Introduction
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REASONS FOR RESEARCH

We all have some form of intellectual curiosity which causes us to seek to find out things. In our world this is known as research and for academics has become an essential part of our career development and even of our promotion. So we undertake research both because we want to and because we need to; naturally we research topics which are of interest or concern to us and we want our research to be as strong as possible. So the design of a research project is an essential part of undertaking research, as is choosing appropriate methods for investigation and analysis.

The methods of research are probably fairly well known and are mostly common to all research in the business and management areas as well as to all research in social sciences. Some things are, however, more suited to research in the area of corporate social responsibility (CSR), and we focus in this book upon these and ways to make best use of available methods.

This leads to the perennial problem of defining what we mean when we talk about CSR. People have spent a long time defining what this is and there are probably as many definitions as there are researchers. Some too have tried to make a clear distinction between CSR and corporate responsibility or corporate governance or sustainability. Some have focused on the history of such research and suggested changes over time. Some have also seized upon the word corporate to assume that this is a field which only considers corporations rather than other forms of organisation. Here, we have taken the opposite view and deliberately avoided defining the field. Instead we will simply state that if you think your research is about CSR – or indeed any of the other terms – then it is and the contents of this book are relevant to you. This may seem a grandiose claim, but we expect to justify it through the course of the book.

As in many other spheres of human endeavour, research provides a key basis for developing knowledge. In the physical sciences, we have long relied on and used research as a way of helping to define and refine knowledge in their subject areas. It is only comparatively recently that the social scientist has begun to use research for the same purpose. Certainly, research in business and management is one of the newest fields of research – with CSR being a new area within this field. In this introductory chapter we examine the background to, and the development of, business and management research, tracing the different approaches to such research, the purposes of the research and some of the particular problems and issues to which research in this area gives rise before moving on to consider the particular aspects of research into CSR and its allied topics. In the process we shall also examine the main traditions and approaches to conducting research in general including what is referred to as the different 'philosophies' of research.

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THEORETICAL ANTECEDENTS TO RESEARCH: EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND ONTOLOGICAL ORIENTATIONS

Business and management research raises both theoretical and practical problems, which are not encountered in research into the physical sciences and even the social sciences. Contemporary research in this area contains certain theoretical strands and antecedents that serve to shape and inform how such research is conducted. Before we look at the different approaches to contemporary research, we need to consider what some of these key theoretical antecedents to management research practice are, and in particular, the different approaches to theory development and testing in the research process. We start by examining two of the earliest approaches which centre primarily on the development of knowledge and theory but which, in turn, have helped shape approaches to research. These two early approaches are the epistemological and ontological schools of thought. Both of these schools of thought date back to the Greek philosophers.

The Epistemological Orientation

Gilbert (1993) suggests that in this approach to developing knowledge and theories, theories are built on the basis of gaining knowledge of the world. An epistemological approach organises and explains knowledge in the form of theories. For example, an epistemological approach to a theory of leadership might be based on exploring what we can observe about effective leadership in the real world. By developing our knowledge of effective leadership in this way we might observe that effective leadership seems to be associated with the possession of certain traits or characteristics on the part of the leader. This knowledge can then be used to form theories of leadership based on the possession of certain traits and their relationship to effective leadership. As we shall see later in this chapter and in several of the chapters that follow, much research and theory building in the social sciences uses the epistemological approach of building knowledge. Admittedly, there are many critics of the limitations of the epistemological approach to developing knowledge (Feyerabend 1975, Cook and Campbell 1979). As Easterby-Smith et al. (2002) suggest, however, this orientation to building theories and knowledge can, and does, result in several approaches or methodologies to the generation of such knowledge. This means that there is little doubt that the epistemological school of thought has resulted in a powerful and enduring legacy when it comes to the development of theory and the practice of business and management research.

The Ontological Orientation

This approach to the development of theories is based on suggestions about the 'nature of phenomena' (Gilbert 1993). For example, an ontological approach to developing theories of leadership would consist of developing views on, for example, the nature of effective leadership with or without reference or an attempt to relate these views to a knowledge base. In fact, this represents a very simplified description of what is in fact a variety of ontological approaches in the physical and social sciences. For example, we have the so-called 'critical realism' ontology such as that of, say, Bhaskar (1989) compared to, say, the 'interpretative' ontological approach suggested by Sayer (2000). For our purposes at this

stage and as you will probably recognise, we have now identified the main distinguishing difference between epistemological and ontological orientations. Specifically, that respectively they represent an empirical versus a conceptual approach to theory building and research and as such are indeed different orientations. As already mentioned, we shall see in some of our methodologies and approaches to management research that both epistemological and ontological orientations survive to influence and shape the nature of contemporary management research.

DEDUCTIVE VERSUS INDUCTIVE RESEARCH

From our two earliest schools of thought regarding theory development and knowledge building have developed two equally important, but also in their own ways equally contrasting, alternative schools of thought with regard to the methodology of theory and knowledge building – namely deductive versus inductive research methods. In fact, these methods of research derive from two alternative methods of thinking (Graziano and Raulin 2004). The differences between these alternative approaches to research are explained below.

Deductive Research

Deductive research develops theories or hypotheses and then tests out these theories or hypotheses through empirical observation. It is essentially a set of techniques for applying theories in the real world in order to test and assess their validity. Essentially the process of deductive research is as Saunders et al. point out 'the development of a theory that is subjected to a rigorous test' (2003, 2005 p. 124). Deductive research is the most widely used research approach in the natural sciences but in our area deductive and inductive research approaches are probably equally used. The process of deductive research can be described as shown in Figure I.1.
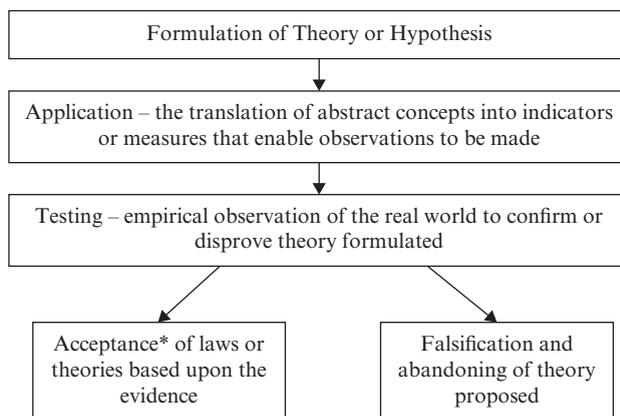
Note: * Acceptance means that such laws are not yet falsified rather than correct.

Figure I.1   The process of deduction

Others, such as Robson (2002), add another stage to this process namely that of modifying the theory in the light of findings, but the key steps in deductive research are now explained.

