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The Paradox of Power in CSR: A Case Study on Implementation

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ABSTRACT. *Purpose* Although current literature assumes positive outcomes for stakeholders resulting from an increase in power associated with CSR, this research suggests that this increase can lead to conflict within organizations, resulting in almost complete inactivity on CSR. *Methods* A Single in-depth case study, focusing on power as an embedded concept. *Results* Empirical evidence is used to demonstrate how some actors use CSR to improve their own positions within an organization. Resource dependence theory is used to highlight why this may be a more significant concern for CSR. *Conclusions* Increasing power for CSR has the potential to offer actors associated with it increased personal power, and thus can attract opportunistic actors with little interest in realizing the benefits of CSR for the company and its stakeholders. Thus power can be an impediment to furthering CSR strategy and activities at the individual and organizational level.

KEY WORDS: corporate social responsibility, implementation, power, resource dependence theory, case study, empirical

This article presents case evidence to illustrate a simple but significant point: the literature assumes that an increase in power associated with CSR is positive because it has benefits for a range of stakeholders. Therefore, there is a positive association between an increase in the power of CSR and stakeholder benefits. In practice this is not the case always. In fact in some organizations, the more powerful CSR becomes, the more this power becomes an obstacle to implementing CSR systems, processes and initiatives that will generate these benefits. Therefore, an increase in power of CSR can be either of no benefit, or negatively impact the vast majority of stakeholders when this power causes stagnation in its development and implementation.

The stagnation results from a process whereby the power associated with CSR increases, causing the potential power of individuals with CSR responsibilities inside organizations to also increase. Some managers recognize the potential for using CSR to improve their own power position, and may have little interest in promoting and developing CSR within the organization. This causes a power struggle between actors who attempt to control CSR in different ways to improve their own power. This struggle can undermine development and implementation efforts, as attentions and priorities of managers are turned towards it and not CSR.

Therefore, CSR is distinct from other topics within business, such as quality control, profit maximization or marketing in two ways: first, power is thought to have a positive effect on CSR because as it becomes more powerful it results in more activity at the organizational level; and second, some contributions emphasize values/morality-based or ethical theories of CSR (e.g. see Garriga and Mele, 2004) which emphasize it as 'the right thing to do'. As such, we would expect that CSR therefore might be less susceptible to power relations than other business imperatives. This case illustrates that both of these assumptions may not hold true in practice, and that due to the link between CSR and the personal ethics of those responsible for it, the power struggle may in fact be more intense than other business imperatives and therefore needs to be carefully managed.

A resource dependence perspective is thus used to illustrate this paradox of power in CSR and the need for further research on the effects of power on CSR.

CSR and power

Although power is an important concept with regard to CSR[1], there is little to be found in the literature dealing specifically with it (Gordon, 2005) and how it impacts CSR implementation. The few articles that discuss power do so in a more generalized sense without discussing what power is, or specifically how it impacts the issues under discussion (e.g. Hamann and Acutt, 2003; Hilton, 2003; Newell, 2005). However, it is these articles that suggest an increase in power for CSR is positive because it allows a range of stakeholder groups to 'increase their own bargaining power' (Hamann and Acutt, 2003, p. 260) in relation to corporations and thus by implication, work towards better meeting their own needs. Thus, power of CSR is positive because it is thought to create opportunities for traditionally less powerful groups such as employees, communities, those representing the environment, etc. to work with companies, to mitigate the impacts of production and to address their needs in conjunction with organizations. This primarily implicit assumption is found in much of the CSR literature (e.g. Aguilera and Cuervo-Cazurra, 2004; Blowfield, 2004; Davis, 1973; Sethi, 2002).

Literature focussed on implementing CSR, also tends not to include issues related to power, and focuses primarily on linear or staged models to describe both current implementation practices, and theorize on ideal processes, structures and considerations (e.g. Adam and Rachman-Moore, 2004; Carlisle and Faulkner, 2004; Cramer, 2005; EFQM, n.d.; Elkington, 1997; Government of Canada, 2006; Labour Behind the Label, n.d.; Nelson, 1999; van Marrewijk et al., 2004; Veser, 2004). Most of these implementation models have similar components that include: conducting a CSR assessment, creating a CSR strategy (often in conjunction with key stakeholders) and identifying the specific commitments to be made, creating monitoring and reporting systems (and in some cases identifying key performance indicators), identifying appropriate communication channels for different audiences and reviewing performance on a regular basis. Other works such as Frenkel (2001). Mamic (2004) and Wood et al. (2004) which provide rich descriptions of CSR implementation efforts also do not speak in any depth about how power impacts the development or implementation of CSR within organizations. Mainly, the work on CSR implementation focuses on increasing effectiveness through improving organizational structures and processes, such as governance, training and awareness, sanctions, etc. Thus, the vast majority of existing CSR literature does not discuss the power implications of CSR and of those who are in control of CSR development and implementation within the organization.

