 1997 to form 38% of the

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combined dataset, did not generate the same number of CSP articles again until 2005, by which time it only constituted 6% of the combined dataset. De Bakker, Groenewegen & den Hond (2005) speculated that there may have been a change in the CSP interest in the 1990s to make it distinct from the CSR dataset this was investigated and will be discussed.

Table 2b: Epistemological Orientation results for aggregated CSR / CSP for All sources for the years up to 2002 and from 2003 to 2013 inclusive.

		Theoretical			Prescriptive		
Year	Descriptive	Conceptual	Exploratory	Predictive	Instrumental	Normative	Total
1949-2002	325	119	213	85	88	23	853
2003	47	49	41	11	25	4	177
2004	46	64	75	33	27	10	255
2005	100	88	74	32	28	6	328
2006	105	95	111	41	18	6	376
2007	133	135	141	52	26	6	493
2008	148	199	195	71	38	13	664
2009	144	251	285	89	43	16	828
2010	115	260	325	137	37	13	887
2011	113	318	478	192	36	8	1,145
2012	112	260	534	110	35	12	1,063
2013	74	254	516	78	14	4	940
2003-13	1,462	2,092	2,988	931	415	121	8,009
Percentage	18.3	26.1	37.3	11.6	5.2	1.5	100.0

Journals. For the All sources dataset we found that the CSR /CSP papers appeared in 1,745 different journals. Whereas the *Journal of Business Ethics* remained the dominant journal, having published the largest number of publications for the period and accounting for 13% of the articles, other specialist journals had pushed *Business and Society*, down to 5th position. The comparison of the 10 most significant publication sources of the CSR /CSP literature to 2013 is shown in Table 3a.

Authors. To determine the number of authors, we separated the multiple author citations and 'cleaned' the author names to get as close to a definitive list to the extent we could. We emphasise that the numbers of articles attributed to each author represents the total of those that were sourced in accordance with the methodology and obviously does not represent all articles that they may have written. Moreover, the list remains approximate because, for a very small number of articles it was difficult to determine if an author's name was the same as an author for another article where, for example, only initials were provided for given names. Having then compiled an overall list of authors, we identified that the 8,009 papers in the aggregated CSR /CSP dataset were written by approximately 11,306 authors at

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an average of 1.41 authors per paper. The 10 most productive authors are shown in Table 3b for the CSR /CSP literature to 2013.

Table 3a - Comparison of Main Publication Sources of CSR/CSP literature to 2013

Journal name2011s (a)	No. of articles
Journal of Business E2012thics	1043
Corporate Social-Responsibility and Environmental Management	255
Social Responsibility Journal	202
Corporate Governance	145
Business and Society	125
Business Ethics	110
Business and Society Review (c)	103
Journal of Corporate Citizenship	91
Business Ethics Quarterly	71
California Management Review	69

Table 3b: Most productive authors in CSR/CSP literature to 2013

Author names (b)	No. of articles
Moon, Jeremy	27
Kolk, Ans	22
Brammer, Stephen	22
Carroll, Archie	19
Comfort, Daphne	19
Hillier, David	19
Jones, Peter	19
Perrini, Francesco	18
Scholtens, Bert	18
Siegel, Donald	18

(a) The next ranked journal had 68 articles

(b) The next author recorded 17 articles

(c) Includes 11 articles from Business and Society Review/Innovation

Epistemological orientation. Our primary interest in performing this research was to investigate how the epistemological orientation has developed over time. As for the period to 2002, we have aggregating the results into 3 year periods excluding the articles sourced prior to 1969. Accordingly, we present the period number and the period percentages in Figure 2. Whereas the number of empirical and conceptual articles continues to rise in each consecutive period, the descriptive and prescriptive (non-theoretical) articles also rises until 2010, and then starts to fall away. In percentage terms, the descriptive and prescriptive articles constituted more than 50% of the articles during the formative years to 1990 and have consistently fallen since then to be now just over 10% of the total. In contrast, the number of conceptual papers have remained around 10% until 1998 (except for 1969 to 1971 when there was only 10 articles in total). Our analysis also confirmed the share of theoretical papers increased steadily to just over 60% in the 3 year period 2000 to 2002. Subsequent to then, however, the conceptual papers have gradually increased to approximately 26% and the empirical papers have increased to 60% of the total.