Theory/hypothesis formulation
The first step in deductive research is the generation of theories or hypotheses. These can be generated in a number of ways: for example, the researcher might simply have an idea based on, say, previous experience which he/she wants to test out or, for example, the theory or hypothesis to be tested might stem from a literature search bringing together the ideas of others. Yet other sources of theories or hypotheses are those that stem from the desire to work out a solution to a specific problem. You will appreciate that this source of theories or hypotheses is particularly important and relevant in the context of this book as many projects start with a specific set of problems or issues that the research is designed to address ultimately with a view to making recommendations to resolving the problem or issues. The deductive research method, therefore, is particularly appropriate and relevant to this type of research. Because of this, much deductive research can be considered as falling into the category of what is often referred to as applied research. We shall be considering the nature and process of such research in more detail in the subsequent chapters. In addition, we shall be considering the generation of theories and hypotheses for testing in later chapters when research design is considered in more detail.

Application
Having formulated theories or hypotheses, the next stage in the deductive research process is to operationalise these. Essentially, this is the process whereby the concepts in our theories or hypotheses are defined in such a way that they can be measured through empirical observation. As Burns (2000) points out, operational definition is necessary to eliminate confusion in meaning and communication. This means, for example, ensuring that we have defined precisely what is to be measured or observed and how this measurement or observation will be carried out. For example, if our hypothesis is along the lines that, say, 'personality traits' are associated with 'effective leadership', then we need to ensure that we have defined and can measure 'personality traits' and what constitutes 'effective leadership'. It is important to stress that the process of operationalising theories or hypotheses can be difficult as we are often dealing with abstract concepts which, of themselves, are difficult to measure. These, and other aspects of operationalising theories or hypotheses, are considered in more detail in later chapters.

Empirical observation – data collection
This stage in the process of deductive research is concerned with the process of measurement and observation such that we can eventually, in the next stage of the process, decide whether our theory or hypotheses can be supported or rejected. This stage of the deductive research process involves identifying and deciding between alternative techniques and approaches for measuring our operationalised concepts. It also includes the selection and design of the research methodologies to be used including, for example, any sampling plan, research instruments, and methods of analysing and interpreting empirical observations and measurements. In many ways, this stage of the deductive research process encompasses much of the activities that will be required to be planned and undertaken

in conducting the research and as such several of the chapters that follow are essentially concerned with the design and application of this stage.

Once we have completed this stage in the deductive process then we can move to the final stage of deciding the extent to which our theory or hypothesis has been falsified and the extent to which parts, if any, of our theory or hypotheses remains as not yet falsified. We refer to this as the falsification and discarding stage.

Falsification and discarding theory

At first, it may seem strange that the aim of the deductive process is to assess the extent to which a theory or hypothesis can be falsified and hence should be discarded. Surely, one might think, the process should be aimed at proving rather than refuting our hypotheses or theories. As you will appreciate, the idea that the outcome should be falsification and discarding of theories and hypotheses stems from the ideas of Karl Popper (1967) in what is often referred to as his maxim of falsification. Simply stated, this maxim is based on the premise that the researcher should aim to refute rather than verify their theories or hypotheses. He argued that no theory can ever be proven but only ever falsified – just as the sighting of one black swan would disprove the theory that all swans are white, whereas discovering millions of white swans over centuries would never prove the theory which would be disproved by a single example. To the extent that the empirical observations made in the previous step in the process of deductive research do not support our theory or hypothesis, then these observations can be said to falsify and may lead us to discard all or part of our theory or hypothesis. This is the bottom right-hand box in Figure I.1. That part of our theory or hypothesis which is not falsified through our observations and measurements of the empirical world does not prove our theory as such but rather allows those parts to remain as yet unfalsified theories or hypotheses. This is the bottom left-hand box in Figure I.1. Clearly, the falsification approach to testing of theory and hypotheses leads to possibly very different approaches to research design, methodology, and techniques of testing theories and hypotheses than where we are using a verification approach. For example, how we state hypotheses or theories for testing is very different with a falsification as opposed to a verification approach. Again, we shall see this when we discuss hypothesis setting and testing in later chapters.

These, then, are the main steps in the process of deductive research. It is a fact that this approach to research represents the main, and some would say, the only justifiable, method of research in the natural sciences. There are those who, in addition, suggest that this is the only truly 'scientific' approach to developing knowledge and therefore should also be the only approach that is used in the social sciences.

However, applying the deductive method in the social as opposed to the natural sciences is not without its problems. For example, measurement can be more problematical. Unlike the natural sciences, research is difficult to control and particularly the factors that can affect research outcomes, that is, the experimental method so widely used in the natural sciences is difficult. Again we shall consider some of these problems of the deductive methods of research and research techniques in later chapters but it is partly because of some of the problems and criticisms of the deductive approach to research that our second and alternative approach to research and research methods is almost exactly the reverse of deduction. This is of course known as inductive research.

Inductive Research

As has already been indicated, inductive research is essentially the opposite of the process found in deductive research. In this approach the researcher develops hypotheses and theories with a view to explaining empirical observations of the real world. These empirical observations can be based on many factors, even for example, they can simply be based on personal experience. Consider your own experiences in this respect. What have you observed best motivates you, or other people, in work organisations? Do you have any ideas on this? If so, you could develop your own explanations and theories about what you have observed through personal experience. Alternatively, theories might be developed to explain observed data and information, for example, the researcher might develop theories based on observed patterns of labour turnover. All sorts and types of information and data can be used to develop theories in inductive research. In fact, in the context of this book, when considering management research in general and CSR-based research in particular, the inductive research approach can be the more appropriate approach to research compared to the deductive method just outlined. Perhaps the greatest strength of inductive research is its flexibility. This research approach does not require the establishment of a-priori theories or hypotheses. On the contrary, we can build our theories based on our observations thereby allowing a problem or issue to be studied or approached in several possible different ways with alternative explanations of what is going on. It is particularly suited to the study of human behaviour, including of course behaviour in organisations. Inductive research also enables more flexibility in research design including aspects such as sample size and type of data.

It is apparent, therefore, that inductive research and investigation begins from description or observation and then moves towards explanation. This approach, then, is initially concerned with observations that then lead to the development of a hypothesis and theories in order to explain those particular observations. In this context, we should note that in many research projects the management researcher, and the consultant researcher in particular, might be required to investigate ideas that stem initially from the observation or more specifically the occurrence of practical and observable issues and problems. The researcher may then be required or called in to investigate these issues and problems in order to develop theories to first explain, and then perhaps solve, these issues and problems. As already stated, the inductive approach to conducting management research, therefore, can be particularly appropriate to research in the area of CSR. Indeed, we shall see when discussing some of the different approaches to, and techniques of, such research that some of the most powerful techniques of management research and consultancy use the inductive approach. The inductive approach is also better suited to the use and interpretation of qualitative data, whereas the deductive method, with its emphasis on measurement, often requires, and can only utilise, quantitative data. Given that such research and certainly management problems can often involve both qualitative and quantitative aspects, more often than not effective management research often requires a combination of inductive and deductive methods. We may, for example, begin a research project using inductive methods and approaches, by say, first observing and measuring a phenomenon or problem that we wish to explore. This in turn can lead us to develop theories that we can then test using the deductive methods and approach.