Much of the management literature on power starts either from definitions that describe power as an ability, a potential ability, or access to resource(s) that allows an individual or group to influence or carry out their own will or interests (e.g. Fiol et al., 2001; Kim et al., 2005; Salancik and Pfeffer, 1977; Vredenburgh and Brender, 1988; Weber, 1947; Whitmeyer, 2001), or that describe different types or dimensions of power (e.g. Furnham, 2005; Gaventa and Cornwall, 2001; Hardy and Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998; Lukes, 1974) where power is not a fixed, structural characteristic (e.g. Abel, 2005; Faubion, 1994; Hosking and Morley, 1991). There is a vast range of literature on power looking at specific elements such as buyer–supplier relationships (e.g. Hingley, 2005; Kumar, 2005), training and development (e.g. Garavan et al., 1993), mentoring relationships (e.g. Ragins, 1997), managers and their use or non-use of power (e.g. Kotter, 1977; Richardson and Swan, 1997), the relationship between supervisory power and organizational values (e.g. Atwater, 1995), or broader issues of power such as organizational politics and game playing (e.g. McKenna, 2000; Mintzberg, 1983; Pettigrew, 1973).

The conception of power used in this study starts from Whitmeyer's (2001) definition that power is the ability of an actor to obtain his/her interests, but this does not assume that it is a static or fixed resource that belongs to a person, group or position, etc. Power is something that is not inherently positive or negative and is available to anyone. Individuals and groups interact and engage in 'heterogeneous one-on-one adjustments of dominance and resistance' (Foucault, 1979 in Abel, 2005), which in some cases are reinforced through repetition. When this occurs, these behaviours become patterns and create power relationships, where resources (such as bases and sources of power or influence tactics) are used to both maintain and resist the relationships. Thus, power can be understood as a set of entrenched relationships that can be changed through re-evaluation and examination, but where parties involved use the resources at their disposal to change or maintain the power relationship as best suits their interests. Thus, a resource-based view of power and a relational view of power are not mutually exclusive and help to more accurately conceptualize how power works in practice. According to Salancik and Pfeffer (1977), power 'while it eludes definition, is easy enough to recognize by its consequences – the ability of those who possess power to bring about the outcomes they desire' (p. 3).

According to resource dependence theory, this ability to bring about desired outcomes is constrained by the environment in which an organization operates (Boyd, 1990; Oliver, 1991; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978/2003). While it has received limited attention in the CSR literature (e.g. Corcoran and Shackman, 2007; Frooman, 1999; Greening and Gray, 1994), there is a relatively rich tradition within the general management literature. Because organizations do not control all resources needed in order to operate, they must come up with other strategies to gain access to these resources and to manage uncertainties within their operating environment. Many respond with such strategies as creating relationships, or interdependencies, with others to gain access to resources (e.g. Boyd, 1990; Greening and Gray, 1994), merging with or acquiring other organizations (e.g. Campling and Mitchelson, 1998; Casciaro and Jan Piskorski, 2005) and/or bringing in individuals with resources needed by the organization (e.g. Daily and Dalton, 1994; Hillman et al., 2000). Within the interdependencies, and constraints and opportunities of their operating environment (Bloodgood and Morrow, 2003), managers exercise a degree of discretion that is mediated by how well aligned the external environment is (Powell, 1988 in Greening and Gray, 1994) and by power relationships between parties (Bloodgood and Morrow, 2003; Hillman et al., 2000; Hrebiniak and Joyce, 1985). Individuals who are able to reduce organizational uncertainties and secure access to key resources such as legitimacy, reputation and credibility (Daily and Dalton, 1994; Gales and Kesner, 1994), thereby increasing discretion and control, become powerful members within the organization (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978/2003).

While it is true that individuals who provide these services to the organization around CSR have the potential to improve their own power within the organization, managers also recognize the potential personal gains for 'solving' the CSR problem and struggle for control over it internally. During the course of the struggle, both the 'constraint absorption' (Casciaro and Jan Piskorski, 2005) and opportunity identification activities (Bloodgood and Morrow, 2003) for further engaging in CSR become ignored.

Therefore, there is a paradox of power within CSR. The CSR literature indicates that as CSR becomes more powerful, business will increasingly be expected to engage in a range of CSR activities with the express purpose of benefiting impacted stakeholders. However, counter to the literature, data from this research suggests that as CSR becomes more powerful within society and thus becomes a more significant constraint within the operating environment for business, the rewards associated with controlling it can cause conflict within the organization, resulting in CSR activities being ignored. In other words, as CSR increases in power, some organizations may find a decrease in the amount of work done to further develop and implement their CSR strategy. Also, because CSR is articulated by scholars and practitioners alike as being fundamentally underpinned by 'good ethics' (see Aguilera et al., 2007; Garriga and Mele, 2004; Meehan et al., 2006; Windsor, 2006), the personal ethics of those involved in the struggle are brought into focus and are used to prove 'worthiness' (TRO1) of being involved with CSR, thereby intensifying the struggle.

As indicated by Salancik and Pfeffer (1977) above, power can be recognized by its consequences, and thus it is possible to observe the details of a power struggle over CSR by observing the power bases individuals ascribe to and the influence tactics they use.