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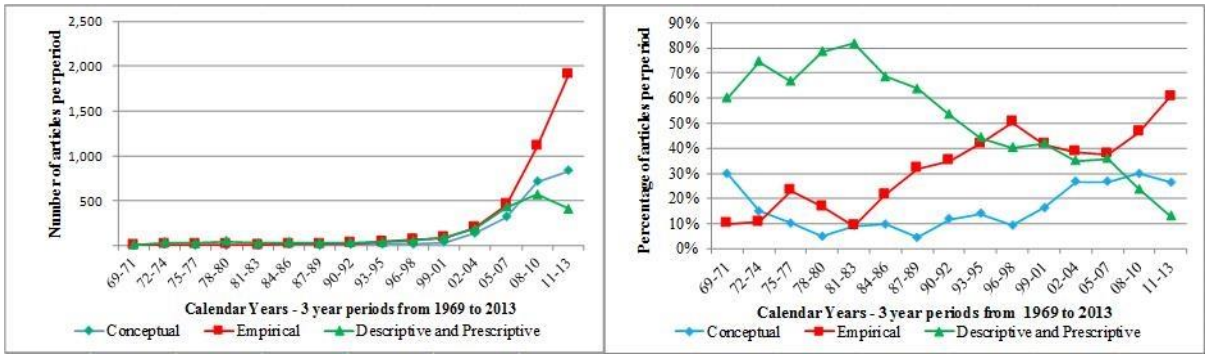


Figure 2: Three (3) year aggregated dataset – articles per period then periodic percentages

However, these 3-year aggregated data are not fine enough for examining trends since 2002. As can be seen from figure 3, the volume of articles published annually subsequent to 2002 far exceeds the preceding years, rendering inclusion of the years preceding 2002 in a trend chart to be meaningless. Accordingly, for reviewing the annual and cumulative trends since 2002, we have commenced using 2002 as the base year. In Figure 4 we provide the annual production of articles in each of the six classification categories and the associated percentages; and in Figures 5 the cumulative annual production of articles in each of the six classification categories and the associated percentages.

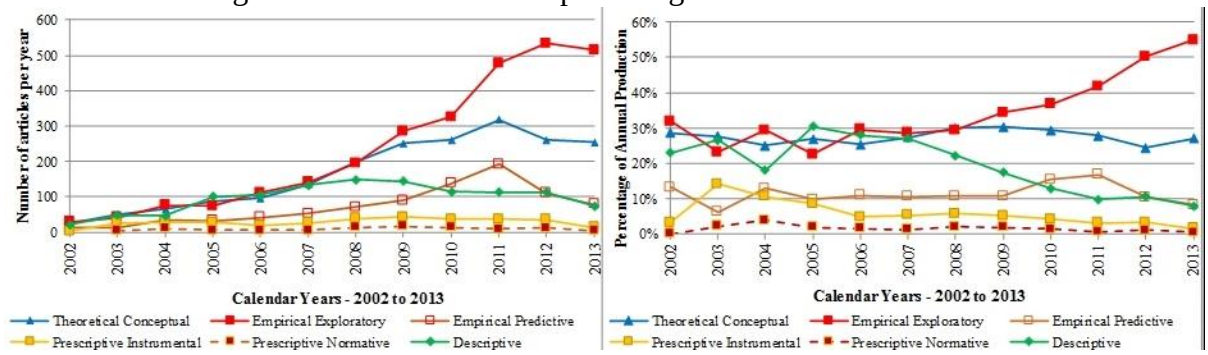


Figure 3: Number or articles and percentages for CSR/CSP dataset

Whereas it can be seen from Figure 3 that the annual production of articles rose for all classifications through to about 2007, except the prescriptive classifications which remained fairly constant per annum; from then until 2012 the descriptive classification gradually fell to just over 100 and, due to the overall reduction in articles in 2013, fell to 74 in 2013. The theoretical conceptual and empirical predictive continued to grow solidly until a peak in 2011 consistent with the overall numbers whilst, except for a slight downturn in 2013, empirical exploratory continued to grow for the whole period. This growth is confirmed by the percentage changes per annum in Figure 3. It can be seen that the relative percentage

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production between conceptual, descriptive and empirical exploratory remained a bit 'messy' through to 2006 in the 20% to 30% range but thereafter empirical exploratory grew significantly to 55% at the expense of descriptive which fell to 8% by 2013. Empirical predictive also grew as a percentage to 2011 but also unexpectedly fell back to 8% in 2013 from 17% in 2011.