NOMOTHETIC VERSUS IDEOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

The contrast between inductive and deductive research methods has given rise to two alternative categories of research methods. Burrell and Morgan (1979) have referred to these alternatives as the nomothetic versus ideographic methodologies. In fact, these two methodologies are best thought of as the extremes of a continuum of research methods but as Burns (2000, p. 3) points out, each of these alternatives 'has profound implications for the way in which research is conducted'.

Nomothetic methods are most appropriate to the deductive approach to research in as much as they include the more highly structured research methodologies which can be replicated and controlled, and which focus on generating quantitative data with a view to explaining causal relationships. Perhaps the best examples of nomothetic research methodologies are those that are based on controlled laboratory experimentation. As such, they are obviously better suited to research in the natural sciences. Ideographic research methodologies, on the other hand, are much less structured and are focused more on the explanation and understanding of phenomena with much more emphasis on qualitative data. As such, the ideographic methods are better suited to the inductive research approach and in some ways are better suited to research in the social sciences including, of course, management research. Amongst the best examples of the ideographic research techniques are those of the previously referred to action research and the related research approach of ethnography, both of which are explained in more detail in later chapters.

Both nomothetic and ideographic methodologies can be used in our research, and again will often be used in combination. In addition, specific techniques of research within both methodologies often cut across and combine nomothetic and ideographic approaches. The characteristics of nomothetic and ideographic methods are considered in later chapters when we consider the selection and use of alternative research methodologies.

So far in this introductory chapter we have examined the main theoretical antecedents to the process of and practice of research in general in both the physical and social sciences – but particularly in the business and management area of the social sciences – including some of the main alternative research methodologies. It is important for us to understand these as they serve to shape and direct contemporary research practices including the practice of research in the area of CSR. As such, we have briefly explored some of the implications of these antecedents and major methodological approaches for the process of management research. Now, however, we need to focus more specifically on the nature and issues of management research in general and of CSR research in particular. We shall start the next part of this chapter, therefore, by discussing three main types of research in management, followed by an overview of the management research process. Then we move on to consider research in the CSR area specifically. Together, these will serve to set the framework for much of what follows in later chapters.

TYPES OF MANAGEMENT RESEARCH

Although there is overlap between them, it is possible to identify or categorise three different types of management research with regard to the primary focus or objective of the research.

Theory Building Research

First, there is that research which is primarily aimed at developing management theories, and by so doing, improving our understanding and knowledge of the management process. You will now recognise that this type of management research is essentially inductive in nature. For example, it seeks to develop theories based on, say, observations, experience, intuition and so on. Much academic research in management is of this nature.

Theory Testing Research

Secondly, there is that research which is primarily aimed at testing out theories of management. Again, as we have already seen, more often than not this testing involves the process of empirical observations and measurements. This makes us able to arrive at the decision as to whether or not to reject a hypothesis or theory; what parts of it can be rejected and thereby which part can remain as not yet falsified. Again, much academic research in management falls into this category.

Problem Centred/Practical Research

Our third type of research in management is that which is primarily aimed not at building or generating new theories, or adding to knowledge through the testing of theories or hypotheses. Rather, this type of research is primarily aimed at investigating a practical problem, question or issue in a specific organisation or management context with a view to resolving the problem and subsequently making recommendations for courses of action. The primary focus of such research, then, is not academic or knowledge building for its own sake, but rather is aimed at investigating and proposing solutions to real life management problems. This is not to say that this type of research does not potentially add to the body of theory and knowledge about management and indeed some of the most significant contributions to our knowledge and understanding in this area have stemmed from what was essentially problem centred consultancy type research. The so-called 'Hawthorne Experiments' at the General Electric Company, USA, are good examples (these experiments are explained in fuller detail in Chapter 17). Having said this, for the most part, in the past with consultancy type research any contributions to theory or knowledge building along the way have been more of a bonus than a primary aim. It is contended here, however, that this is changing. Increasingly, it is being recognised that consultancy type research, even if it is still primarily problem/application centred, can at the same time be used for theory building and theory testing and hence for knowledge building. As already mentioned, there are plenty of examples of consultancy type research making substantial contributions in this way. In this book, we continue this tradition, but in so doing, strive to bring even closer together and combine the applied consultancy type research approach with more academic type research that is so often the prime focus of most undergraduate and graduate projects and dissertations. In so doing, it is important to emphasise that this means that a variety of research methods and approaches may need to be combined for a particular project according to the circumstances. This is what Gill and Johnson (1997) refer to as 'methodological pluralism' by which they mean that there

is no one best research method or approach, but rather 'many methods contingent on the issue being studied'.

The reason for stressing this increased emphasis on combining the different research approaches is because almost every user of this book will be actually undertaking a research project or dissertation as part of their academic working environment. Clearly there are different types of management research according to nature, purpose and context. However, it is useful to describe in broad terms the overall CSR-based management research process which can now be introduced.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE CSR-BASED MANAGEMENT RESEARCH PROCESS

As you will appreciate, the term management research encompasses a wide variety of approaches and types but certainly includes CSR research in all its various forms. It is perhaps, therefore, problematical to propose an outline or model of the process of management research that fits or reflects all these possible approaches and types. However, we share the view of Gill and Johnson (op. cit.), who suggest that despite the potential problems of proposing an overview of the research sequence, such an overview, although admittedly idealised, serves to help understand and appreciate the research process, including where the actual research process detracts from this idealised version. Using a framework similar to that proposed by Howard and Sharp (1983), however, we can identify that the stages in the research sequence are as follows:

- Identification of a general topic or field of research
- Selection within this field of specific research topic
- Deciding upon research methodology to be adopted
- Formulation of research plan
- Data collection
- Analysis of data collected
- Interpretation of the analysis within the context of the research topic
- Presentation of findings.

Probably we all recognise, but certainly it is worth emphasising, that rarely, if ever, is the process of research as smooth as suggested in the sequence above. More often, the process is messy and frustrating with the stages overlapping and often having to be revisited in an iterative manner as the research progresses. All too often there are cases when the research process does not progress at all with what initially appeared to be 'exciting' and 'feasible' research projects but has become problematic. For a variety of reasons, many turn out to be 'non-starters'.