Tools for observing the use of power within organizations

Managers who recognize the increase in power associated with CSR have a number of tactics at their disposal to strengthen their association and control over the direction of CSR within the organization. Work on power bases (e.g. French and Raven, 1959; Yukl and Falbe, 1991), and influence tactics (e.g. Kipnis et al., 1980; Yukl and Tracey, 1992) are useful in analyzing the behaviour of

TABLE I

Eight sources of power inside organizations (Yukl and Falbe, 1991)

Type of power	Description
Position Power	
Legitimate	The actor has the right, considering his/her position and the target's job responsibilities, to expect the target to comply with legitimate request(s)
Reward	The actor is able to give special benefits or reward to people, and the target finds it advantageous to trade favours
Coercive	The actor can make things difficult for people and the target wants to avoid getting the actor angry
Information	The actor has access to information not available to the target and this information convinces the target that the actor is right
Personal power	
Expert	The actor has the experience and knowledge to earn the target's respect and the target defers to the actor's judgement in some matters
Persuasive	The actor's logical arguments convince the target that the request or recommendation is the best way to accomplish an objective or get a task done
Referent	The target likes the actor and enjoys doing things for him/her
Charisma	The actor is very charismatic and is able to appeal to the target's values and inspire the target's enthusiasm for a task

individuals within an organizational setting to show where they believe their power comes from (what power sources they refer to) and what tactics they are using to change the level of power they already have within the organization (power change and use tactics). Therefore, the two tools represented in Tables I and II can be used to identify *how* some managers are using the opportunities associated with an increase in power of CSR to realize the rewards of dealing with related uncertainties and resource acquisition.

Methods

According to Mintzberg (1979) 'measuring in real organizational terms means first of all getting out into the field, into real organizations. Questionnaires often won't do' (p. 586).

Power is a socially embedded, context-dependent phenomenon requiring research methods that can take context and situational factors into account (e.g. Mintzberg, 1983; Pettigrew, 1977; Pfeffer, 1981). It also requires methods where behaviours involved in power relationships can be observed in their natural setting (e.g. Bonoma, 1985; Lueger et al., 2005) due to the likelihood that research participants are 'reluctant to admit that they are motivated by fear of punishment or desire for rewards and may attribute compliance to…reasons, such as friendship with the agent' (Yukl and Falbe, 1991, p. 416). Therefore a study of power requires inductive, iterative, observation-based methods that are situated within the natural context of the observable behaviours.

This research seeks to understand the 'world as it is' and to 'understand the fundamental nature of the social world at the level of subjective experience (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p. 28), thus falling into what Burrell and Morgan (1979) call the interpretive paradigm. This paradigm is focussed on the creation of meaning within certain contexts and how those meanings and experiences are understood to constitute social action (Baker, 2001; Schwandt, 2000; Spiggle, 1994). The researcher acts as an interpreter, who attempts to identify meanings associated with a particular social action and processes through such things as conversation and interaction, and thus attempts to understand the subjective meaning of action in an objective manner (Mason, 2002; Schwandt, 2000), or by making strange that which is normal by challenging our own preconceived notions about the process in question (Baker, 2002; Toren, 1996). Objectivity in this sense refers to the researcher's ability and willingness to listen to and

TABLE II

Nine influence tactics (Yukl and Tracey, 1992)

Influence tactics	Description
Coalition	The actor seeks the aid of others to persuade the target to do something or uses the support of others as a reason for the target to agree also
Consultation	The actor seeks the target's participation in planning a strategy, activity or change for which the target's support and assistance are desired, or the actor is willing to modify a proposal to deal with the target's concerns and suggestions
Exchange	The actor offers an exchange of favours, indicates willingness to reciprocate at a later time, or promises to share the benefits if the target accomplishes a task
Ingratiation	The actor seeks to get the target in a good mood or to think favourably of him/her before asking the target to do something
Inspirational appeal	The actor makes a request or proposal that arouses enthusiasm by appealing to the target's values, ideals and aspirations or by increasing the target's confidence that he/she can do it
Legitimating	The actor seeks to establish the legitimacy of a request by claiming authority or right to make it or by verifying that it is consistent with organizational, policies, rules, practices or traditions
Rational persuasion	The actor uses logical arguments and factual evidence to persuade the target that a proposal of request is viable and likely to result in the attainment of task objectives
Personal appeal	The actor appeals to the target's feelings of loyalty and friendship towards him or her before asking the target to do something
Pressure	The actor uses demands, threats or persistent reminders to influence the target to do what he or she wants

'give voice' to participants (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 43). Within this process of interpreting, the researcher responds as a whole person and acts as 'an instrument in observation, selection, coordination and interpretation of data' (Spiggle, 1994, p. 492).

Case research is most appropriate as it allows the researcher to interact with the participants through multiple methods (interviews, document analysis, participant observation and direct observation) in the context in which these activities take place and which therefore serve to improve both the validity and reliability of the information gathered (Bonoma, 1985; Eisenhardt, 1989; Scholz and Tietje, 2002; Van Maanen, 1988; Yin, 2003). It also allows for investigating complex phenomenon that are under-developed in the literature (Baker, 2001; Scholz and Tietje, 2002; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Vinten, 1994; Yin, 2003) as is clearly the case with the impact of power on the development and implementation of CSR.

In investigating the influence of power on CSR development and implementation within a single UK MNC, it was important to understand the phenomenon from a practical perspective and therefore was data-led. As such, the research began from an inductive, unstructured approach, where no single theory or hypothesis was tested (Baker, 2002; Crane, 2000; Eisenhardt, 1989), and where theory emerged from the data (e.g. Mintzberg, 1979; Pettigrew, 2000; Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Therefore, a single unstructured, exploratory case was identified to provide further insight into the influence that power has on the development and implementation of CSR strategy (Scholz and Tietje, 2002; Vinten, 1994; Yin, 2003).

