“Have Soul?”
Why Select U.S. Fortune 500 Global Corporations
Do CSR the Right Way

“We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.”
- Winston Churchill ("Winston Churchill quotes," n.d., para. 1)

This paper provides a detailed look at corporate social responsibility (CSR) among selected U.S. Fortune 500 global corporations that show evidence of advanced stages of development, hereinafter called *it*CSR. The Global Leadership Network Framework - focused on business strategy, leadership, operational excellence, and engaged learning - was used as a model for assessing why these corporations, in particular, have developed to *it*CSR levels, what motivated the executive leadership, and why they have designed meaningful triple bottom line impact in society and for their business. The paper explores the intersection of these high stages of CSR with the construct of corporate soul.

Introduction

There was a time in history when people believed in the nobility of business leaders. Early evidence came in the form of prominent philanthropic efforts at the turn of the 20th century by some of the greatest businessmen in American history. Well-known for their giving and attention to community, business moguls such as John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, Cornelius Vanderbilt, Milton S. Hershey, and Henry Ford were in society’s small upper echelon of wealth and abundance, but they did take on a paternalistic mindset toward the community in which it operated (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2012). Furthermore, these ambitious, successful, and wealthy businessmen were significant philanthropists (Visser, 2011) who took care of their employees and families and established significant foundations that continue to make a positive impression in today's society. Granted, it was a time when the business dynamics were simpler, local, and followed assembly line linearity. Nevertheless, it was an era in which companies were focused on the small, local communities in which they operated (Porter & Kramer, 2011) and business was conducted on a handshake – symbolic of mutual trust (Ariely, 2009).

However, more recently, civil society witnessed a growing absence of morality. Greed increasingly crept into business conduct and unethical behavior spread like a virus among many executive leaders. This lack of morality resulted in the loss of billions of dollars and the demise of several large corporations just in the past fifteen years alone (May et al., 2003). A rash of widespread corporate scandals eroded trust between civil society and the private sector, resulting in low public opinion of corporate executive leaders (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2012; Googins et al., 2007), so much so that, after a long period of distant engagement, the government stepped in to impose regulation where self-regulation was lacking. As a result, the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 (SOX) was born, one of the biggest pieces of legislation to force corporate compliance around financial reporting, transparency, and ethical conduct (Savitz & Weber, 2006).

Unfortunately, this regulatory activity in the early part of the decade did not prevent more corporate disasters from ensuing. Toward the end of the first decade of the 21st century, additional large corporate entities and drivers in the U.S. economy, such as Lehman Brothers, American International Group, and General Motors, declared bankruptcy, wreaking further havoc on society and the global economy (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2012). Notable abuses, unethical behavior, and independent project failures alienated consumers, devastated local communities, increased regulator activity, and fostered a culture of doubt among employees toward employers (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2012; McElhaney, 2008; Valente & Crane, 2010). In fact, there was a universal understanding that the private sector needed to massively overcome public mistrust of business and its leadership (Valente & Crane, 2010), because “the unsavory actions of top executives in companies hurt numerous stakeholders, including employees, shareholders, suppliers, and customers, and sometimes posed a threat to financial and economic systems” (Puffer & McCarthy, 2008, p. 304).

As a result, the world was left wondering about the nobility of big business and executive leadership, and if it was even realistic to expect the corporate arena to have any kind of conscience. Scholars prolifically wrote about what the corporate world would look like if it was possible for nobility and morality to exist – and thrive. Ensuing discussions about corporate soul (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Renaud-Coulon, 2008), positive organizational scholarship (Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2003), authentic leadership, and emotional intelligence (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio et al., 2004; Cashman, 2010; George et al., 2007; Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008; May et al., 2003), became increasingly intriguing in parallel with a growing investigation of corporate social responsibility (CSR), also known as sustainability and or corporate citizenship.