Conducting any type of research project can be messy and frustrating. Some of these problems and issues are common to all types of social research. For example, unlike the natural sciences, in social science research, we have the problem of trying to apply some of the processes and methodologies in settings or situations which are difficult and sometimes impossible to control. Unlike the physicist or chemist, the social sciences researcher does not have the benefit of a 'laboratory' in which to conduct his/her research. Similarly,

quantification and hence statistical analysis and verification can be more problematical in social sciences research. Additionally, within this field research there are particular problems and issues which are related to the particular types or methodologies which we tend to employ. For example, methodologies such as action research or ethnography give rise to certain special issues and problems only associated with these particular methodologies. These are of course covered in subsequent chapters.

Conducting CSR research can give rise to ethical problems: ethical issues in research encompass a set of mores and values for conducting and using research and the researcher must be careful not to violate these. The conduct of research therefore must conform to a set of ethical codes or values. A problem here, however, is as Wells (1994) points out that what is considered ethical – and therefore unethical – behaviour can vary from situation to situation; from researcher to researcher; and from culture to culture. This is something which will be returned to in a later chapter but it is important here to recognise the particular problems from international research. It is also important to recognise that all universities and most professional and funding bodies all have codes of conduct which must be adhered to. This can be problematic if your collaborator is from another institution in another country with different expectations. It is important, therefore, that ethical issues are a part of your research plan.

A perennial problem to researchers is that of access. As you will understand, access encompasses initial permission to enter an organisation, and this is what Gummesson (2000) refers to as 'physical access'. Obviously, without such permission, much research is virtually impossible. In addition to this initial access/permission we also have the issue of access to information and people as part of the research design. For example, the researcher and organisation have to consider and agree what information the researcher will have access to, and on what basis, and who the researcher will be allowed access to and what parts of the organisation the researcher can seek information from as part of the research. This of course raises the issue of confidentiality – another important issue which will be returned to. Obviously, access needs to be negotiated and agreed between researcher and the researched, but overall should be such as to ensure that the research objectives can be met. In practice, limitations or problems in access often result in modifications to initial research objectives and programmes.

Where the research involves, or cuts across, different cultures, such as when the research encompasses, say, different geographical divisions in a multinational organisation, there can be particular problems of methodology and interpretation. Even where the research is confined to one country, internal organisational culture too can be an issue in planning and conducting management consultancy based research projects. Because this type of research is conducted directly within an organisational environment the researcher must be careful to ensure that, for example, the research approach, techniques of data collection and so on are appropriate to organisational systems and procedures.

Much CSR research can be problematic because a number of stakeholders have an interest and possibly influence in the research. The most obvious stakeholder with an interest in the research, or certainly the research results and recommendations, is of course the organisation in which the research is being conducted. Clearly, the organisation may seek to influence the nature of the research, how it is conducted, the objectives and so on.[1] In addition, where the research is also the basis for a thesis there are also academic stakeholders – just as there increasingly is when we are driven to publish our findings in

particular outlets. These stakeholders also have an interest in how research is conducted and the objectives and so on. This stakeholder group may have a fundamentally different perspective on these matters and will certainly often have a different set of criteria for judging how effective the research has been. This means that the researcher must often resolve any potential conflicts which stem from trying to meet potentially conflicting aims of different parties. In some cases, this may result in two different reports being produced, one for the organisation and its management, and one for the academic environment.

Conducting Research

In order to understand both the process and nature of our CSR research it is necessary to understand some of the theoretical antecedents to research in general. The researcher naturally needs to appreciate some of the major alternative schools of thought or models of research. Of particular relevance and importance in this context are the epistemological versus ontological orientations in research, the nature and differences between deductive and inductive research, and the comparison between nomothetic and ideographic research approaches. CSR research encompasses several different types and forms of research which can primarily be distinguished with regard to the objectives or purpose, and hence the outcomes of the research activities. Such research, therefore, encompasses both theoretical and applied research.

Having considered business and management research generally, as a subset of social science, we need to turn our attention to CSR research in all its various forms. After all this book is a handbook of research methods in this area! One way to start is to consider what has been published in this area. Many journals have published articles on CSR or on some aspect of this field but the number of journals dedicated to this area are limited. Some new ones are starting as this book is published but very few have any extensive pedigree. One exception which is well established is *Social Responsibility Journal*, published by Emerald Group. This journal is not just concerned with this field of research but is also the official journal of the Social Responsibility Research Network. Its activities are therefore worthy of consideration.

Perspectives from the Social Responsibility Research Network

The origin of the Social Responsibility Research Network can be traced to 2003 (Seifi and Crowther 2012) and was an outcome of an event organised by Professor David Crowther and hosted at London Metropolitan University. This international event attracted 150 participants from around the world and raised many important issues ranging from business ethics and social reporting to implications for biodiversity and sustainable construction, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the backgrounds and expertise of the participants. The success of the event led to a variety of international collaborative projects and to a number of publications.

The Network[2] itself was formed during 2004 and has become an established organisation which currently has over 850 members located all over the world. One of the prime purposes of the Network is to bring together people interested in the various aspects of social responsibility and to facilitate collaborative research. We believe that discussion and debate amongst interested people from different backgrounds and different parts of

the world – and who very often work alone in their own location – will enrich the debate and lead towards developments in our understanding of some of the important issues facing the world today. Membership is open to anyone who has a perspective on any aspect of this important issue. This includes academics, researchers, business people, non-governmental organisation managers, government officials and politicians, consultants and scholars – and all groups are represented within the membership.

As a consequence of the focus upon the facilitation of a collaborative research agenda the prime focus of the Network has been upon both its annual conference – held at a different location around the world each year – and its publishing. Thus the official journal of the Network is *Social Responsibility Journal*, founded as an academic journal to publish work by members and others in this important and growing area. The journal is now in its fourteenth year and continues to grow in strength and reputation. The Network also publishes books within the series Developments in Corporate Governance and Responsibility, which currently publishes two books per year.

This background information is essential to explain the rationale for this analysis of the current state of research in the area of social responsibility and to look at some areas which are currently under-researched. In doing this we intend to explore the current agenda of research and to propose its development into new areas.

It is important at the outset of this analysis to state what we mean by the social responsibility research. This is interpreted in its broadest sense as being any aspect of the broad social responsibility agenda and covers the whole range of social, environmental, cultural and philanthropic aspects of corporate and organisational behaviour. It also extends into the very important areas of sustainability and sustainable development. Another significant area which falls within our definition is that of governance, which we regard as an integral aspect of social responsibility. It can be seen, therefore, that we adopt a very wide definition of social responsibility and this is reflected in the topics which have been presented at our conferences and published in our various journals and books. Naturally, we recognise that the topics being investigated have changed in the decade during which we have been in existence and we both welcome this and note it as an indication of the development and maturing of the field of social responsibility. We are only concerned with present and future lines of research and we have therefore conducted our analysis on the most recent papers in the journal (including those accepted but not yet published) and the most recent two conferences. We feel that this is sufficient to give an understanding of the topics which are of current concern as far as social responsibility research is concerned. From this some interesting findings are revealed.