Case selection and data collection

The case company is a UK MNC in the global tourism industry. It was selected because previous research indicates that larger organizations are more likely to be working on CSR (Maignan and Ralston, 2002), and in this case, both the company and the industry are unremarkable or typical in nature (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The company is indistinguishable from its competition and neither led or lagged behind other companies competing in the same market with regard to its core business and to CSR. For instance they offer similar if not the same products and prices as their competitors due to such things as volume bed purchasing at hotels where multiple vendors have contracts, targeting the same locations around the world for holiday destinations, employees who regularly move between this company and their competitors and themselves indicate little difference between organizations and targeting and advertising to the same market segment in the UK.[2] The staff involved in CSR development and implementation were not specialists in the field, nor did their knowledge lag behind the average individual working in any junior management position in an average company.

This international tourism industry is also unremarkable when it comes to CSR development and implementation. It has begun to be affected by certain issues, such as climate change and changing weather patterns in destination communities and therefore is in early stages of responding to CSR considerations. Thus, the industry is not considered to be a leader on CSR issues, such as mining or oil and gas industries, nor does it lag significantly behind most industries, such as the case with insurance or electrical component industries.

Therefore, this case is unremarkable in every sense and is potentially the representative of any number of companies at early stages of CSR development and implementation that has little internal impetus for making CSR a priority.

Over 100 h of direct observation, document analysis, and 12 formal, semi-structured interviews (resulting in 11.5 h of interview time ranging from 30 to 75 min in length) have been conducted with senior managers to date. Four focus groups were also run with 17 mid- and junior-level managers resulting in an additional 6 h of contact time. All information gathered from interviews, focus groups, participant observation, direct observation and documents was analyzed using the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Spiggle, 1994).

Case details

Company X

Company X appeared to be in a state of mild confusion regarding CSR. Until the beginning of 2005, CSR was seen as something that affected other companies and was not of any real concern to them internally or industry-wide. By 2000, companies were aware that external groups were talking about CSR in relation to the industry but showed little concern until 2003–2004 when the other major competitors appointed CSR managers. To ensure they did not lag sufficiently behind their competition, they also appointed a CSR manager, but CSR was not seen either as an opportunity or as a threat. However, in 2006, not only did the NGOs become louder and the government talk about stiffer climate change regulations (neither of which had really affected Company X in the past), their key investor asked for specific information regarding CSR-related policies and practices. Due to the weak financial position of Company X, and the large proportion of shares owned by the investor, Company X was significantly 'power-disadvantaged', providing the investor with the opportunity to have significant influence on activities and decision making of Company X (Casciaro and Jan Piskorski, 2005). By raising the importance and urgency of CSR policies and activities within Company X, it gave those in control of CSR 'a louder voice at the table' (TRO11), where managers recognized the rewards associated with 'managing CSR'. Thus, the investor increased not only the visibility and credibility of CSR within the organization, but also of those engaged in CSR activities.

The two rival camps

It became evident early-on in the research that two rival CSR 'camps' were developing. According to Mintzberg (1983), rival camps are any groups at the same level whose purpose is to defeat each other in the quest for power. Company X began the process of CSR development and implementation with the hiring of the CSR manager in 2004 and her creation of a policy on CSR that they published on their website. She was responsible for the development and implementation of all CSR efforts within the organization, with the exception of technical environmental issues. The CSR manager sat within Department 1 with two reporting levels above her. This position was characterized by little resource, authority or control over organizational practices (TRI10 and TRI3), but as the only position within the company tasked with CSR activities, the CSR manager retained large control over how CSR was shaped until mid-2006 when the institutional investor stepped in.

When the request was received from their key investor in 2006, it came through Department 2, which had operational responsibility for dealing with most external stakeholders. The company secretary indicated the company's response to this request would be four or five pages at the end of the 2006 annual report, and would be informed by a planning document on CSR to be written by a mid-level manager from within Department 2. This manager, in conjunction with his senior manager, worked with other senior managers who had operational responsibility for certain aspects of 'CSR', such as human resources, the airline, health and safety, communications and property maintenance, who each wrote a small review of what they were doing with regard to it. The Department 2 manager and his boss wrote the final 4–5 paged report. No definition of CSR had been put forward and it was the planning document created by Department 2 manager that informed the company's thinking of CSR for this report. Although aware of the CSR manager, she was not included in these activities until much later in the process as a result of lobbying at higher levels within the organization by her senior manager (TRO2).

A shared disinterest

Interestingly, one key area of similarity between the two camps was their disinterest in CSR. Neither the CSR manager nor the Department 2 manager was personally interested in CSR. The CSR manager was hired into the position having no prior experience in any related field and indicated she has 'learned everything she knows about CSR on the job and from the Internet'. She accepted the position because it sounded interesting and she had recently been made redundant (TRO1). She was uninterested in engaging with senior managers, having only met or had contact with less than half of them 18 months after starting in the CSR role, and had no plans to engage them in the near future. She spent most of her time working with industry bodies on CSR and sustainability issues and chose not to engage internally (TRO1). In fact neither she, nor her two line managers showed any particular interest in improving their existing CSR strategy or in pushing for it at higher levels within the organization (TRO1 and 2).

The Department 2 manager suggested that although he had some personal interest in CSR and ethics such as 'recycling and being trustworthy' (TRO11), he would move ahead with CSR in whatever way he was instructed to by the head of Department 2. He was not interested in CSR beyond how it was defined by his boss, who was well known to be very negative and dismissive of CSR (TRO1, 2 and TRI 14). Despite the fact that both of these individuals had indicated little personal interest in engaging further with CSR development and implementation within the organization, both individuals, and their departments, were intent on being in control of it and used power sources and influence tactics to further control the CSR agenda within their organization, as will be seen in the following sections. This behaviour suggests that these managers, while determined to control it, were focussed more on using CSR as a platform for improving their own power positions rather than on improving CSR activities within the organization and resulting benefits to stakeholders.