From CSR to itCSR. In the broadest sense, CSR is an umbrella concept meant to convey business’ role in society (Werther & Chandler, 2011). The early concept of CSR grew from the seminal 1987 Brundtland Report, commissioned by the United Nations, which first described sustainability in environmental terms as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (as cited in Werbach, 2009, p. 8). Soon after, Carroll (1991) developed the standard definition of CSR (see Figure 2): "The total corporate social responsibility of business entails the simultaneous fulfillment of the firm's economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities" (p. 43). Shortly thereafter, Elkington (1998) espoused a more holistic business approach, known as *the triple bottom line* (TBL) construct (p. 37), that prioritized equal contribution to (a) people (society/culture), (b) planet (environment), and (c) profits (economics), also known as the *sustainable bottom line* (Werbach, 2009).

Recently, the emergence of social entrepreneurs has been instrumental in setting higher expectations about the positive influence an organization can have on societal issues. In fact, "social entrepreneurship is the new black…The idea of not choosing between profit & purpose seems to be gaining traction as America continues to cultivate a new sense of philanthropic virtue" (Paisner, 2012, para. 1). Additionally known as sustainable capitalism, on the premise that any business' output is another business' input (Elkington, 1998), CSR has also become synonymous with social capitalism, stakeholder capitalism, social responsiveness, sustainable development, sustainable business, ethical business, business responsibility, environmentally responsible business, global business citizenship, community engagement, corporate stewardship, strategic philanthropy, socially responsible business, resilient business, green business, conscious capitalism, natural capitalism, creative capitalism, conscientious capitalism, new capitalism, collaborative consumption for sustainable brands, purpose branding, meaningful brands, and brands with belief (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2012; Googins et al., 2007; Mainwaring, 2011; McElhaney, 2008; Senge et al., 2008; Werther & Chander, 2011; Williams, 2012), and the latest term “capitalism with a conscience” (Horovitz, 2013). Social entrepreneurs and small-medium enterprises (SMEs) have been the innovators and early adopters who entered the business world with creative designs that both matched consumer interests and provided solutions to environmental and social concerns (Mainwaring, 2011; Senge et al., 2008; Visser, 2011; Zadek, 2007). As a result, CSR landed squarely on the desks of business executives and corporate boards (Mainwaring, 2011; McElhaney, 2008).

As some corporations scrambled to compete with the social entrepreneurs, variations in terminology and nuances of definitions grew from these broad business constructs, and “conceptual confusion” ensued in both academic and business circles (Matten & Crane, 2005, p. 174). Many organizations tried to retrofit a CSR strategy, and in many cases, it proved to be the equivalent of trying to put a square peg into a round hole. Sarita Dahl, CSR consultant to NGOs, government, private organizations, and corporations, believes this is because of a disconnect between their understanding of CSR versus what it actually is. For example, she says, “CSR is like teenage sex. Everyone says that they are ‘doing it,’ but really only half are ‘doing it,’ and of that half, only half are ‘doing it the right way’” (S. Dahl, personal communication, April 14, 2011).

This disconnect has been bubbling up to the surface, especially with a growing and far-reaching stakeholder influence that yields global implications, and levels of connectivity and technological advancement the likes of which society has not seen previously. Laszlo’s (2008) position on the subject is this: “Stakeholder power has been driven by quantum increases in information combined with rising societal expectations about health and the environment, leading to a tighter interface between business and civil society” (Laszlo, 2008, ch. 9, para. 3). Furthermore, the advent of social media has played a significant part in creating a global CSR platform and a place to more publicly call out organizations who have not properly focused on *closing the gap* between "high-minded statements of vision, mission, and values, and intentions and every day ground-level practices" (Mirvis, Googins, & Kinnicutt, 2010, p. 322), or who are "cause-washing" – engaging in the false public promotion of involvement in a cause (Mainwaring, 2011, p. 49). The 2009 Edelman Good Purpose survey found that 66% of 6,000 people surveyed globally want corporations to demonstrate better balance between profits and purpose (Mainwaring, 2011). As a result, ordinary consumers have turned into activists, establishing websites such as change.org wherein individuals can unite around common concerns, and "these stakeholders come from every corner of the world, armed with both the traditional media and that global megaphone called the Internet" (Savitz & Weber, 2006, "Introduction," para. 21).