There are a number of issues which are of current concern to businesses and to people (Crowther and Seifi 2011) and which comprise a current and future agenda for research. Broadly speaking they can be considered to be issues concerning the environment, human rights protection and governance. We can examine each in turn.

Environmental Issues

The changes to the climate around the world is apparent to most people and is being manifest in such extreme weather as excessive rain or snow, droughts, heatwaves and hurricanes which have been affecting many parts of the world. Possibly even some earthquakes are related to climate change. Global warming and climate change, its most noticeable effect,

is a subject of discussion all over the world and it is generally, although by no means universally, accepted that global warming is taking place and therefore that climate change will continue to happen. Opinion is divided, however, as to whether the climate change which has taken place can be reversed or not. Some think that it cannot be reversed. Thus according to Lovelock (2006) climate change is inevitable with its consequences upon the environment and therefore upon human life and economic activity. Although there are many factors which are contributing to the global warming which is taking place it is clear that commercial and economic activity plays a significant part in this global warming. Indeed, many people talk about 'greenhouse gases', with carbon dioxide being the main one, as a direct consequence of economic activity. Consequently, many people see the reduction in the emission of such gases as being fundamental to any attempt to combat climate change.

Another factor which is of concern to people in general is that of their ecological footprint – the amount of physical area of the earth needed to provide for each person. Ecological footprint analysis compares human demand on nature with the biosphere's ability to regenerate resources and provide services. It does this by assessing the biologically productive land and marine area required to produce the resources a population consumes and absorb the corresponding waste, using prevailing technology. This approach can also be applied to an activity such as the manufacturing of a product or driving of a car. A possibly more fashionable term at the moment, however, is that of carbon footprinting.[3] General concern has been expressed worldwide and this has led to the Kyoto Protocol.[4] The Kyoto Protocol defines legally binding targets and timetables for cutting the greenhouse gas emissions of industrialised countries that ratified the protocol.[5]

Although scientific opinion has more or less reached a consensus that global warming is taking place and therefore that climate change is happening, there are still a considerable number of sceptics and people who deny that it is happening.[6] There are others who argue that the human contribution to global warming is negligible: they argue, therefore, that it is useless or even harmful to concentrate on individual contributions.

In many parts of the world water is becoming a serious problem. Irrigation has led to serious problems in such parts of the world as California while in Uzbekistan it has led to the shrinking of the Aral Sea to a fraction of its previous size. And many rivers, in all parts of the world, have so much water extracted from them that they no longer reach the sea. At the same time millions of people do not have access to safe drinking water. And countries are entering into disputes with each other for access to water that they share between them. Indeed, access to water is forecast to become a major source of conflict in the 21st century. Another issue concerning water is the question of virtual water and the Royal Academy of Engineering (UK) has documented (2010) that countries such as the UK are using water from developing countries where it is in short supply by embedding it in the products purchased from such countries.

It is fairly obvious that the resources of the planet are finite and this is a limiting factor to growth and development. The depletion of the resources of the planet, however, is one of the actors which has helped create the current interest in sustainability. Of particular concern are the extractive industries and such materials as aluminium are becoming in short supply. In the UK the mineral resources such as tin and lead have been fully extracted long ago and the thriving industries based around them are long gone. As other

resources – such as coal – are extracted in total then the companies based upon them disappear, as do the jobs in those industries. This is an obvious source of concern for people.

Of particular concern is the extinguishing of supplies of oil, because much economic activity is only possible because of energy created by the use of oil. Indeed, many would argue that the wars in the Middle East,[7] particularly the problems in Iraq and Iran, are caused by oil shortages, actual or impending, and the problems thereby caused, rather than by any concern for political issues. Most people have now heard of Hubbert's Peak[8] and engaged with the debate as to whether or not it has been reached (Deffeyes 2004, Bower 2009). Certainly, it has in parts of the world such as the North Sea, but it is less certain if it has been reached for the world as a whole. Indeed, the creation of techniques for extracting fuel from shale beds has postponed the urgency of considering the arrival of Hubbert's Peak, although most people do not seem to realise that it is a relatively short-term postponement of about 25 years.[9] Nevertheless, the whole crux of sustainability – and sustainable development – is based upon the need for energy and there are insufficient alternative sources of energy to compensate for the elimination of oil as a source of fuel. Consequently, resource depletion, real or imagined, and particularly energy resources, is one of the most significant causes of the current interest in sustainability.

Human Rights Issues

Another matter which has become prominent is a concern with the supply chain of a business; in other words, with what is happening in other companies which that company does business with – their suppliers and the suppliers of their suppliers. In particular people are concerned with the exploitation of people in developing countries, especially the question of child labour but also such things as sweat shops.

So no longer is it acceptable for a company to say that the conditions under which their suppliers operate is outside of their control and so they are not responsible. Customers have said that this is not acceptable and have called companies to account. And there have recently been a number of high profile retail companies which have held their hands up to acknowledge problems and then taken very public steps to change this.

Interestingly the popularity of companies increases after they have admitted problems and taken steps to correct these problems. In doing this they are thereby showing both that honesty is the best practice and also that customers are reasonable. The evidence suggests that individual customers are understanding and that they do not expect perfection but do expect honesty and transparency. Moreover, they also expect companies to make efforts to change their behaviour and to try to solve their CSR problems.

Companies themselves have also changed. No longer are they concerned with greenwashing – the pretence of socially responsible behaviour through artful reporting. Now companies are taking CSR much more seriously not just because they understand that it is a key to business success and can give them a strategic advantage, but also because people in those organisations care about social responsibility. Sadly, however, examples of poor practice, such as Volkswagen's cheating of emission testing, continue to be uncovered.

So it would be reasonable to claim that the growing importance of CSR and sustainable development is being driven by individuals who care – but those individuals are not just customers, they are also employees, managers, owners and investors of a company.

So companies are partly reacting to external pressures and partly leading the development of responsible behaviour and reporting.

Problems of Governance

The 2008 financial and economic crisis and its aftermath have shown that there are failures in governance and problems with the market system. In the main these have been depicted as representative of systemic failures of the market system and the lax application of systems of governance and regulation. Thus many people are arguing for improved systems to combat this – although little change has been manifest (see Lauesen 2013, 2016). Naturally many people have discussed these failures and the consequent problems and will continue to do so in the future. It is not of course the first such crisis, and the market economy has been proceeding on a course of boom and bust for the last 20 years which is not dissimilar to that of the sixties and seventies which the neo-conservatives claimed to have stopped. The main differences are that recent cycles are driven by the financial markets rather than economics and in the era of globalisation no country is immune from contagion and the effects felt in other countries.

