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# **Corporate Social Responsibility in Management Research: Focus, Nature, Salience and Sources of Influence\***

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**ABSTRACT** In this paper we investigate the status of corporate social responsibility (CSR) research within the management literature. In particular, we examine the focus and nature of knowledge, the changing salience of this knowledge and the academic influences on the knowledge. We present empirical evidence based on publication and citation analyses of research published from 1992 to 2002. Our results demonstrate that, for CSR research published in management journals, the most popular issues investigated have been environmental and ethics; the empirical research has been overwhelmingly of a quantitative nature; the theoretical research has been primarily non-normative; the field is driven by agendas in the business environment as well as by continuing scientific engagement; and the single most important source of references for CSR articles was the management literature itself.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In this paper we investigate the state of corporate social responsibility (CSR) knowledge, particularly its changing nature, salience and sources of influence. Although CSR is addressed by many disciplines, we focus on the management literature. As CSR has become an increasingly salient feature of business and its environment, to which managers are expected to respond, it has acquired status within management education and research (Pfeffer and Fong, 2004; Starkey et al., 2004). We therefore examine the CSR literature within leading management journals.

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We address the following questions over the period 1992–2002: (1) What has been the focus of research in CSR and how has this changed over time? (2) What is the nature of knowledge generated in CSR and has this changed over time? (3) What is the level of interest in CSR and how has this changed over time? (4) What are the intellectual influences on CSR and have they changed over time?

In order to address the question of *focus* we categorize the CSR papers into four groups according to the dominant CSR theme of the papers reflected in keywords in their titles and abstracts: social, environmental, ethics and stakeholders. The question of the *nature* of the CSR literature we analyse via the proportion of CSR papers which are theoretical (normative and non-normative) and empirical (quantitative and qualitative). The issue of *salience* is addressed by analysing the quantity and proportion of CSR articles in the management literature. Finally, the question of *influence* is addressed by analysing the proportion of references cited by the CSR literature in management to sources in: the management literature, the literature of related academic disciplines, and the CSR literature itself.

## THE EVOLUTION OF CSR RESEARCH

A traditional method for examining the development of a body of academic work is Kuhn's (1962) work on the development of scientific paradigms in the natural sciences. While following Kuhn's reasoning, we propose that the social sciences in general, and management in particular, may differ from the natural sciences in terms of the relationships between the researchers and the subject matter (Ryan, 1970) and in their institutional structures (Whitley, 1984a, 1984b). Furthermore, when considering the case of CSR we contend that the delineation of paradigms is even less clear than in the case of many other branches of the social sciences.

We follow the logic of Whitley's (1984a) distinction between the core social sciences (economics, psychology, etc) and management, and identify CSR as a *field* of study within management rather than as a *discipline*. Disciplines are conventionally understood as 'branches' or 'departments' of knowledge (*Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*). These can be identified with reference to their *theoretically* or *methodologically* distinctive approaches to study. Thus one can distinguish economics (assumption of instrumental rational calculation, deployment of cost-benefit analysis), from philosophy (assumption of such norms as justice and good life and deployment of logic and other forms of reasoning), from psychology (assumption of the independence of the human mind, concepts and methods for its analysis) and from sociology (assumptions of social underpinnings of individuals and meanings, deployment of ethnography, surveys, structural functionalism).

A wider, or more relaxed, definition of a discipline would admit approaches that are *substantively* distinctive and *systematic*. Thus politics or political science (normative and empirical concern with power and rule) can be distinguished from law

(concern with the mechanisms of rule and social order). Both of these examples draw upon the theories and methods of philosophy, economics and sociology but are substantively distinctive. Similarly management could be designated a discipline in *substantive* terms and in its *systematic* focus on the nature and operation of organizations.

We suggest that CSR does not meet even the more relaxed definition of a substantive discipline and therefore is better described as a field because, as Busentiz et al. observe about of the field of entrepreneurship, it has 'highly permeable boundaries' (2003, p. 285). We suggest that CSR relies on disciplines for theories and methodologies and cannot, as yet, claim substantive/systematic distinctiveness. Indeed, debate continues about the nature of CSR knowledge.

### **The Focus of CSR Research**

As an academic field, with highly permeable boundaries, CSR will exhibit a number of different research traditions focusing on different issues relating to CSR. In this paper we are interested in the focus of CSR research and how this may have changed over time. We have delineated four areas of focus for CSR research: business ethics, environmental responsibility, social responsibility and stakeholder approaches. Clearly, any such classification will include some overlaps and lacuna. We contend, however, that this classification echoes other research findings and practical management distinctions.

The environmental distinction is well established. Although many researchers take an anthropomorphic view of the environment and see its significance only as it relates to the human condition, even they recognize the environment as a distinct focus. Others take an essentialist view and regard the environment as an entity and value in its own right. Either way it is a well-established focus of research and practical endeavour. This is evidenced by the number of journals dedicated to it (e.g. *Greener Management International*, *Business Strategy and the Environment*, *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*) and the distinctive management standards which have emerged in this area (e.g. ISO 14000).<sup>[1]</sup>

Similarly, the area of business ethics is well established and has been a relatively long standing focus for CSR research and education (see below). Again, this is evidenced by the introduction of dedicated journals (e.g. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Business Ethics Quarterly*, *Business Ethics: A European Review*) and the long-standing tradition of numerous corporations to maintain codes of ethical conduct (Bondy et al., 2004).

The general area of corporate *social* responsibility may be traced back to Bowen (1953). Although discussions of CSR were sufficiently prominent in the USA in the late 1960s to prompt Milton Friedman (1970) to warn about its excesses, it has flourished more conspicuously and more internationally over the last twenty years.