Consequently, between social media activism and innovations by social entrepreneurs, a new consumerism has been born, and the public has started to take a more active, conscious, and in some cases, punitive position against corporate avarice, exploitation, and neglect (Googins et al., 2007). This web-mediated consumer activism continues to expand as customers increasingly weigh in on the implications of their purchases in a global social media forum, and they are unwilling to tolerate corporate largesse, selfishness, advertising manipulation, and corporate detachment from society (Kanji & Chopra, 2010). In fact, consumer activity is now a significant change agent (Boehm, 2011), and consumers are in the powerful position of having their choice of products and services from global individuals, small companies, entrepreneurs, inventors, and big corporations. Essentially, digital connectivity has brought about new forms of corporate "democratization, networking and monitoring" (Horrigan, 2010, p. 340).

Fittingly, Zadek (2007) believes that "the role of business in society is the 21st century's most important and contentious public policy issue" (p. 9), and there is ample literature exploring what it means to *do CSR the right way,* what it takes to have meaningful TBL impact, and how corporations can succeed at high stages of CSR, herein referred to as *it*CSR. *It*CSR broadly conveys the ideal contribution of business in society. Furthermore, *it*CSR represents a contemporary, *balanced scorecard* approach to measuring corporate success rather than the traditional one-dimensional approach of exclusively evaluating financial results (Savitz & Weber, 2006), and it incorporates the early concepts of CSR. For example, the activities around philanthropy, compliance, marketing, and PR are not to be discounted or rebuked. On the contrary, they are necessary business practices that can be foundational and even valuable when they are employed by organizations that practice genuine *it*CSR (Googins et al., 2007; Mainwaring, 2011; Visser, 2011; Zadek, 2004, 2007).

However, *it*CSR represents a broader spectrum of activities as well. *It*CSR is marked by a company's proactive efforts to create meaningful TBL impact, such that harm is minimized and shared value is created legally and ethically among multiple stakeholders in the business community, society, and government (Googins et al., 2007; Porter & Kramer, 2006; Werbach, 2009; Werther & Chandler, 2011). It represents a convergence of internal and external motivators. Googins et al. (2007) summarize internal and external motivators and drivers of *it*CSR, based on a U.S. national survey conducted in 2007: internal motivators (in order of significance) include traditions and values, reputation and image, business strategy, and recruiting and retaining employees; the external motivators include pressure from customers/consumers, expectations in communities, and regulators.

*It*CSR is further represented by: (a) being a champion or visionary leader in the field, (b) being out in front of innovation and or leading the industry, (c) proactively building multi-stakeholder partnerships, and (d) strategically creating shared value and social change throughout the value chain (Googins et al., 2007; Porter & Kramer, 2011; Werther & Chandler, 2011). These highest levels are characterized in the literature as strategic, authentic, sophisticated, advanced, highly developed, evolved, robust, holistic, conscious, virtuous, purposeful, dynamic, revolutionary, visionary, inventive, innovative, inspirational, genuine, multi-faceted, collaborative, multi-dimensional, significant, methodical, game changing, profitable, and the best form of CSR (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2012; Googins et al., 2007; Mainwaring, 2011; McElhaney, 2008; Visser, 2011; Werbach, 2009; Werther & Chandler, 2011; Zadek, 2004, 2007). Accordingly, various stakeholders believe *it*CSR development reveals the morality-based soul or true character of a company (Bhattacharya, Sen, et al., 2011).

Corporate and soul… an oxymoron? It is completely understandable that a considerable number of people legitimately question whether a corporation can have a soul or even a higher purpose. The skeptics might reasonably argue that a higher purpose cannot exist within a publicly-traded company that answers to Wall Street's quarterly demands. Many thinkers, and businesspeople, alike, may rebuff the idea of corporate soul because it is not tangible. In fact, there is no quantifiable way to construct a return on investment (ROI) analysis around morality; there is only a clear case of noticing it when it is missing (Lennick & Kiel, 2006). It is, therefore, quite possible for people to argue that the words “corporate” and “soul” together are an oxymoron, and cannot possibly co-exist.