Thus we need to consider alternatives and spend a short time considering governance – and in the context of this book its relationship to CSR. All systems of governance are concerned primarily with managing the governing of associations and therefore with political authority, institutions and, ultimately, control. Governance in this particular sense denotes formal political institutions that aim to coordinate and control interdependent social relations and that have the ability to enforce decisions. Increasingly, however, in a globalised world, the concept of governance is being used to describe the regulation of interdependent relations in the absence of overarching political authority, such as in the international system. Thus global governance can be considered as the management of global processes in the absence of a form of global government. There are some international bodies which seek to address these issues and prominent amongst these are the United Nations and the World Trade Organization. Each of these has met with mixed success in instituting some form of governance in international relations but are part of a recognition of the problem and an attempt to address worldwide problems that go beyond the capacity of individual states to solve.

Global governance is not of course the same thing as world government: indeed, it can be argued that such a system would not actually be necessary if there was such a thing as a world government. Currently, however, the various state governments have a legitimate monopoly on the use of force – on the power of enforcement. Global governance therefore refers to the political interaction that is required to solve problems that affect more than one state or region when there is no power of enforcing compliance. Improved global problem-solving need not of course require the establishing of more powerful formal global institutions, but it would involve the creation of a consensus on norms and practices to be applied.

Steps are of course underway to establish these norms and one example that is currently being established is the creation and improvement of global accountability mechanisms. In this respect, for example, the United Nations Global Compact[10] – described as the world's largest voluntary corporate responsibility initiative – brings together companies, national and international agencies, trades unions and other labour organisations and

various organs of civil society in order to support universal environmental protection, human rights and social principles. Participation is entirely voluntary,[11] and there is no enforcement of the principles by an outside regulatory body. Companies adhere to these practices both because they make economic sense, and because their stakeholders, including their shareholders (most individuals and institutional investors), are concerned with these issues and this provides a mechanism whereby they can monitor the compliance of companies easily. Mechanisms such as the Global Compact can improve the ability of individuals and local communities to hold companies accountable.

Organisational and Regional Studies

It has been customary to consider SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) as a separate category of organisations when investigating and analysing business activities. Thus any organisation with less than 250 employees is considered to be an SME while an organisation with more than 250 employees would be classified as large. This division is a convenient method of classification but it does create several problems and ignores some situations. Thus this division ignores cultural differences: for example, an organisation with 250 employees would not be considered particularly large in China but would be considered very large indeed in most sub-Saharan African countries. This division also ignores sectoral differences: service industries such as retailing or catering tend to employ many people and 250 employees would be quite a small organisation in these sectors but would be very big for a specialist manufacturing company. Similarly, the asset base of a company will vary greatly both according to industrial sector and according to country in which the company is based. And of course sales of €50 million is much more in some countries than in others. Nevertheless, this division between SMEs and large companies has been universally adopted as a basis for investigation and analysis despite these problems. This has led to a duplication of research between different sizes of organisation without too much consideration of whether or not there are differences in CSR according to size. Equally there has been an increase in studies of different regions with unspoken assumptions that there are differences in different regions or between developed countries and developing countries and undeveloped countries. Such research has increased the body of knowledge that exists without necessarily increasing our understanding.

One implication of this arbitrary division is that there is a difference in the characteristics of companies due to their size. This may well be true – a company with ten employees will most probably be different from a company with 1000 employees. Equally, however, a company with 200 employees – and therefore classified as an SME – is more likely to be similar to a company in the same sector with 500 employees – and therefore classified as large – than it is with a company with five employees in the same or even a different sector. Thus we can see that there is an element of artificiality in this definition of SME. Nevertheless, attention seems to have moved from a concern with large organisations – and primarily multinational companies – to an increasing concern with SMEs for investigation and analysis of CSR activity; indeed this has been the focus of this book. In this chapter, however, we are not treating SMEs as a homogenous sector; instead we are focusing our attention on those medium-sized enterprises which are on the cusp and could easily become classified as large in the near future.

Such firms are relatively small in number and comprise considerably less than 1 per cent

of the total SME population. In the main they differ from very large companies in that they are national rather than multinational organisations. Moreover, they tend to be single site organisations rather than having multiple sites – although exceptions can be found to all of these generalisations. In the main they are different from small organisations and are certainly different from the micro-organisations which comprise around 98 per cent of this sector. They all have websites and have highly developed performance management and reporting systems, our starting point for analysis.

As socially responsible behaviour has moved up the agenda of corporate activity most corporations can be seen to be becoming more active in the reporting of their activities in this respect. On corporate websites this is very evident and is becoming more evident also in the annual reporting of these organisations. For many, however, this is represented by a separate CSR report rather than the embedding of this activity in the annual report itself (Crowther 2002). If socially responsible behaviour is being undertaken within organisations, then it seems appropriate that these organisations should report it and increased disclosure in this respect is to be expected. It has been suggested by Schaltegger et al. (1996) that one of the driving forces in the development of social and environmental accounting was the need to placate, through the production of appropriate information, those members of society who could be classified as environmental activists. They further suggest that such accounting information developed for this purpose has now been adopted into the repertoire of organisational accounting and forms an important part of the internal management control information of the organisation.

Of course it is equally true that, in the current environment, corporations have an incentive to present their activity as socially responsible whether or not they are particularly addressing this kind of activity. In this case such reporting becomes little more than window dressing rather than a reporting of activity. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the extent to which either of these motives apply.

An examination of the external reporting of organisations does, however, demonstrate an increasing recognition of the need to include environmental information and an increasing number of annual reports of companies include some information in this respect. This trend is gathering momentum as more organisations perceive the importance of providing such information to external stakeholders. It has been suggested, however (Till and Symes 1999), that the inclusion of such information does not demonstrate an increasing concern with the environment but rather some benefits to the company itself. One trend which is also apparent, however, is the tendency of companies to produce separate environmental reports. In this context such reports, which will be considered later in this chapter, are generally termed environmental reports although in reality they include both reporting upon environmental impact and upon social impact. Thus the terms social accounting and environmental accounting tend to have been conflated within the practice of corporate reporting and the two terms used interchangeably for the form of performance measurement and reporting which recognises and reports upon the effects of the organisation's actions upon its external environment.

While these reports tend to contain much more detailed environmental information than is contained in the annual report the implication of this trend is that such information is required by a separate constituency of stakeholders than the information contained in the annual report. This suggests an impression, therefore, that environmental information is not necessary for the owners and investors in a business but is needed by other

stakeholders. This therefore leads to a further suggestion that organisations view environmental issues as separate from the economic performance of the business rather than as integral to it. This conflicts with some of the arguments and findings considered above, which suggest the need for the integration of environmental and economic performance within the accounting needs of a business for the sake of continuing future performance. It does, however, highlight the problematic nature of environmental accounting and some of the problems associated with environmental impact measurement which have been considered.