Again, the distinctiveness of the social concept is captured in journal titles (e.g. *Business and Society*, *Business and Society Review*, *Journal of Corporate Citizenship*) and management standards (e.g. SA 8000).

Finally, stakeholder management emerged as a focus for scholars for the purposes of delineating an appropriate approach to, and normative reference for, CSR. This has been so pronounced that Freeman (1984), the key author in stakeholder management, has been prompted to distinguish his original formulation from CSR (Phillips et al., 2003). Moreover, there is now also a management standard for stakeholder relations which has an explicit CSR character (AA 1000).

### **The Nature of Knowledge in CSR**

In order to understand the development of CSR knowledge we distinguish empirical and theoretical types of knowledge which can be further divided into quantitative and qualitative (empirical) and normative and non-normative (theoretical). Non-normative theoretical knowledge is concerned with the integration of concepts and paradigms, framework building, explanation and application of deductive techniques. Normative theoretical knowledge emphasizes 'oughts' and 'shoulds', in this case about business behaviour, while non-normative theoretical knowledge emphasize 'hows' and 'whys'. Swanson (1999) distinguishes 'descriptive' and 'normative' management and CSR research.

There are a number of different trajectories that one might expect of a new field of knowledge, particularly in the balance between theoretical and empirical studies. If consensus were to emerge about theory, then we would expect the theoretical assumptions and parameters to be tested by empirical research whose results would be replicated in other contexts. The latter research would inform qualification, modification or extension of the theories. Under these conditions we would expect the proportion of theoretical papers to fall over time and the proportion of empirical papers to increase. Second, we would expect that the balance of those empirical papers would shift from qualitative to quantitative as the field develops.

If CSR has highly permeable boundaries, then such a consensus will not be achieved. Therefore, the strict dichotomy between empirical and theoretical research may not fully capture the role which empirical work might play in theory building in CSR (e.g. Eisenhardt, 1989). Additionally, the field is not simply driven by rational or experimental practices but also by business, social and political agendas. In light of these qualifications, we conjecture that the field of CSR will be characterized by a lack of convergence and, therefore, the body of CSR research will remain fragmented in terms of empirics, theory and (non) normative orientation.

### **The Salience of CSR**

The literature on the development of CSR education suggests that CSR and its antecedents 'business ethics' (BE) and 'business and society' (B&S) have relatively long-standing status within business schools. This is illustrated by the number of endowed chairs in US and European universities (Dunfee and Werhane, 1997; van Luijk, 1997); course development (Bampton and Cowton, 2002; Collins and Wartick, 1995; Dunfee and Werhane, 1997; Ferrell et al., 2002; Matten and Moon, 2004a; Spence, 2000) and the integration of CSR into mainstream courses (Aspen/WRI, 2003; Matten and Moon 2004b).<sup>[2]</sup> This status of CSR education was complemented by the formation of the 'Social Issues in Management' division of the Academy of Management in 1971 and by the emergence of numerous related journals (*Business and Society Review*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Business and Society*, *Etica degli Affari e delle Professione*, *Business Ethics Quarterly*, *Business Ethics: A European Review*, *Revue Ethique des Affaires*).

The salience of CSR education has, however, been unstable. Thus Collins and Wartick report a 15 per cent decline in B&S/BE undergraduate and postgraduate courses in the late 1980s (1995, pp. 60–1). It is likely that demand for CSR education has largely been driven by issues in the social environment of business (e.g. corporate scandals). Assuming that there is some relationship between demand and supply of CSR education and the salience of CSR knowledge (through the appointment of professors to teach the courses who, in turn, seek academic promotion through publication), we expect the salience of CSR research to be unstable rather than reflecting a single growth trajectory.

### **The Influences on the Field of CSR**

Research into the backgrounds of CSR researchers suggests that they draw both on related social science and substantive disciplines. Ferrell et al. report great heterogeneity among American business ethics instructors, particularly since the 1970s, when theologians were joined by business professors and applied philosophers (2002, pp. 9–10). Collins and Warnick (1995) report that Law, Management, Business and Society, Economics, Political Science and Philosophy are the most common highest degree areas of full time Business and Society instructors. This is reflected in the diversity and nature of topics addressed by CSR researchers in the USA and Europe (Collins and Warnick, 1995; Matten and Moon, 2004a).

Thus our investigation of the intellectual influences on CSR is informed by the assumption that, like the substantive discipline of management, CSR's intellectual heritage is drawn from the related social sciences. Pieters and Baumgartner's (2002) results indicate that, in terms of citations, management interacts most closely with

the social sciences of economics, psychology and sociology. However, given the legacy of business ethics we expect that the discipline of philosophy/ethics may be an important source of influence for CSR. Furthermore, we expect the substantive disciplines of environmental studies, political science and law to be intellectual sources for CSR scholars publishing in management journals in light of the academic backgrounds of instructors and keywords used by CSR researchers (Collins and Wartnick, 1995; Matten and Moon, 2004a).

We therefore envisage that CSR research has imported, and will continue to import, ideas from different social science and substantive disciplines. As the field develops, however, we might expect that the level of imported knowledge may fall. Evidence of such a development would be evidenced by an increasing reliance on CSR journals as a source of knowledge.

## METHODOLOGY

In this outline of the methodology, we first explain the selection of journals used to generate the sample of CSR articles for analysis. Given our assumption that CSR can be regarded as an applied management topic, we focused on the mainstream management journals. This ensured that the knowledge analysed had been subject to broadly similar assurance systems for academic quality and rigour as those in the wider management discipline. We also selected journals representative of other related substantive and social science disciplines whose influence on CSR knowledge we wish to test.