This cynicism comes from an erosion of the foundational notion of mutuality in the social contract construct. To add context, a contemporary version of the social contract serves as the platform for the fusion of *civility* and the fundamental business construct of profitability (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2012; Zadek, 2004). In the broadest sense, a social contract binds agreement within an order among its various members (Cole, 2010). The social contract that extended to business used to be fairly straightforward and parochial: pay taxes, obey the law, treat people fairly, and donate to worthy causes (Googins et al., 2007). However, the evolving social contract places a greater, more global responsibility on business to co-create with government and NGOs. Arguably, the demands on business today are more complex than they were over 100 years ago; on the other hand, they are naturally evolving and aligned with the forces of globalization (de Geus, 2002; Senge et al., 2008; Werbach, 2009), and cannot be avoided. Therefore, a multi-sector engagement among business, government, and NGOs is necessary, but it takes courageous ethical and moral leadership in order to exercise a business’ power, resources, and global reach constructively, and simultaneously build a financially prosperous company that has high standards of integrity and social innovation (Googins et al., 2007).

In any case, the long-term viability of the social contract depends on trust and a moral orientation between the organization and its constituents. Furthermore, the longevity of a business’ brand and its legacy will always be better sustained if grounded in ethical governance. Otherwise, the alternative might be the fate of Tyco, Enron, and Worldcom to name a few (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2012; Googins et al., 2007). Last decade, after losing billions of dollars in the marketplace to corporate greed and unethical actions, and the onset of a global economic recession caused in large part by big business, two words became an oxymoron: "corporate" and "credibility." Trust between consumer and supplier was destroyed, and public opinion of corporate executive leaders hit an all-time low (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2012; Googins et al., 2007). Today, much of the public feels economically and socially drained by bad corporate behavior and citizens are frustrated by and intolerant of irresponsible actions by business leaders (Idowu, 2009).

Now more than ever, the identity of successful organizations must be based upon an uncompromising ethical foundation of honesty, trust, transparency, and accountability (Andriof & McIntosh, 2001; Eccles & Krzus, 2010; Haugh & Talwar, 2010; Puffer & McCarthy, 2008; Zadek, 2007). In fact, trust is a prolific topic in scholarly literature on organizational development, particularly because trust is hard to rebuild for publicly-traded corporations where short-term profit goals prey on organizational dynamics (Zadek, 2007). Then again, at this juncture when big business has been radically scrutinized for many amoral and myopic behaviors, it might be advantageous for business leaders (and followers) to pause on the subject of soulfulness as a foundational element in constructing meaningful TBL impact.

Bolman and Deal (2003) define the corporate soul as "a bedrock sense of identity, a deep confidence about [what the company is], what [the organization] cares about, and what [the organization] deeply believes in" (p. 396). The characteristics of soulfulness driving a corporate culture are linked to a keen awareness of the organization's meaning and a guiding moral authority (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Renaud-Coulon (2008) adds that the essence of soul is based on moral responsibility that comes from conscience. Birch (2008) highlights this point in his discussion of Morris' book from the late 1990s, titled *If Aristotle Ran General Motors: The New Soul of Business*. Even before Bolman and Deal's (2003) work, Morris (as cited in Birch, 2008) was "encouraging us all to engage in 'reinventing the corporate spirit,' recognizing that 'the key to sustainable success in the world today…is provided by some of our most ancient wisdom'" (p. 26), such as the Greek eudaemonic ethic. Commonly referred to as virtue ethics, eudaemonia is presented as,

> Virtues on which one prides oneself in personal life are essentially the same as those essential to good business – honesty, dependability, courage, loyalty and integrity. Aristotle's central ethical concept, accordingly, is a unified, all-embracing notion of… eudaemonia, translated as "flourishing" or "doing well." (Solomon, as cited in Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 399)

Eudaemonia is grounded in self-determinism wherein the basic needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness are necessary to create a state of well-being (Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005).

In an organizational sense, eudaemonics is a foundation for the principles outlined in Cameron, Dutton, and Quinn's (2003) positive organizational scholarship (POS), which is also grounded in Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi's (2000) work on positive psychology (Ilies et al., 2005). Positive psychology and POS focus on vitality, joy, strengths, and health, rather than weakness and despair (Cameron et al., 2003). In addition, eudaemonics feeds Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers' (1998) theory of the organization being a living system, and this living system functions with a sense of shared significance and the strength of the human spirit to be free, create, and develop organically (de Geus, 2002). "In a sense, these are organizations…whose products, processes, business models, and management philosophies are based on the idea of a future in which business operates more and more like the other living systems of nature" (Senge et al., 2008, "Business with a Mission," para. 2).