While some of these factors existed prior to the investor's demand for information on CSR, it was the need to respond that put the two departments and the two managers in particular, into direct and open conflict. Therefore, the writing of the 4–5 paged report (as the response to the investor) signified the first shifts in power: the need to retain strong ties to the investor and thus a key resource by signalling existing and future CSR efforts created a constraint within the operational environment but also gave those tasked with different elements of CSR the ability to improve their own position within the organization by reducing the uncertainty around CSR. Thus, the increase in individual power associated with reducing organizational uncertainty around CSR meant that the managers were keen to be in control of it and this brought them into direct conflict.

Struggle for control over CSR

Thus, two rival CSR 'camps' developed. Mainly, both camps used similar tactics but to different ends.

Camp 1 (CSR) made claims of legitimate and expert power (see Table III) based on the fact that they have the formal authority within the organization for the CSR function and know more about it than anyone else. They formally stated a triple bottom line philosophy (Elkington, 1997) that in practice focussed on industry collaboration and supply chain compliance, and used coalition/pressure, ingratiation/personal appeal to encourage others to support their claims for control over CSR.

Camp 2 (Department 2), made claims consistent with legitimate and expert sources of power but which stemmed from being responsible for key stakeholders and being experts in the practicalities associated with running a successful business. While they also formally stated a triple bottom line philosophy, in practice they focussed on CSR as a 'tick box' exercise where the minimum expectation was met, and also used the same three groups of influence tactics to encourage support of their position regarding CSR. Table III summarizes the key differences between the positions of Camp 1 and Camp 2.

Sources of power

Camp 1 claimed their legitimate power by virtue of being formally tasked within the organization to work on CSR. They had formal authority through the position of CSR manager who was dedicated to investigating and implementing CSR within the organization. This is the primary basis upon which they claimed legitimate power for all CSR activities within the organization. Camp 2's claim for legitimate power focussed on the fact that CSR was only of substantial interest to this one external stakeholder and they were formally tasked with maintaining relationships with outside stakeholders. Therefore, understanding, defining and responding to their stakeholders on CSR is a part of what their position required and therefore became part of their formal tasks. They were also given legitimate power by virtue of being tasked with organizing and writing the CSR pages for the annual report.

In terms of expert power, both camps claimed to better understand CSR and it's important elements, who the key stakeholders are and how to work with them for the benefit of Company X. Most of the disagreement and the lever for attempting to 'prove' expert power was based on how the camps defined CSR and its important elements. For instance, Camp 1 formally defined CSR according to the triple bottom line. However, when talking about the organization and the type of initiatives it should be involved in, this camp tended to talk more about issues outside the organization, in particular those issues being dealt with by industry associations, such as sustainability assessments or audit programmes for the supply chain in destinations. The focus was on working with industry bodies on issues that have general consensus at industry level. The other focus was on internal initiatives that were non-controversial, such as a recycling policies and energy efficiency practices, such as low-energy light bulbs. Both internal initiatives had been underway for over 12 months prior to the first field visit and were still in development at the end of field work. Very little time was spent discussing the internal environment and working with others inside the business to improve the visibility, participation and action on CSR strategy and initiatives.

Camp 1 therefore believed their expert power came from their work with competitors on CSR issues, from attending industry led conferences, and from having written the CSR policy. Camp 1 felt that Camp 2 should *not* be in control of CSR because '[Camp 2 manager] knows nothing about CSR and doesn't care about it. He will just do what he's told and that's it, he won't do it in the right way' (TRO1).

Camp 2, however, claimed an error in thinking on the part of Camp 1 around governance, and as such, laid its own claim of expert knowledge. The manager from Camp 2 indicated that '…most people who are involved in CSR have absolutely no interest in corporate governance. Now I see that as being a part of CSR, but [the CSR manager] is just not interested in governance' (TRI11). He also claimed that without considerations of governance, CSR would be just another 'touchy feely' (TRI3) or 'airy fairy' (TRI10) idea that would not be undertaken by Company X, which was supported in interviews with other senior managers. And while also formally defining CSR by its triple bottom line considerations, when asked about the specific initiatives the company was and should be undertaking, this camp tended to articulate the need to be 'realistic' about the appropriate balance between traditional business