### Selection of Management Journals

We initially chose six management journals on the basis of their influence, as measured by the impact factor published by the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI). A journal's impact factor is calculated by summing the current citations (number of times cited) from all journals published in the previous two years and dividing this sum by the total number of articles published in the two previous years. We focused on journals with high impact factors, because the importance of these journals within the disciplines has been previously demonstrated (Stigler et al., 1995). Following Lockett and McWilliams (2005), we define the core management journals as: *Academy of Management Journal* (AMJ), *Academy of Management Review* (AMR), *Administrative Science Quarterly* (ASQ), *Journal of Management* (JM), *Organization Science* (OSc) and *Strategic Management Journal* (SMJ).

All of the above journals are US-based and therefore they may not fully represent the state of knowledge in their non-US counterparts. Research suggests that an article in journal 'A' is more likely to cite articles in journal 'B' (holding quality constant) if they are closer geographically (and methodologically) (McWilliams et al., 2004). We therefore increased the geographic (and hence, potentially, method-

ological) spread of journals by adding the *Journal of Management Studies* (JMS) as this is considered relatively 'European-oriented'.

In view of our suggestion that CSR is in some part 'issue-driven' (see above), we added practitioner-oriented journals because these may constitute arenas for the identification and evaluation of emerging CSR issues ahead of the more academic journals. Using the impact factor method outlined above, we selected: *Harvard Business Review* (HBR), *Sloan Management Review* (SMR) and *California Management Review* (CMR).

### **Selection of CSR Articles**

The key words which we used to delineate the CSR domain, grouped by CSR thematic focus, are: Social (social responsibility, social performance, corporate citizenship, philanthropy/philanthropic, charity/charitable, community, volunteer/volunteerism, social compact); Environmental (environmental responsibility, environmental performance, sustainability, green, ecology/ecological, conservation, pollution, nature/natural); Ethics (ethics, morals, values, corruption, ethical/unethical, crime/criminal, integrity); and Stakeholders (stakeholder/s, stakeholder relations, stakeholder theory, stakeholder management, accountability, accountable, reputation/reputational).<sup>[3]</sup> Although the 'corporate governance' literature does overlap with that of CSR, this was excluded as it is a long-standing field in its own right.

These keywords were used to generate a list of 176 articles for the period 1992–2002 from the ten management journals (seven academic and three practitioner) listed above, which formed the basis of our analysis of the CSR literature in management. The Business Source Premier (EBSCO) and ABI/INFORM Global (Proquest) online databases were used to access the journal contents. All paper titles for the period under investigation were reviewed for inclusion, following which the abstracts of all potential CSR articles were checked for compliance with the keyword criteria. Editorials, transcribed speeches, book reviews and insubstantial articles (four pages or less) were excluded from the analysis. All selected articles were further checked to ensure that they were about CSR.<sup>[4]</sup>

Of the 176 articles, 114 were published in the seven *academic* management journals, which is approximately proportionate to their share of the total management journals examined ( $n = 10$ ). This suggests that although we see CSR as partly issued, the salience of CSR research in management is not driven by a disproportionate attention to the more *practitioner*-oriented journals.

### **Delineating Research Focus**

The research focus of each paper was determined by examining the CSR-related keywords in the title and abstract. In order to classify the papers according to their

dominant CSR focus, we employed the groupings (social, environmental, ethics, stakeholders) as described in 'selection of CSR articles'. Each paper was included in a single group reflecting the dominant theme of the article.

### **Designation of Knowledge Type**

Papers were first categorized as either empirical or theoretical in orientation. The empirical papers were then sub-divided into quantitative and qualitative types, while the theoretical papers were sub-divided into normative and non-normative types.

Given the high quality pool of journals selected, there was an expectation that empirical contributions would have been theoretically informed and may even have made theoretical contributions. Moreover, many empirical and non-normative papers might have been inspired by normative questions. Thus many papers could include quantitative, qualitative, normative and non-normative theoretical elements. Our intention was simply to distinguish the main approach or contribution of each paper. Categorizations were made on the basis of the judgement of the authors who separately classified each paper. In the few cases (less than 5 per cent) where doubts or differences of opinion initially occurred, these were resolved through further joint scrutiny of the respective papers.

### **Selection of Journals in Related Disciplines and in the CSR Field**

We examined influences on the CSR field by comparing the impacts of the management literature (as designated above) with those of the related core and substantive social science disciplines, and with the CSR literature itself.

We identified the leading journals in the disciplines of economics, psychology, sociology, philosophy, law, political science, and environmental studies, and the field of CSR. For each of the social science and substantive disciplines we selected a list of journals, employing the categories constructed by the SSCI.

In order to identify six journals each from economics, philosophy, psychology and sociology, we employed a similar methodology to that used to select the management journals (i.e. we used the impact factors). In addition to selecting the top four 'core' journals, we included two 'applied' journals on the assumption that, being an applied management phenomenon, the CSR literature might be likely to draw on applied knowledge from core disciplines.

The core economics journals were found to be the *Journal of Economic Literature* (JEL), *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (QJE), *Journal of Political Economy* (JPE) and the *American Economic Review* (AER). In addition, the two applied journals were the *Journal of Finance* (JF) and *Journal of Financial Economics* (JFE).

The SSCI historically contained a category for Philosophy, however, this was replaced by Ethics in 2000, which led us to choose journals that were present under

both categories. The core philosophy journals were *Ethics* (E), *Journal of Medical Ethics* (JME), *Economic Philosophy* (EP), *Kennedy Institute Ethical Journal* (KIEJ), *Environmental Ethics* (EE) and *Philosophy and Public Affairs* (PPFA). All the journals selected are core journals, however, owing to the applied nature of a number of these journals, there was no need to restrict the sample to four core and two applied journals.

The core psychology journals selected were: *Psychological Bulletin* (PB), *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (JPSP), *American Psychologist* (AP) and *Psychological Review* (PR). In addition, the two applied journals selected were: the *Journal of Applied Psychology* (JAP) and *Personnel Psychology* (PP).