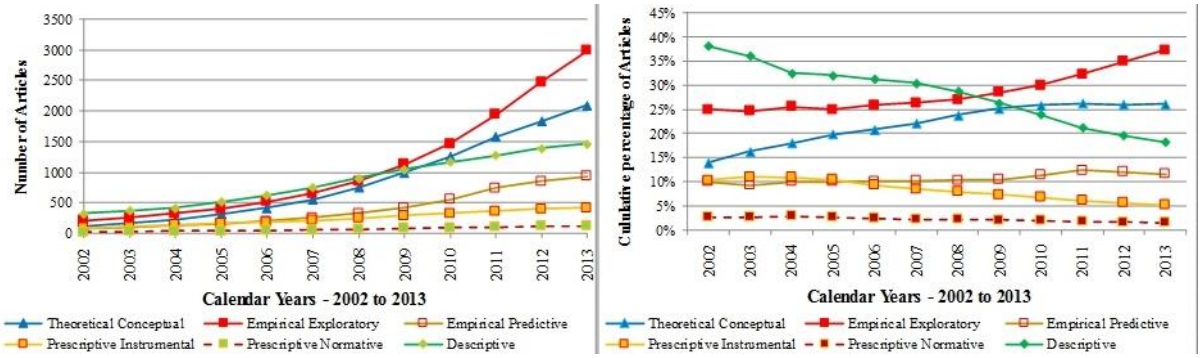


Figure 4: Cumulative number of articles and percentages over 12 years.

Finally, from Figure 4, which show the cumulative figures, it can be seen that all of the classifications continue to grow every year but the rate of growth is down over the last two years due to the overall reduction of CSR /CSP papers in 2012 and 2013. This confirms that the field of Social Responsibility of Business, as the body of literature is now described by the major databases, remains of great interest to researchers. Of more interest, however, the cumulative percentage of empirical exploratory articles continued to grow to an overall 37% and empirical predictive remained strong at 12%, whilst descriptive fell to an overall cumulative percentage of 12%. These changes in the percentages of empirical exploratory and predictive at the expense of the descriptive and, to a lesser but still significant extent, the prescriptive instrumental percentage which fell from around 10% to 5% over the 12 year period, point to a continuation of both the variegational and progressive development of the CSR /CSP literature.

Predominant Themes to 2013

The other objective of this research was to investigate the emerging dominant themes for the period since de Bakker, Groenewegen & den Hond (2005) conducted their research in order to answer the second part of RQ1. We tabulated the data and totalled it from inception to 2002 and then from 2003 to 2013 to identify the dominant themes that existed when the de Bakker, Groenewegen & den Hond (2005) study was performed and what has changed since then. The results, tabulated in Table 4, show that, as at 2002, the dominant theme since the inception of the CSR /CSP literature was 'business ethics' which was just marginally ahead of the 'environment' with both of them securing more than one quarter of the articles that were actually concerned with one or other of the dominant themes. Interest in 'stakeholders', noting that this was largely an interest in 'stakeholder theory' was lying in 3rd place with the

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'sustainability' theme lying second from bottom. During the period from 2003 to 2013, only the 'environment' maintained its quarter share with 'stakeholders' moving up into 2nd place just ahead of interest in 'sustainability' and 'business ethics' whilst 'financial performance' and 'corporate governance' attracted least attention. In terms of emerging 'theories', reference to stakeholder theory was by far and away the most frequently referenced theory in the CSR /CSP literature, both before and after 2002, thereby confirming $RH1_T$.

Table 4: Dominant Themes from inception to 2002 and from 2003 to 2013 inclusive

	Corporate Governance	Environment*	(Business) Ethics	Financial Performance	Stakeholder*	Strateg*	Sustainab*
Total to 2002	17	189	193	56	122	98	37
Percentages to 2002	2.4%	26.5%	27.1%	7.9%	17.1%	13.8%	5.2%
Total 2003 to 2013	400	2,310	1,389	389	1,767	1,378	1,456
Percentages 2003 to 2013	4.4%	25.4%	15.3%	4.3%	19.4%	15.2%	16.0%

DISCUSSION

The evolution of the CSR /CSP Literature

Firstly, it is of interest that this analysis confirmed the assessment of de Bakker, Groenewegen & den Hond (2005) and others that the CSR /CSP literature is not significantly normative, both for the period up to 2002 and from 2003 to 2013; with less than 3% exhibiting this characteristic. This statistic is less than expected, given that there are still assertions of a normative bias in the literature (e.g. Dentchev, 2009; Matten, Crane & Chapple, 2003).