Technically, though, corporations do not have consciences; they are inanimate. However, people have consciences. As such, people and organizations are intertwined and a corporate soul is thus its core ideologies brought about by the individual members and upheld by them through generations of its existence (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Consequently, now more than ever, the literature that suggests the necessity of corporate soul may not be as much of a stretch of the business imagination. Milward-Oliver (2011) posits that "CSR is a reflection of an organization's soul. It is the core or 'essence' of the organization…If in its soul, the organization believes that the only responsibility it has is to its shareholders, then its adoption of CSR is likely to be skin-deep and probably insincere…If an organization believes at its core that it has obligations to society, then it is more likely to behave accordingly" (p. 77). As a result, a strong moral and ethical foundation must be at the epicenter of the organization and its leadership in order to facilitate the development of *it*CSR (Andriof & McIntosh, 2001; Carroll & Buchholtz, 2012; Eccles & Krzus, 2010; Hoebink, 2008; Kanter, 2009; Logsdon & Lewellyn, 2000; Mainwaring, 2011; Renaud-Coulon, 2008; Zadek, 2007), and the scholarly discussions on the notion of corporate soul is a valuable construct in *it*CSR.

Backing up *it*CSR with soul

Forging deep trust requires a hard, introspective look at the corporate culture, vision, mission, values (Mirvis et al., 2010), and soulfulness that is undeniably rooted in eudaemonics, ethics, and morality (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Visser (2011) speaks of trust in the context of responsibility as a virtue that all humans and organizations should promote, and he defines responsibility as "an ability to respond" and a "counterbalance to rights" (p. 4). Having responsibility is akin to exercising personal freedom and it is an expression of confidence in oneself, but it can often be a burden when one takes on too much and feels a sense of loss for that freedom (Visser, 2011).

> Responsibility is not a guarantee of success, but a commitment to trying…[but] accepting too many responsibilities is, in fact, irresponsible – for it compromises [an] ability to respond…Do few things but do them well is the maxim of responsibility...Taking responsibility is a way of taking ownership in our lives, of acknowledging our own hand in the shaping of destiny…Responsibility is being conscious of the oneness of existence. (p. 5)

Therefore, responsibility is about purposeful intent, and as Visser (2011) indicates, it is about owning the corporation's part in the social and environmental problems. He sees this through the eyes of Ray Anderson's book *Confessions of a Radical Industrialist*: "He concedes not only that today's economic system is broken, but that he and his company are part of the problem. He is able to see himself as a plunderer- not through malicious intent, or even greed, but by failing to question the true impacts of business on society and the environment" (p. 140). This self-awareness of impact and admission of guilt, omission, or simply oversight, demonstrate compassion and vulnerability. Part of improving well-being comes from tapping into people's spirit and providing the gift of significance through compassion. Brown talks about the ability to have self-compassion and give compassion as a function of one's own vulnerability, and "in order for connection to happen, we need to be seen, really seen" (TedTalks Director, 2010, 5:30). Visser (2011) also comments that responsibility is also about ambition, the drive, the willpower, and the application of resources to solve social and environmental problems.

The literature further reveals the following subjects as central in *it*CSR development that intersect with corporate soul: consciousness, agility, authenticity, action orientation, collaboration, holistic intention, and courage. These are explored below.

Consciousness. *It*CSR development represents the dawn of a new era. Russell speaks of an "Age of Consciousness" replacing the Information Age (as cited in Renesch, 2005, p. 19). For Renesch (2005), this Age of Consciousness represents full responsibility in whatever might be created, and according to Hubbard (as cited in Renesch, 2005), the Age of Consciousness depends on the "co-creative society" that "is nurtured into being by increasing the connections and coherence among those already initiating vital actions…It emerges when we collectively overcome the illusion of separation that has divided us" (p. 22). The notions of idea generation and co-innovation are at the forefront of 2013 trends researched by GlobeScan (GlobeScan, n.d.).