The core sociology journals selected were: *American Sociological Review* (ASR), *American Journal of Sociology* (AJS), *Annual Review of Sociology* (ARS) and *Discourse and Society* (DS). The two applied journals selected were *Social Forces* (SF) and *Sociology* (S).

We selected six core journals for the substantive disciplines of environmental studies, law, and political science also on the basis of impact factors. No further distinction was made between these and more applied journals given the comparatively applied orientation of the subject material.

The core environmental studies journals selected were: *Environment and Planning D – Society and Space* (EPDSS), *Harvard Environmental Law* (HEL), *Environment Planning A* (EPA), *Journal of Environment and Economic Management* (JEEM), *Urban Studies* (US) and *Regional Studies* (RS).

The core law journals selected were: *Harvard Law Review* (HLR), *Yale Law Review* (YLR), *Columbia Law Review* (CLR), *Stanford Law Review* (SLR), *Michigan Law Review* (MLR) and *VA Law Review* (VALR).

The core political science journals selected were: *American Political Science Review* (APSR), *American Journal of Political Science* (AJPS), *British Journal of Political Science* (BJPS), *New Left Review* (NLR), *Comparative Politics* (CP) and *Political Geography* (PG).

Finally, we chose the four leading CSR journals, once again employing the impact factors. These journals were: *Journal of Business Ethics* (JBE), *Business and Society* (BS), *Business and Society Review* (BSR) and *Business Ethics Quarterly* (BEQ). As most of these are US-based there might be some grounds for caution about the generalizability of the findings. However, other research suggests that CSR represents a more explicit expression of business-society relations in the Anglo-American world than, say, in continental Europe (Matten and Moon, 2004a, 2004b).

## EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

### The Focus of CSR Knowledge

The number (and percentage) of papers by the four categories of research focus are presented in Table I. The data indicate that, confirming our expectations, articles focusing on environmental and ethical subjects dominate CSR research in

Table I. Focus of the CSR papers, 1992–2002

	<i>Social</i>	<i>Environmental</i>	<i>Ethical</i>	<i>Stakeholder</i>	<i>Total</i>
Totals	27 (15%)	64 (36%)	54 (31%)	31 (18%)	176 (100%)
AMJ	4 (14%)	14 (48%)	6 (21%)	5 (17%)	29 (100%)
AMR	3 (9%)	8 (23%)	11 (31%)	13 (37%)	35 (100%)
ASQ	1 (50%)	0 (0%)	1 (50%)	0 (0%)	2 (100%)
JM	3 (43%)	1 (14%)	3 (43%)	0 (0%)	7 (100%)
JMS	1 (5%)	4 (21%)	8 (42%)	6 (32%)	19 (100%)
OSc	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (64%)	4 (36%)	11 (100%)
SMJ	2 (18%)	7 (64%)	1 (9%)	1 (9%)	11 (100%)
CMR	4 (13%)	17 (55%)	9 (29%)	1 (3%)	31 (100%)
HBR	7 (33%)	9 (43%)	5 (24%)	0 (0%)	21 (100%)
SMR	2 (20%)	4 (40%)	3 (30%)	1 (10%)	10 (100%)
Totals	27 (15%)	64 (36%)	54 (31%)	31 (18%)	176 (100%)
2002	4 (29%)	3 (21%)	3 (21%)	4 (29%)	14 (100%)
2001	2 (10%)	12 (57%)	4 (19%)	3 (14%)	21 (100%)
2000	2 (10%)	12 (60%)	4 (20%)	2 (10%)	20 (100%)
1999	5 (18%)	5 (18%)	6 (21%)	12 (43%)	28 (100%)
1998	3 (17%)	6 (33%)	8 (44%)	1 (6%)	18 (100%)
1997	3 (15%)	7 (35%)	6 (30%)	4 (20%)	20 (100%)
1996	0 (0%)	2 (33%)	3 (50%)	1 (17%)	6 (100%)
1995	2 (9%)	11 (48%)	7 (30%)	3 (13%)	23 (100%)
1994	4 (33%)	4 (33%)	4 (33%)	0 (0%)	12 (100%)
1993	0 (0%)	2 (33%)	4 (67%)	0 (0%)	6 (100%)
1992	1 (14%)	0 (0%)	5 (71%)	1 (14%)	7 (100%)

management, accounting for 36 and 31 per cent of the articles respectively. The remaining categories – stakeholder and social, account for 18 and 15 per cent of the papers respectively. Arguably, this reflects the relatively more developed status of the environmental and ethical subjects in their orientation to ecological science and philosophy respectively, as well as their status as management issues.

The balance of papers, by category, appears to be driven, in part, by the preferences of the individual journals. For example, of the CSR papers published in SMJ, 64 per cent (seven papers) have been on environmental issues whereas only nine per cent (one paper) have been on ethical issues. OSc has published no papers on environmental issues but has published 64 per cent of its CSR papers (seven papers) on ethical issues.

In terms of the relative balance of papers in the four categories over time, no clear picture emerges. The data indicate that the variations over time are largely driven by the publication of special issues, of which there were six (two in AMJ, three in AMR and one in CMR).<sup>[5]</sup> Furthermore, no clear distinction can be made between the academic and practitioner journals in terms of the subject matter upon which they focus.

### **The Nature of CSR Knowledge**

A representation of the balance between empirical and theoretical papers is presented in Table II. Overall, 53 per cent of papers were empirical and 47 per cent theoretical. The results, however, indicate that there has been some shift in the balance of papers over time. In 1992, 67 per cent of CSR papers were theoretical and 33 per cent were empirical (a count of two and one papers respectively). The percentages of empirical and theoretical papers have fluctuated over time, but the data do indicate that there has been an increase in the proportion of theoretical papers over time and a corresponding decrease in the proportion of empirical papers. This finding contrasts with a Kuhnian normal scientific paradigm presumption that, as a field develops, the balance of work will shift from theory generation to theory testing (Kuhn, 1962).