Secondly, this research confirms the results of de Bakker, Groenewegen & den Hond (2005) that there was a steady increase in interest in corporate social responsibility / performance from its inception until the early 1990s, except during the period 1983 to 1990, the Reagan era when the annual production of articles remained steady at less than 20, as predicted by Frederick (1983). From 1991, which together with 1997 were very productive years, until 2002 annual publications increased to 91 articles per year with a remarkable increase since

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then commencing with 2003 during which publication of articles nearly doubled from the 2002 figure to 177. Since these observations are based on the All sources dataset and continued past 2002, this provides the answer to the first question posed by de Bakker, Groenewegen & den Hond (2005) being that increased interest accounted for the upward trend of article production from the early 1990s.

Although the term 'Corporate Social Performance' appeared once in the referenced databases in 1959 (Eells, in keywords), it did not appear again until the mid-1970s. Thereafter, there was a limited but consistent interest in this term, but this was overshadowed by growth in the interest in the terms 'Corporate Social Responsibility', 'Corporate Social Responsiveness' and 'CSR' until the period between 1995 and 2000 when CSP competed for major interest with an aggregated 27% of published articles for the period and a peak in 1997 of over 30%. Since 2002, reference to 'Corporate Social Performance' /'CSP' has reduced as a relative fraction in the CSR /CSP literature with approximately 3.7% being recorded for the period 2003 to 2013, down from the 16.8% for the period to 2002, to generate an overall average of 5.1%. This supports an argument that the CSP literature may now be distinguishable from the CSR literature although the orientation of the CSP component of the dataset remains similar to that of the combined dataset. We also found that the CSP dataset is considerably more theoretical in orientation for the period to 2002, confirming de Bakker, Groenewegen & den Hond's (2005: 298) observation and it remained so thereafter with the theoretical orientation for the period to 2002 being 60.5% and overall to 2013 was 80.7% both of which are higher than the combined dataset and both were at the expense of the descriptive orientation. We conclude that the CSP component remains an integral part of the CSR literature but that interest in this construct has significantly reduced.

Epistemological Orientation of the CSR /CSP Literature

So, how has the epistemological orientation of the CSR /CSP literature changed over time? Broadly, the changes are:

Orientation	To 2002	2003-2013
• Descriptive	38.1%	18.3%
• Theoretical Conceptual	13.9%	26.1%
• Theoretical Empirical Exploratory	25.0%	37.3%
• Theoretical Empirical Predictive	10.0%	11.6%
• Prescriptive Instrumental	10.3%	5.2%
• Prescriptive Normative	2.7%	1.5%

That is, both the descriptive orientation and the prescriptive orientation have halved whilst the theoretical conceptual orientation has doubled and the theoretical empirical exploratory orientation has increased by 50%. Although approximately half the theoretical papers are exploratory; with conceptual and predictive orientation forming the other half up to 2002 and subsequently, the noticeable change is that the theoretical papers have increased from 48.9%

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to 75% and the empirical papers have increased from 35% to 48.9% as the average production for the 11 years.

Implications, Contribution and Suggested Further Research

At the outset, we identified that there is a literature gap relating to CSR's epistemological evolution within the recent management literature. The results of this research have filled that gap by identifying that the epistemological evolution of the CSR concept within the recent management literature can be characterized as being both variegational and progressive. Moreover, this research confirms that the dominant theoretical theme for the research into the CSR concept has remained as Stakeholder theory.

Based on the observations on the content of the abstracts and articles in the CSR literature, there appears to be many theories and constructs that have been developed and tested in the CSR literature. We recommend that an analysis of such theories and constructs would be a further useful contributor to the ongoing CSR research. We suggest that such research would assist future researchers to recognise the underlying themes that contribute to the core construct and assist them to contribute to the development of the core constructs of the CSR concept. We also suggest that further analysis, perhaps using similar methodology, would be useful to determine if 2011, in fact, marked a high point in the CSR literature.

Conclusion

This research has confirmed that the progression of the CSR construct since 2002 continues to be both variegational and progressive and reflective of a multidimensional ever-evolving construct. This empirical analysis of the literature had revealed that by far the vast majority of articles, especially since de Bakke et al. (2005) completed their analysis of the literature up to 2002, has been empirically based. Although many of these empirical articles have made contributions to the conceptual development of the theories underpinning the study of corporate social responsibility, and notwithstanding the ongoing relevance of stakeholder theory, the subject can still be described by paraphrasing Ullmann's (1985: 555) conclusion that the field of CSR research can be characterised as *empirical data in search of an overriding theory*. Notwithstanding Ullmann's (1985) contribution of the stakeholder framework, we doubt that such an overriding theory for CSR is possible or even desirable.

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