These concerns have led to the general opinion that there is something different about environmental information which deserves reporting in its own right rather than being subsumed within the general corporate reporting and lost in the organisation-centric norm of corporate reporting. This opinion is based upon a recognition, as described by Butler et al. (1992, p. 60), that:

> The environment (which is a free resource to individual businesses) is increasingly being turned into a factor that does carry costs. Primarily as a result of requirements imposed by current or probable future government regulation on pollution control, but also to some extent because of the wider concern of the public, who can affect a business's profitability by their behaviour as consumers, employees, and investors, there is a financial impact that needs to be accounted for.

These kinds of argument support the practice of corporate reporting in suggesting a general agreement that environmental accounting is distinct from traditional accounting.

Stakeholder Perspectives

Alongside this recognition that corporations are accountable to their stakeholders has come a development of the principles upon which this demonstration of accountability should be based. Inevitably this is predicated in accounting as a mechanism by which such action can be measured and reported. In generic terms this has come to be called either social or environmental accounting. The objective of environmental accounting is to measure the effects of the actions of the organisation upon the environment and to report upon those effects. In other words, the objective is to incorporate the effect of the activities of the firm upon externalities and to view the firm as a network which extends beyond just the internal environment to include the whole environment (see Crowther 2002). In this view of the organisation the accounting for the firm does not stop at the organisational boundary but extends beyond to include not just the business environment in which it operates but also the whole social environment. Environmental accounting therefore adds a new dimension to the role of accounting for an organisation because of its emphasis upon accounting for external effects of the organisation's activities. In doing so this provides a recognition that the organisation is an integral part of society, rather than a self-contained entity which has only an indirect relationship with society at large. This self-containment has been the traditional view taken by an organisation as far as their relationship with society at large is concerned, with interaction being only by means of resource acquisition and sales of finished products or services. Recognition of this closely intertwined relationship of mutual interdependency between the organisation and society at large, when reflected in the accounting of the organisation, can help bring

about a closer, and possibly more harmonious, relationship between the organisation and society. Given that the managers and workers of an organisation are also stakeholders in that society in other capacities, such as consumers, citizens and inhabitants, this reinforces the mutual interdependency.

While few would argue with the claim that a business is an entity insofar as it is perceived to act as a whole towards the fulfilment of the particular objectives which it has, it is in reality a composite entity which consists of an association of individuals each working towards a commonality of shared purpose. The actuality is different to this in that the common purpose is often not clearly identified and articulated and that the individuals are not necessarily working totally towards that common purpose, particularly when this purpose conflicts with or diverges from their individual motivations and objectives. This is particularly apparent when these individuals are considered within the context of the stakeholder community (Aras and Crowther 2009) because the different stakeholder groupings have different desires and different motivations, which are often in conflict with those of other stakeholders (Aras and Crowther 2007). These conflicts need to be resolved in some fashion in order for the business to function and it is obvious that, as businesses do actually function, they end up being resolved by some means.

Just as the functioning of an organisation, however, can be seen to be a composite of its various constituents, so too does this reflect upon the performance of the business and the multiple facets of that performance (Crowther 2002). It is clear that the determination of good performance is dependent upon the perspective from which that performance is being considered and that what one stakeholder grouping might consider to be good performance may very well be considered by another grouping to be poor performance (Child 1984). The evaluation of performance, therefore, for a business depends not just upon the identification of adequate means of measuring that performance but also upon the determination of what good performance actually consists of. Just as the determination of standards of performance depends upon the perspective from which it is being evaluated, so too does the measurement of that performance, which needs suitably relevant measures to evaluate performance, not absolutely as this has no meaning, but within the context in which it is being evaluated. From an external perspective, therefore, a very different evaluation of performance might arise.

Within the legal systems of the UK, the US and most Western countries the managers of a business have a fiduciary duty to the owners of that business. This duty to shareholders is 'more general and proactive' than the regulatory or contractual responsibilities to other groups (Marens and Wicks 1999, Goodpaster 1991). These more general duties have also been used as a justification of the appropriateness of shareholder theories of the firm. The purpose and meaning of fiduciary duty were considered by Marens and Wicks (1999), who suggest that in actual fact this duty does not limit managers to a very narrow shareholder approach. They argue that the purpose of the fiduciary duty was originally designed to prevent managers undertaking expenditures that benefited themselves (Berle and Means 1933). Further Marens and Wicks (1999) suggest that fiduciary duties simply require that the fiduciary has an honest and open relationship with the shareholder and does not gain illegitimately from their office. Therefore the tension between fiduciary responsibility and the responsibility to other stakeholder groups, the so-called stakeholder paradox (Goodpaster 1991), is not as apparent as is often assumed. Further support

for this argument is provided from the US courts. When shareholders have challenged management's actions as being too generous to other stakeholder groups then the court has 'almost always' upheld the right of management to manage. Management's justification or defence has often been on rational business performance grounds, such as efficiency or productivity, and the accuracy of such claims is difficult to prove. As such, Marens and Wicks (1999, p. 281) suggest that 'virtually any act that does not financially threaten the survival of the business could be construed as in the long-term best interest of shareholders'.

Thus agency theory argues that managers merely act as custodians of the organisation and its operational activities and places upon them the burden of managing in the best interest of the owners of that business. According to agency theory all other stakeholders of the business are largely irrelevant and if they benefit from the business then this is coincidental to the activities of management in running the business to serve shareholders. This focus upon shareholders alone as the intended beneficiaries of a business has been questioned considerably from many perspectives, which argue that it is either not the way in which a business is actually run or that it is a view which does not meet the needs of society in general. Conversely stakeholder theory argues that there are a whole variety of stakeholders involved in the organisation and each deserves some return for their involvement. According to stakeholder theory, therefore, benefit is maximised if the business is operated by its management on behalf of all stakeholders and returns are divided appropriately amongst those stakeholders, in some way which is acceptable to all. Unfortunately, a mechanism for dividing returns amongst all stakeholders which has universal acceptance does not exist, and stakeholder theory is significantly lacking in suggestions in this respect. Nevertheless, this theory has some acceptance and is based upon the premise that operating a business in this manner achieves as one of its outcomes the maximisation of returns to shareholders, as part of the process of maximising returns to all other stakeholders. This maximisation of returns is achieved in the long run through the optimisation of performance for the business to achieve maximal returns to all stakeholders. Consequently, the role of management is to optimise the long-term performance of the business in order to achieve this end and thereby reward all stakeholders, including themselves as one stakeholder community, appropriately.

These two theories can be regarded as competing explanations of the operations of a firm which lead to different operational foci and to different implications for the measurement and reporting of performance. It is significant, however, that both theories have one feature in common. This is that the management of the firm is believed to be acting on behalf of others, either shareholders or stakeholders more generally. They do so, not because they are the kind of people who behave altruistically, but because they are rewarded appropriately and much effort is therefore devoted to the creation of reward schemes which motivate these managers to achieve the desired ends. Similarly, much literature is devoted to the consideration of the effects of reward schemes on managerial behaviour (see, for example, Briers and Hirst 1990, Child 1974, 1975, Coates et al. 1993, Fitzgerald et al. 1991) and suggestions for improvement.