With respect to the types of empirical and theoretical research conducted, data presented in Table II indicate that overall there has been a much greater emphasis on quantitative than qualitative empirical research and, if anything, the former is increasing in significance. The data also reveal that, overall, there has been a greater emphasis on non-normative than normative theoretical papers.

The nature of knowledge not only varies over time but also by journal. The data reported in Table III suggest that the editorial policies of the journals differ. In particular, AMJ and AMR are very strict in terms of their editorial remit – being almost exclusively empirical and theoretical respectively. Of the remaining journals, OSc and the JMS appear to have the most balanced portfolio of papers with approximately a 50:50 split between empirical and theoretical.

Table II. Orientation of the CSR papers, 1992–2002

	Total	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996	1995	1994	1993	1992
Empirical	60 (53%)	3 (33%)	6 (55%)	14 (93%)	11 (52%)	7 (44%)	8 (62%)	1 (50%)	4 (24%)	2 (50%)	2 (67%)	2 (67%)
Theoretical	54 (47%)	6 (67%)	5 (45%)	1 (7%)	10 (48%)	9 (56%)	5 (38%)	1 (50%)	13 (76%)	2 (50%)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)
Total	114 (100%)	9 (100%)	11 (100%)	15 (100%)	21 (100%)	16 (100%)	13 (100%)	2 (100%)	17 (100%)	4 (100%)	3 (100%)	3 (100%)
Quantitative	48 (80%)	2 (67%)	4 (67%)	11 (79%)	11 (100%)	5 (71%)	7 (88%)	0 (0%)	2 (50%)	2 (100%)	2 (100%)	2 (100%)
Qualitative	12 (20%)	1 (33%)	2 (33%)	3 (21%)	0 (0%)	2 (29%)	1 (12%)	1 (100%)	2 (50%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total empirical	60 (100%)	3 (100%)	6 (100%)	14 (100%)	11 (100%)	7 (100%)	8 (100%)	1 (100%)	4 (100%)	2 (100%)	2 (100%)	2 (100%)
Normative	6 (11%)	1 (17%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (11%)	1 (20%)	1 (100%)	2 (15%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Non-normative	48 (89%)	5 (83%)	5 (100%)	1 (100%)	10 (100%)	8 (89%)	4 (80%)	0 (0%)	11 (85%)	2 (100%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)
Total theoretical	54 (100%)	6 (100%)	5 (100%)	1 (100%)	10 (100%)	9 (100%)	5 (100%)	1 (100%)	13 (100%)	2 (100%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)

Note: Excludes practitioner management journals.

Table III. Orientation of the CSR papers by journal, 1992–2002

	<i>Total</i>	<i>AMJ</i>	<i>AMR</i>	<i>ASQ</i>	<i>JM</i>	<i>JMS</i>	<i>OSc</i>	<i>SMJ</i>
Empirical	60 (53%)	28 (97%)	1 (3%)	2 (100%)	6 (86%)	10 (53%)	5 (45%)	8 (73%)
Theoretical	54 (47%)	1 (3%)	34 (97%)	0 (0%)	1 (14%)	9 (47%)	6 (55%)	3 (27%)
Total	114 (100%)	29 (100%)	35 (100%)	2 (100%)	7 (100%)	19 (100%)	11 (100%)	11 (100%)
Quantitative	48 (80%)	26 (93%)	0 (0%)	2 (100%)	6 (100%)	4 (40%)	4 (80%)	6 (75%)
Qualitative	12 (20%)	2 (7%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (60%)	1 (20%)	2 (25%)
<i>Total empirical</i>	60 (100%)	28 (100%)	1 (100%)	2 (100%)	6 (100%)	10 (100%)	5 (100%)	8 (100%)
Normative	6 (11%)	0 (0%)	3 (9%)	0 (n/a)	0 (0%)	2 (22%)	1 (17%)	0 (0%)
Non-normative	48 (89%)	1 (100%)	31 (91%)	0 (n/a)	1 (100%)	7 (78%)	5 (83%)	3 (100%)
<i>Total theoretical</i>	54 (100%)	1 (100%)	34 (100%)	0 (n/a)	1 (100%)	9 (100%)	6 (100%)	3 (100%)

*Note:* Excludes practitioner management journals.

The journals also vary in terms of the nature of the empirical and theoretical knowledge they publish. In terms of empirical research, AMJ, JM, OSc and SMJ all publish significantly more *quantitative* than *qualitative* research. Across all journals, the balance of empirical papers is 80 per cent quantitative and 20 per cent qualitative. JMS is the outlier with only 40 per cent of empirical papers being quantitative, perhaps reflecting the more European-orientation of this journal (see above). Of the theoretical papers, only 11 per cent were *normative* (six papers in total) and the remainder were *non-normative*.

Overall, these findings suggest that (notwithstanding differences in editorial policy): (a) the published research in the seven academic management journals is evenly split between empirical and theoretical research; (b) the journals publish substantially less qualitative than quantitative research; and (c) the theoretical research is overwhelmingly non-normative in orientation.