TABLE III
Summary of positions for Camp 1 and Camp 2

Positions	Camp 1	Camp 2
Specific areas		
Reasons to improve position with the organization	Maintain job as CSR manager, gain control over how CSR conceptualized so as to accentuate its importance within the organization, formalize CSR function within the organization to improve internal networks, improve position of power and influence	Gain control over how CSR is conceptualized so as to minimize it within the organization and retain status quo, leading to improved internal networks, particularly with the boss and improve position of power and influence
Claims of legitimate power	Formally tasked with CSR responsibility	Formally tasked with responsibility for communication with external stakeholders, and these are the stakeholders with concern over CSR
Claims of expert power	More accurate understanding of CSR	More appropriate business understanding of CSR
Definition of CSR	*Formal*: being responsible for social, environmental and economic impacts *Informal*: involvement with industry groups to focus on improving CSR practice within supply chain (destination communities), focus on issues external to the organization except recycling within the office	*Formal*: taking social, environmental and economic considerations into account while ensuring effective corporate governance and realistic assessment of the balance between traditional business goals and non-financial responsibilities *Informal*: a tick-box exercise for external stakeholders which does not over commit the company in the future and shows the company in the most positive light
Most common tactics employed	*Coalition/pressure*: support of boss (senior manager and head of department), CSR will fail if left to Camp 2 because no support or ability to attract resources, encourage support of other senior managers based on who already belongs in the camp, traditional business perspective result in negative consequences for CSR and the company *Ingratiation/personal appeal*: used to encourage people to agree when they were suspected of not agreeing, get external CSR 'expert' to agree with CSR perspective *Ethical person*: I'm a more ethical person and therefore should be in charge of CSR	*Coalition/pressure*: support of boss (senior manager and head of department), CSR will fail if left to Camp 1 because no support or ability to attract resources, encourage support of other senior managers based on who already belongs in the camp, wider stakeholder perspective result in negative consequences for CSR and the company, Department 2 is more powerful and will be awarded control of CSR anyway *Ingratiation/personal appeal*: used to get external CSR 'expert' to agree with CSR perspective *Ethical person*: I'm a more ethical person and therefore should be in charge of CSR

concerns and CSR issues. They also emphasized the need to use external communications that put the company in the most positive light possible, without committing or obliging the company to any future actions, or put it at reputational or legal risk.

> TRI11: so, my aim is to get a piece of work that's honest, that's open, that doesn't stretch the truth, that doesn't on the other side that doesn't commit the business uh unfairly, or tie its hands in the future … because we don't see it as being particularly relevant to staff, or customers, largely uh a few external bodies, investors who want to tick the box and for institutional uh investor bodies.

CSR within this camp was defined as meeting the minimum to comply with ethical standards, as 'a tick-box exercise'.

Therefore, both camps claimed that they should control CSR within the organization because they were responsible for the important tasks surrounding CSR development and implementation, and had the appropriate expert knowledge to make it a success within the organization. Thus, each camp argued that it was better suited to reduce the uncertainty of CSR.

But which arguments were most persuasive with other senior managers? Most found the legitimate power associated with the CSR manager post to be more persuasive than the Department 2 manager being tasked with the 4–5 paged report. When discussing where the CSR function should be held within the organization, 3 of the 12 senior managers believed the CSR function should remain where it was, with the CSR manager. Two further senior managers indicated that CSR responsibility should stay within Department 1, but should be held at a senior management level. Therefore, 5 of the 12 managers indicated CSR should remain within Department 1 and therefore continue to have functional control over it. Only three managers indicated that CSR should be moved to Department 2 and one manager indicated it should *not* be in Department 2 due to the implications it would have for the nature of CSR within the organization. Thus, legitimate power was a persuasive argument for Camp 1 to retain control over CSR.

Camp 2 however, was not only better aligned with the key resources of the organization (and thus a more powerful department), but also defined CSR more in line with the traditional business concerns. By defining CSR as a compliance activity requiring few additional resources and minimal effort, and by demonstrating their expert knowledge on managing traditional business concerns, Camp 2 removed the majority of uncertainty surrounding CSR within the organization. Many senior managers were more in support of this definition of CSR and were happy for Camp 2 to control the response to the institutional investor. Camp 2's efforts made CSR a less significant issue that was manageable with the existing skills and competencies held by Camp 2. While this allowed them to maintain control over the 4–5 paged CSR report, it is unclear whether their 'expert' status would have allowed them to take further control of other CSR activities in the long-term.

Clearly, the legitimate power source for Camp 1 and the expert power source for Camp 2 were quite strong at the senior level within the organization; however, the strength of arguments for both camps meant that a determination over control of CSR was difficult. The conflict was also allowed to continue because little time and attention had been given to CSR issues at the senior management level. In the previous 3 years, it had never been on the agenda or debated at a senior management meeting (TRI8), nor was there any historical mention of it (TRI10). Also, the senior manager in charge of Department 1 was believed to be uninterested in promoting CSR at senior management level.

> TRI10: I think [CSR manager]'s battling on her own at the moment, its actually quite difficult for her in her position uhm to network and influence the company … it should be [senior manager for Department 1] who's taking what she has done and is doing and her ideas and politicking and influencing for her at a senior level, increasing that sort of visibility uhm and then you'll find that it becomes much more of an issue there…but its all its all about managing influence, you know she's doing an awful lot of work around herself and she's got a lot of people interested in what she does including myself. Uhm but unless she starts to say to [senior manager for Department 1] what are you doing about this for me, right, and [senior manager for Department 1] is passionate about doing something about it … and I don't see the passion there at the senior level for this other than it's a pain in the butt'

Therefore, the lack of passion at senior management level in combination with the lack of direction from the company executive (i.e. no company definition of CSR or formal authority for CSR at the board level, etc.) exacerbated the organizational uncertainty surrounding CSR and thus the conflict between those seeking organizational rewards for reducing this uncertainty. While the power bases to which these two camps referred were somewhat successful in swaying senior management opinion, no camp was identified as the clear 'winner'. As such both groups continued to pursue their positions by further trying to identify themselves with CSR and convince others within the organization that they should have control over CSR on the basis of their legitimate role within the organization and superior expert knowledge.