ANALYSIS OF CURRENT RESEARCH

If we look at current trends in research by investigating what is published in the leading journals then we see a number of themes in addition to those already discussed. One that is increasing in importance is that of corruption, its consequences and what can be done to reduce it. Implicit within this is a concern for transparency which includes matters such as reporting, information and communication through media and internet and anything which leads to stakeholders and society knowledge on social responsibility of a special activity. Transparency, as a principle, means that the external impact of the actions of the organisation can be ascertained from that organisation's reporting and pertinent facts are not disguised within that reporting. Thus all the effects of the actions of the organisation, including external impacts, should be apparent to all from using the information provided by the organisation's reporting mechanisms. Transparency is of particular importance to external users of such information as these users lack the background details and knowledge available to internal users of such information. Transparency therefore can be seen to be a part of the process of recognition of responsibility on the part of the organisation for the external effects of its actions and equally part of the process of transferring power to external stakeholders. It is a principle which is related to disclosure and disclosure has been a core issue for social responsibility research for many years. Arguably the concern is shifting somewhat though from multinational corporations (MNCs) to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and from developed to developing countries. Nevertheless, it still remains the main research topic.

Another topic of importance has been organisational. In part this is a concern with social responsibility in different organisational structures. Organisations of any kind and with any structure have been under attention but especially people have started to show particular interest in publicly owned enterprises (POEs) and in SMEs, alongside a continuing interest in multinational companies. Two relevant issues inside this category have been those of privatisation and organisational structure. We know of course that multinational companies in particular have recently received a great deal of attention considering the issues related to labour and human rights. These too are an issue for research.

Other topics of concern include sustainability and sustainable development; the terms have different meanings but are often used interchangeably. Sustainability is the substrate for any objective for any organisation (Seifi and Crowther 2011); so first it should exist and continue to exist and then should decide how to exist, whether to be socially responsible or not and where to have a concern for contributing to sustainable development or not. So people have shown interest in sustainability as a general awareness on global needs for countries who care for sustainable resource use; through sustainable purchasing decisions, sustainable production, sustainable consumption and in other words, an interest in sustainable development. We have witnessed academic papers on this topic.

Finance is something that has been either knowingly or unknowingly neglected in social responsibility research. But finance – or at least profit – is the main purpose for the existence of any organisation whether socially responsible or socially irresponsible. It is the sustainability of an organisation that matters at first priority and it all depends on finance and economy at the initial steps. The classical theoreticians believed that the main

responsibility of a company is to undertake its own professional work. On the other hand, it was another way of telling the basic philosophy: the main objective of a company is to make money. As the main objective of a socially responsible organisation is to contribute to sustainable development and as economy is one of the pillars of sustainable development, therefore we conclude that neglecting finance is equal to neglecting sustainable development.

STRUCTURE OF THIS BOOK

As we have seen, there are many aspects to research in the area of CSR, and many topics which are relevant. This means inevitably that there are many approaches to researching these topics and many epistemological paradigms which can be – and are – applied. As we stated earlier, we have made no attempt to define the subject area as all definitions are acceptable to some. Equally we have made no attempt to define suitable research methods and have deliberately attempted to be inclusive in the belief that some aspects of this book will be useful to everyone.

Thus the book is organised into four parts. The first part we have titled Methodology Planning. In this part are chapters that are concerned with various aspects of planning the research project and dealing with such things as secondary data and with ethics in the research process. These are chapters which are relevant to all of us regardless of our project and regardless of our ontological stance. This part is followed by a part dealing with Quantitative Methods, which contains chapters considering a wide variety of quantitative methods which have all been used to research CSR. Following this is a part dealing with Qualitative Methods, again containing chapters dealing with a variety of qualitative methods which have also been used to research in the area of CSR. The methods selected to discuss in the chapters in these two parts are not exhaustive as there are other methods which can be, and have been, used but they do represent the vast majority of approaches to research which have been taken by those undertaking research into CSR. Although, as researchers, each of us has preferences about which methods we prefer to use, this has not influenced our decisions concerning what methods to include. For us every method which is available and has something to contribute to increase our understanding is an appropriate method and so we have sought to include consideration of all methods. Realistically this has needed to be limited to all the major methods plus some of the less common ones which give added insight.

One of the problems with considering published research is that there is always an historic element to it. This is inevitable as publications must always be about research that has already been undertaken. Moreover, there is a currency to publications, which means they remain relevant and useful for some years after the research originally took place. This is of course completely fine, but leaves us with a problem in that we do not know what topics are considered important for the research which is currently being undertaken and which will be undertaken in the very near future. Additionally, it does not tell us anything about the research methods which are currently considered to be useful, especially if they are new and have not been used before. With this in mind we have included a final section in the book to address this Future Research Agenda. In this part we have invited some prominent and experienced researchers to contribute. We have given them an

open brief to consider what they think might become important in future CSR research. Unsurprisingly, these make for some interesting reading.

NOTES

1. This is an argument against the funding of research, where there is a tendency to 'find' what the funder expects. This is a problem with the physical sciences also, where medical research has been allegedly warped to favour the funders or where defence funding has affected the way investigations are conducted. In CSR research one of the problems is that the ontological stance of the researchers tends to favour the non-organisational stakeholders and be 'biased' for this reason.
2. See the Network website – www.socialresponsibility.biz – for further details of the Network, its history and its activities.
3. This conveniently obfuscates the problem. Carbon dioxide is not the only greenhouse gas and is not the most problematic but focusing on it means that carbon monoxide from the motor vehicle industry can be ignored as well as methane from the dairy industry. These industries are also a cause of significant other environmental problems.
4. This was agreed in 1997 and came into effect in 2005.
5. In late 2007 Australia ratified the protocol, leaving only one large developed country which has not done so. This country is, however, the USA, probably the largest producer of such greenhouse gases.
6. The European consensus is by no means worldwide in this respect.
7. And most probably any other parts of the world also – it would be instructive to correlate the presence of oil with conflicts.
8. In 1956 M. King Hubbert developed a model of oil production which showed that when the midpoint of oil reserves was reached then future production would slow down and less would be available. Although originally developed for US oil production it has been shown to be equally valid globally. This midpoint is known as Hubbert's Peak and has arrived or soon will arrive, at that point oil supplies start to get less with obvious implications in an environment in which demand continues to increase.
9. Many people continue to think that new technological developments will continue to solve the problems which are being created.
10. See www.unglobalcompact.org.
11. Voluntary but easier for some than others – the developed world is privileged again!

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