### The Salience of CSR Publications

Our expectation was that the salience of CSR research would be unstable. Data reported in Table IV show that the total number and proportion of CSR papers in the ten management journals increased from seven in 1992 (2 per cent) to a high of 27 in 1999 (6 per cent) (notwithstanding 1996 when only 1 per cent of

Table IV. The volume of CSR publications in management journals, 1992–2002

	Total	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996	1995	1994	1993	1992
<i>Academy of Management Journal</i>	29/678 (4%)	0/71 (0%)	0/74 (0%)	10/74 (14%)	10/44 (23%)	2/44 (5%)	3/54 (6%)	0/63 (0%)	1/70 (1%)	1/71 (1%)	1/66 (2%)	1/47 (2%)
<i>Academy of Management Review</i>	35/349 (10%)	3/26 (12%)	2/28 (7%)	1/47 (2%)	8/50 (16%)	4/38 (11%)	2/26 (8%)	0/33 (0%)	14/30 (47%)	1/23 (4%)	0/21 (0%)	0/27 (0%)
<i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>	2/262 (1%)	0/20 (0%)	0/22 (0%)	0/24 (0%)	1/26 (4%)	0/26 (0%)	1/24 (4%)	0/28 (0%)	0/24 (0%)	0/22 (0%)	0/22 (0%)	0/24 (0%)
<i>Journal of Management</i>	7/435 (2%)	0/36 (0%)	2/39 (5%)	1/49 (2%)	1/38 (3%)	1/32 (3%)	0/31 (0%)	0/35 (0%)	0/54 (0%)	1/41 (2%)	0/42 (0%)	1/38 (3%)
<i>Journal of Management Studies</i>	19/446 (4%)	3/48 (6%)	5/49 (10%)	1/49 (2%)	0/44 (0%)	4/38 (11%)	3/36 (8%)	2/35 (6%)	0/36 (0%)	0/34 (0%)	0/39 (0%)	1/38 (3%)
<i>Organization Science</i>	11/447 (2%)	2/45 (4%)	0/44 (0%)	1/44 (2%)	1/44 (2%)	1/56 (2%)	3/39 (8%)	0/39 (0%)	1/38 (3%)	0/38 (0%)	2/33 (6%)	0/27 (0%)
<i>Strategic Management Journal</i>	11/677 (2%)	1/70 (1%)	2/62 (3%)	1/69 (1%)	0/63 (0%)	4/71 (6%)	1/65 (2%)	0/46 (0%)	1/51 (2%)	1/60 (2%)	0/59 (0%)	0/61 (0%)
Subtotal core management journals	114/3294 (3%)	9/316 (3%)	11/318 (3%)	15/356 (4%)	21/309 (7%)	16/305 (5%)	13/275 (5%)	2/279 (1%)	17/303 (6%)	4/289 (1%)	3/282 (1%)	3/262 (1%)
<i>California Management Review</i>	31/326 (10%)	2/28 (7%)	7/31 (23%)	2/26 (8%)	3/29 (10%)	2/38 (5%)	2/28 (7%)	2/33 (6%)	4/28 (14%)	3/28 (11%)	1/28 (4%)	3/29 (10%)
<i>Harvard Business Review</i>	21/848 (2%)	2/111 (2%)	2/118 (2%)	1/74 (1%)	2/73 (3%)	0/65 (0%)	3/68 (4%)	1/68 (1%)	1/67 (1%)	5/68 (7%)	3/66 (5%)	1/70 (1%)
<i>Sloan Management Review</i>	10/334 (3%)	1/40 (3%)	1/32 (3%)	3/29 (10%)	1/34 (3%)	0/28 (0%)	2/29 (7%)	1/30 (3%)	1/28 (4%)	0/32 (0%)	0/26 (0%)	0/26 (0%)
Subtotal practitioner management journals	62/1508 (4%)	5/179 (3%)	10/181 (6%)	6/129 (5%)	6/136 (4%)	2/131 (2%)	7/125 (6%)	4/131 (3%)	6/123 (5%)	8/128 (6%)	4/120 (3%)	4/125 (3%)
Total all management journals	176/4802 (4%)	14/495 (3%)	21/499 (4%)	21/485 (4%)	27/445 (6%)	18/436 (4%)	20/400 (5%)	6/410 (1%)	23/426 (5%)	12/417 (3%)	7/406 (2%)	7/387 (2%)

papers were CSR). However, the number and proportion of CSR papers fell from the 1999 peak back to 21 in 2000 and 2001 (4 per cent) and further to 14 in 2002 (3 per cent). It should be noted that the total proportion of CSR articles, 4 per cent over the period, compares well with the entrepreneurship field (Busentiz et al., 2003).

Table IV also reports data that allows us to compare the salience of CSR articles in core and more practitioner oriented journals. The field was comparatively over-represented in the latter journals in the early 1990s, perhaps reflecting its connection to business environment agendas. Thereafter the salience of CSR papers in both types of journals was in general terms more similar, though not identical. As with the total sample, the peak year for publication of CSR articles in core management journals was 1999 when 7 per cent of all papers were in the CSR field. Similarly, since the peak of publication, the proportion of CSR papers in all ten journals fell back to 4 per cent in 2000 and to 4 per cent in 2001 and 2002.

The journals in our study have different propensities to publish CSR research. From Table IV, we can see that AMR has the highest propensity to publish CSR research. Over the period studied, CSR papers accounted for 10 per cent of all papers published in AMR (a total of 35 papers). ASQ had the lowest propensity to publish articles related to CSR; CSR papers accounted for only 1 per cent of all articles published in the journal (a total of two papers) over the studied period. The remaining academic management journals published between 2 and 4 per cent of papers relating to CSR, with JM, OSc and SMJ being at the low (2 per cent) and AMJ and JMS being at the high end (4 per cent) of this range.

This varying pattern of publication across the different academically-oriented management journals was also found to hold across the practitioner-oriented journals. Table III shows that 10 per cent of the articles published by CMR were CSR-related, while only 2 per cent of HBR's and 3 per cent of SMR's were CSR-related.

### **What are the Influences on CSR Knowledge?**

In order to assess the influences on CSR knowledge, we examined the citations made by our sample of papers to references in the journals which we deemed representative of management, other social science disciplines, and the CSR field (as defined above).