Tactics for changing individual power

While the two camps were referring to legitimate and expert power sources in the fight for control over CSR, the individuals used a multitude of influence tactics to improve their own power within the organization. Both the CSR and Department 2 manager used similar tactics to influence the perception of others within the organization to help improve their own position of power. The most common tactics observed were the use of coalition in conjunction with pressure. Both managers referred back to their boss as supporting their current CSR activities, and suggested that if CSR was implemented differently to what their camp indicated was appropriate, it would fail. The reasons given for this imminent failure tended to be around lack of support within the company for those 'types' of CSR initiatives and difficulty accessing scarce company resources. In many cases, both managers tried to disguise their use of coalition and pressure behind rational arguments. For instance, when meeting with individual senior mangers to discuss their contributions to the CSR report, both the CSR and the Department 2 manager (both present at all meetings) would continually refer back to what their boss and others at higher levels within the organization had said to them about CSR and the report. These comments were then used to encourage agreement from the senior manager in the meeting. If agreement was not forthcoming, then the managers would comment that if CSR was not approached either from a wider stakeholder perspective (Camp 1) or more traditional business perspective (Camp 2), CSR would be unlikely to succeed, thus resulting in negative consequences for the business. Some examples of these comments include 'well if you don't know what your suppliers are doing, someone will catch you out' (TRO1) and 'if we can't link CSR back to business profitability we may as not do it because it will be a waste of time' (TRO11).

The other pair of tactics that was observed, although less often, was ingratiation and personal appeal. This combination of tactics was observed more often with the CSR manager, and they were used when there was concern over whether the targeted individual might say no to her request. These two tactics were often used on the researcher to try and pull her in line with either the CSR or Department 2 manager's view of CSR. It is believed that this was done so as to suggest that the external 'expert' was fully within one camp, adding further support to their interpretation of CSR. Rational persuasion, consultation and legitimating were used but infrequently. Neither inspirational appeal nor exchange was observed during field visits.

Outside of the tactics identified by Yukl and Tracey (1992), both managers indicated that the other managers involved in CSR (including the department heads) were not as 'ethical' as they were and therefore, by virtue of their better ethics should be in control of CSR. For instance, the CSR manager indicated on many separate occasions that the Department 2's manager 'did not care about CSR' and was 'unethical because he would do whatever his unethical boss asked of him' (TRO1) with the implication that somehow his poor personal ethics (according to the CSR manager) meant that he would agree with whatever his boss said, regardless of what that boss' opinion was. Meanwhile, the Department 2 manager dedicated over 10 min of a 1 h interview to describe his beliefs about morality, showing himself to be a highly moral person.

> TRI11: uhm because we are moral beings, and our development as human beings uhm will get no where if you're not moral, I mean, you know if if I'm if I say there is no moral (code), businesses are not moral institutions, they have no moral fibre … I wouldn't say that to my wife, to my children you know so why should I be you know like uhm why should I not care about morals in the business when I care about them with my friends. I care about them if my partner is cheating on me, or my children are lying to me or stealing so its basically just saying look ... I'm not gonna lie to my friends and I'm not going to lie to my suppliers or my customers and honesty is a big part of it, honesty uhm you know I mean a lot of this information, but a a lot of a persons information, is due to them being open and honest to receiving information uhm if if you know a person can say oh you know I never knew about that but if they don't make any efforts to know about it or if they have blocked it in the past or they've put up barriers, then they're not gonna know

This quote clearly shows TRI11 linking his beliefs about 'good personal ethics' to 'good organizational ethics', demonstrating his belief in the overlap between them, and used this to demonstrate his appropriateness for being in control of CSR. He does this by describing how part of being a moral person includes being open to receiving new information about CSR, which was a subtle comparison with the CSR manager who he had indicated previously was not interested in learning more about CSR. He was thus saying that he was more moral because he was open to a broader understanding of CSR.

The fact that both of these managers used an 'ethical person' tactic, indicates that both ascribed to the belief described in some of the literature that CSR is fundamentally 'good' or 'right' (e.g. Aguilera et al., 2007), and therefore to be responsible for CSR within the organization, they also must have (or be seen to have) an appropriate matching ethic. This tactic was used as often as coalition/pressure, but was also quite subtle. The use of this tactic made the struggle for CSR more personal, and thus intensified it.

Taken as a whole, both managers were employing the same type of argument to win power from the other in control of CSR: first the other manager's understanding of CSR is flawed, second that they have more support within the organization, third that their department head is more powerful and fourth that they are the more ethical individual and therefore will be awarded full control over CSR activities.

CSR ignored in the struggle over who controls it

Meanwhile, in the course of struggling for control over CSR activities, the development and implementation of CSR strategy was virtually ignored. The CSR manager was focussed on maintaining her job and by claiming CSR as a complex field of inquiry thus requiring expert knowledge, she was trying to maintain the perks of going to different countries to meet with industry bodies on CSR. The Department 2 manager wanted to gain control over CSR to help minimize it and thus gain the praise of his boss.

During the 11 months I was in contact with the company, virtually no forward movement had been made on CSR within the organization: the Department 2 manager finished the four pages for the annual report to appease the investor, and the CSR manager attended three separate industry events, all focussed on refining the industry supplier assessment criteria, while continuing to work on both the recycling policy and energy efficiency initiative for the two head office sites. Clearly, the desire to improve their own personal power within the organization was significantly strong to keep both managers (and their respective departments) involved in the fight over control of CSR. However, this very focus on the power struggle became an impediment to the development and implementation of CSR within the organization.