Tables V and VI indicate that over the studied period, CSR publications in the core academically-oriented management journals drew most heavily on other core academic management journals (1343 of 7692 citations).<sup>[6]</sup> The next most highly cited group consisted of the four CSR journals (296 citations) and then the three practitioner-oriented management journals (221 citations). These results may not be surprising given our focus on CSR publications in those same management core journals.

Table V. Citations made by CSR articles in academic management journals, 1992–2002

	Total	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996	1995	1994	1993	1992
CSR journals (4)	296	21	22	35	80	37	33	1	23	24	17	3
Management journals (10)	1564	113	182	247	338	231	208	3	151	36	35	20
Discipline based journals (24)	419	28	24	63	69	44	76	0	54	13	26	22
Economics (6)	109	4	8	20	20	13	5	0	26	2	3	8
Sociology (6)	107	12	4	17	23	9	20	0	16	0	3	3
Psychology (6)	187	10	12	26	24	21	50	0	7	6	20	11
Philosophy (6)	16	2	0	0	2	1	1	0	5	5	0	0
Substantive discipline journals (18)	16	4	0	2	3	2	1	0	3	0	0	1
Environmental studies (6)	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Law (6)	10	0	0	1	2	2	1	0	3	0	0	1
Political science (6)	5	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal journals (56)	2295	166	228	347	490	314	318	4	231	73	78	46
Books	3391	258	277	439	375	395	476	67	871	124	36	73
Newspapers/magazines	150	18	23	15	22	9	25	1	28	5	1	3
Conference proceedings	149	6	19	31	21	7	25	1	32	3	3	1
Additional sources	1707	153	236	253	169	204	249	7	303	28	78	27
Subtotal other	5397	435	555	738	587	615	775	76	1234	160	118	104
Total number of citations	7692	601	783	1085	1077	929	1093	80	1465	233	196	150
Number of CSR articles	114	9	11	15	21	16	13	2	17	4	3	3

*Notes:*

Excludes papers published in practitioner management journals.

Figures in parentheses indicate the number of journals in each category.

Table VI. Citation sources in CSR articles in the academically-oriented management journals, 1992–2002

<i>Sources cited in CSR articles</i>	<i>Count of total citations</i>	<i>Rank of total citations</i>	<i>% of total citations</i>	<i>Citations per CSR article</i>
CSR journals	296		3.85	2.60
<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	133	5	1.73	1.17
<i>Business and Society</i>	37		0.48	0.32
<i>Business and Society Review</i>	4		0.05	0.04
<i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i>	122	7	1.59	1.07
Academic management journals	1343		17.46	11.78
<i>Academy of Management Journal</i>	293	2	3.81	2.57
<i>Academy of Management Review</i>	543	1	7.06	4.76
<i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>	140	4	1.82	1.23
<i>Journal of Management</i>	62		0.81	0.54
<i>Organization Science</i>	63	10	0.82	0.55
<i>Strategic Management Journal</i>	194	3	2.52	1.70
<i>Journal of Management Studies</i>	48		0.62	0.42
Practitioner management journals	221		2.87	1.94
<i>California Management Review</i>	74	8	0.96	0.65
<i>Harvard Business Review</i>	126	6	1.64	1.11
<i>Sloan Management Review</i>	21		0.27	0.18
<b>Total management journals</b>	1564		20.33	13.72
Economics (6 journals)	109		1.42	0.96
Sociology (6 journals)	107		1.39	0.94
Psychology (6 journals)	187	9*	2.43	1.64
Philosophy (6 journals)	16		0.21	0.14
<b>Total disciplines</b>	419		5.45	3.68
Environmental Studies (6 journals)	1		0.01	0.01
Law (6 journals)	10		0.13	0.09
Political Science (6 journals)	5		0.07	0.04
<b>Total substantive disciplines</b>	16		0.21	0.14
<b>Subtotal top journals</b>	2295		29.84	20.13
Books	3391		44.08	29.75
Newspapers/magazines	150		1.95	1.32
Conference proceedings	149		1.94	1.31
Additional sources	1707		22.19	14.97
<b>Subtotal other sources</b>	5397		70.16	47.34
<b>Total citations</b>	7692		100.00	67.47

\* *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* – citation count.

Turning to the influence of the core disciplines on the field of CSR, psychology (with 187 citations) had the greatest impact, followed by economics (with 109 citations) and sociology (with 107 citations). The low level of citations from philosophy/ethics (only 16 citations) is a puzzle, as many articles published in the wider CSR literature refer to this discipline. Two potential explanations include: the possibility that this may echo the evidence of Table III about the low level of

normative papers published by management journals; and the possibility that it may reflect the fact that there is a greater tendency for the relevant philosophical/ethical sources to appear in monograph form (which are not included in the SSCI data).

Low levels of citation were also found for the substantive disciplines of environmental studies, law and political science, with a total of only 16 citations between them. This may be related to the different status that core and substantive disciplines have in the academy such that the former are more widely influential, feeding either directly into fields of research such as CSR or through the more closely related substantive disciplines which, for CSR, is management.

Table VI also provides a ranking of the most frequent sources of citations in CSR papers from among our selected sources. The first four sources of citations are mainstream management journals; the fifth and seventh are CSR journals. Of the top ten sources, only the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* is from another discipline.

The increasing reliance on the management journals mirrors the findings of Busenitz et al. (2003) for entrepreneurship. This may reflect one of two possibilities. First, it could signal that the mainstream management literature itself is able to provide an increasing proportion of the concepts, frameworks and illustrations for such allied fields as CSR, i.e. that management is becoming more developed as a substantive discipline. Second, it could simply reflect the perceived need to cite the management literature in order to get published in its journals. The increased reliance of the CSR-in-management literature on the wider CSR knowledge is also consistent with Busenitz et al.'s (2003) analysis of entrepreneurship. This may be taken as an indication that the field of CSR is becoming more established.

## CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Finally we turn to reviewing our findings. First, the most popular issues in CSR research published in management journals have been environmental concerns and ethics. The data, however, do not indicate any structural changes in the focus of research over time. This is consistent with a field that exhibits a considerable degree of heterogeneity in terms of research focus.

Second, our expectation of *non-normative* theoretical papers persisting has been confirmed. This suggests that much CSR knowledge reflects its inter-disciplinary nature and that scholars continue to revise basic assumptions and concepts in response to the work of those bringing other perspectives to the field.

Third, despite this concern with non-normative theory, it should be noted that our expectation that empirical research would persist has also been confirmed. Interestingly, and contrary to our expectations, this has been overwhelmingly of a quantitative nature (e.g. testing the relationship between CSR and financial performance).

Fourth, the fluctuating salience of CSR research in management appears to confirm our expectation that the field is driven not only by continuing scientific engagement but also by agendas in the business environment.

Finally, in the light of the heterogeneous background of CSR instructors and researchers, it is perhaps surprising that greater impacts from the core disciplines did not appear. The greatest single source of references was the management literature itself, followed by the CSR literature. Furthermore, our analysis indicates a significant increase in dependence of CSR knowledge in management on citations from management and CSR literatures over time.

The above trend suggests that the CSR field is becoming more established and distinctive, however, this does not indicate any emergence of a Kuhnian normal scientific paradigm. This lack of a paradigm is illustrated not only in the balance between theoretical and empirical CSR knowledge noted above, but also by the fact that CSR knowledge appears nested in the substantive discipline of management. Given management's own multi-disciplinary nature, it is clear that the core journals have played an intermediary role between CSR and other disciplines. This explains why the data reveal a perhaps surprisingly low influence being provided by disciplines other than management.<sup>[7]</sup> This may have implications for CSR research as it may reduce the interaction of CSR researchers with those in the substantive disciplines (Lockett and McWilliams, 2005).

In summary, our findings suggest that, in Kuhnian terms, CSR knowledge could best be described as in a *continuing state of emergence*. While the field appears well established (overall profile in management journals, increasing significance of other CSR literature in emerging knowledge), it is not characterized by the domination of a particular theoretical approach, assumptions and method. Its demonstrated location in the management discipline (see Pfeffer, 1993) reinforces its development as a field without a dominant paradigm. The fluctuating salience of the field suggests that it is not only driven by scientific momentum but by developments in business–society relations which themselves provoke redefinitions of the nature and scope of the field.

There may be no strong reason for CSR knowledge to develop in a Kuhnian sense from this continuing state of emergence even if its overall salience does achieve long-term growth. This state of continuing emergence can be thought of as a two-edged sword for the future of CSR. First, the lack of a clear dominant paradigm may have a detrimental impact on research quality (Pfeffer, 1993). This is illustrated by the work of McWilliams and Siegel who provide evidence that some CSR research may be poorly executed (McWilliams and Siegel, 1997, 2000). In particular they show that the conclusion, drawn from numerous empirical studies, that there is a positive relationship between CSR and financial performance resulted from poor execution of event study methodology (McWilliams and Siegel, 1997, 1998; McWilliams et al., 1999). In addition, regression studies that examine the link between CSR expenditure and firm performance may suffer from

the problem of model misspecification. Specifically, a positive relationship between CSR and firm performance only holds when researchers do not control for R&D spending (McWilliams and Siegel, 2000). Second, the continual emergent status may reflect a continuing lively engagement between those who seek to improve CSR research by applying lessons from a related social science paradigm (e.g. McWilliams and Siegel, 2001) and those who see CSR as fundamentally undermining such paradigms (e.g. Korehonen, 2003).

## NOTES

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- [1] One ambiguity involves the use of the word 'sustainability' which we, along with other scholars (e.g. Wheeler et al., 2003), classify as principally environmental, while others (e.g. Elkington, 1997) see as combining environmental with economic and social outcomes.
- [2] The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) decided to include Business and Society in the 'common body of knowledge' of its approved curriculum (Collins and Wartick, 1995). From January 2004 on, its standards refer to 'ethical and legal responsibilities in organizations and society' (<http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/business/standards01-01-04.pdf>).
- [3] While it is clear from Freeman (1984), and doubly clear from Phillips et al. (2003), that stakeholder relations are not synonymous with CSR, in the CSR literature there is sufficient overlap as to justify its inclusion for these purposes (Wheeler et al., 2003).
- [4] Thus, for example, a number of papers on stakeholder relations which had nothing to do with CSR were excluded (see Phillips et al., 2003).
- [5] In total, 40 of the 176 CSR papers were published in the following six special issues: *Academy of Management Journal*, **43**, 4, 2000: on the Management of Organizations in the Natural Environment (9 of 13 articles); *Academy of Management Journal*, **42**, 5, 1999: on Stakeholders, Social Responsibility and Performance (7 of 7 articles); *Academy of Management Review*, **24**, 2, 1999: on Stakeholder Theory (6 of 11 articles); *Academy of Management Review*, **20**, 1, 1995: on Societal Expectations and Corporate Performance (5 of 8 articles); *Academy of Management Review*, **20**, 4, 1995: on Ecologically Sustainable Organizations (6 of 9 articles); *California Management Review*, **43**, 3, 2001: on Environmental Strategy (7 of 10 articles).
- [6] Practitioner-oriented journals were excluded from this stage of the analysis as they deploy less consistent citation policies.
- [7] This conclusion appears to be strengthened by the fact that our findings are consistent with Busenitz et al.'s (2003) findings for the development of the entrepreneurship field within management.

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