The paradox of power in CSR

In recognizing the rewards associated with controlling CSR, and in their shared disinterest in pursing a CSR agenda, both camps focussed on the conflict and not on the activities surrounding it. Thus, while they both used power sources and influence tactics to reduce the perception of uncertainty around CSR within the organization and with the investor, they were not in fact using any resources to improve actual CSR engagement. In other words, as it became more powerful, work on CSR planning and initiatives virtually ceased while actors struggled to position themselves more favourably within the organization based on the new opportunities presented by CSR. And, there is the paradox – as CSR becomes more powerful, the rewards that this power creates within organizations may in fact subvert efforts to move CSR forward, and therefore subvert the benefits to stakeholders that this power is assumed to provide.

CSR is therefore distinct in that it is highly susceptible to the opportunistic behaviour of actors and subversion of resulting societal benefits due to the high uncertainty that surrounds it. As resource dependence theory suggests, organizations employ different strategies and tactics to reduce uncertainty and constraint within their environments. This is done by accessing key resources (such as individuals or legitimacy) that help to absorb the constraint, providing the organization with increased discretion and control over its activities (e.g. Casciaro and Piskorski, 2005; Hillman et al., 2000). However, the complexity and uncertainty surrounding a vast range of CSR issues means that identifying the appropriate resources to 'absorb' CSR is difficult. Few individuals have the knowledge and networks to effectively create the interdependencies between the organization and external groups around pertinent CSR issues. They therefore have limited expertise and experience, but also fewer channels for communication, aids in obtaining support or external credibility (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978/2003) to deal with these external CSR factors. This in tandem with the complexity of CSR means that it is quite easy for individuals with little expertise and/or interest to manipulate and control CSR activities without the organization realizing the consequences until much later in the process. Therefore, CSR acts as a constraint at the organizational level, compelling organizations to engage in it due to changes in their operating environment, but as an opportunity at the individual level, where actors (some with little personal interest) may use CSR as a tool for improving their own position.

Thus, constraint absorption (Casciaro and Piskorski, 2005) is not achieved in the long-term as the constraints imposed by CSR still exist, but the opportunistic behaviour of actors within the organization ignore or do not employ their resources in responding to these constraints, putting the organization at further risk. Opportunities for the business (Bloodgood and Morrow, 2003) resulting from CSR are also virtually ignored, reducing the likelihood that CSR will be seen as having traditional (and non-traditional) business benefits, and therefore less likely to have support at senior levels within the organization. Looking back to the three more common methods of reducing uncertainty, creating interdependencies, mergers and acquisitions and employing individuals with key resources, we see that these methods are problematic with regard to CSR. Since merging or acquiring new 'CSR focussed' companies is a very expensive option and is not guaranteed to provide access to key resources in such a complex area (i.e. as was the case with L'Oreal's purchase of the Body Shop), and the creation of interdependencies relies heavily on individual actors to identify and create these relationships, the problems created by opportunistic behaviour are significant. And, this behaviour is exacerbated by the fact that CSR does not have its own natural place within business due to the fact that it cuts across all business functions. Without this natural placement, with high levels of uncertainty due to its complexity, and with the potential to attract opportunistically motivated individuals due to the opportunities CSR creates at an individual level, it is susceptible to perversion or corruption from those who seek to control it. Also, the struggle for control is heightened due to the fact that personal ethics of CSR professionals are thought to be relevant to their ability to be in control of CSR, and are thus used to personalize and therefore intensify the struggle, whether intentional or not.

Therefore, CSR must be carefully managed to ensure that its formation within the organization reflects an understanding of the resources needed to engage effectively across a range of issues. For instance, by ensuring senior management responsibility for CSR, authority and access given to the person functionally responsible for CSR, and appropriate hiring competencies used to fill the CSR role, it is possible to significantly limit the potential for CSR to be used as a tool for personal gain within organizations.

Conclusion

This article suggests that there is a paradox of power in CSR. The positive benefits associated with increased power of CSR that are assumed by the literature may in fact not exist in some circumstances. In fact, an increase in the power of CSR may be an impediment to the effective development and implementation of it in some organizations. Thus, this increase in power may in fact lead to opportunistic behaviour, which may result in the subversion of CSR and its benefits for stakeholders. CSR may be particularly susceptible to this type of behaviour due to the high degree of uncertainty surrounding it, and therefore the difficulty in identifying appropriate resources for responding to it. This struggle is intensified due to the personalization of the struggle as individual ethics become a part of the debate.

This article adds to the CSR literature in four distinct ways: 1, by illustrating how CSR can provide opportunities for individual actors to improve their own positions within an organization; 2, in illustrating that those fighting for power often do so at the expense of CSR development and implementation efforts; 3, the increasing power of CSR may be an impediment in that it increasingly attracts individuals who are more interested in increasing their own power rather than developing and implementing effective CSR strategy and 4, that companies must be aware of and mitigate potential conflicts resulting from a competition for power surrounding control of CSR.

This article has demonstrated the significant influence that power can have over CSR development and implementation, highlighting the paradoxical power of CSR and thus the need for further research into the link between CSR, power and implementation.

Notes

[1] For the purpose of this article, no conceptual or operational definition of CSR has been provided because the most appropriate definition of CSR within this case is the case company's definition which is highlighted in later sections of this article.

[2] This information was collected during the course of interviews with senior and mid-management-level employees and informal conversations with a range of management over the course of the case research.

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