Starbucks founder Howard Schultz (as cited in Googins et al., 2007) is famous for bringing a higher level of consciousness to a global organization. He wrote that "a company should lead with its heart and nurture its soul as it makes money. It should inspire other companies to aim high. It should do more than simply avoid doing harm; it should consciously seek to do good" (p. 35). In this new era, business strategy is based on the creation of a conscious organization, co-creative, collaborative partnership, and the notion of possibility instead of inevitability (Renesch, 2005). Renesch (2005) believes that "the conscious organization is one that continually examines itself, committed to becoming as conscious as it can…It possesses the collective will to be vigilant, the collective commitment to continuous evolution, and the collective courage to act" (p. 71).

Agility. In developing *it*CSR, the organization experiences continuous change (Lake & Calandro, 2012; Marshak, 2004), and is on a never-ending journey. Resiliency throughout the operations becomes imperative, as well as an acceptance of the continuous change process in which all living systems operate. Adopting Marshak's (2004) "morphing" concept of change is advantageous in order to make the organization better equipped to cope with constant flux (Stoltz, 2004). *It*CSR development is a dynamic, evolutionary, iterative process; it is not something that is turned on like a light switch from one day to the next. Rather, it requires a corporation to develop its agility, coordination, and forward-thinking capabilities (Boehm, 2011; Coulter & Erikson, 2012; Grayson et al., 2008; Kanter, 2009; Kourula & Halme, 2008; Kytle & Ruggie, 2005; Louche, Idowu, & Filho, 2010; Marshak, 2004; Pink, 2011; Savitz & Weber, 2006; Werbach, 2009; Zadek, 2004, 2007). Therefore, *it*CSR demands that an organization move away from start-stop change strategies and toward a collective mindset among the people of ongoing, cumulative, progressive consolidation of firm-wide business, cultural and financial strategies (Googins et al., 2007; Lake & Calandro, 2012; Marshak, 2004; Zadek, 2004).

Authenticity. *It*CSR development requires leaders to establish a strong corporate vision, mission, and values (Mirvis et al., 2010). These leaders ensure that the standards are uniformly and consistently carried out at all levels and throughout all business units of the organization (Grayson et al., 2008; Kanji & Chopra, 2010; Savitz & Weber, 2006). Consequently, leadership must make a genuine, public commitment, beyond philanthropy or PR, to embed the virtues of *it*CSR into the whole organization and each business unit in order to achieve both financial and non-financial long-term benefits (Kourula & Halme, 2008; Kytle & Ruggie, 2005; Mainwaring, 2011; Werther & Chandler, 2011). At the core of authenticity is transparency. Accordingly, transparency and accountability are essential in corporate governance concerning *it*CSR development (Werther & Chandler, 2011).

Action orientation. An acute action orientation exists at the high levels of *it*CSR development (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2012). This action orientation is not reactive, but rather inventive, creative, and regenerative (Senge et al., 2008). A company's DNA, which is the essence of its corporate culture, is critical to its sustainability (Crittenden et al., 2010). Fostering action throughout the culture comes from continuous learning and an open forum that breeds innovation to address societal and environmental challenges (Coulter & Erikson, 2012; Boehm, 2011; Grayson et al., 2008; Kanter, 2009; Kourula & Halme, 2008; Kytle & Ruggie, 2005; Louche et al., 2010; Marshak, 2004; Pink, 2011; Savitz & Weber, 2006; Werbach, 2009; Zadek, 2004, 2007). In addition, promoting employee well-being correlates with *it*CSR. A company should be a place where people can find purpose and a higher sense of meaning through their work. It is contradictory for an organization to stifle its employees' pursuit of meaning in their work, and then turn around and promote meaning and purpose externally (Amabile & Kramer, 2012). With an action orientation, the soul is evident in the actions that are produced by the characteristics that make up the DNA of the corporate culture.

Collaboration. Partnership with various stakeholders is an essential ingredient in the *it*CSR construct. In fact, the GlobeScan/SustainAbility 2012 survey of more than 700 participants in over 70 countries indicated that focus on single-issue collaboration is expected to grow in the next 5 years. In GlobeScan's 2013 trends to watch, they believe that partnerships will be moving toward collaborative networks wherein NGOs participate in setting corporate objectives ("GlobeScan," n.d.), and corporations are more engaged in *designing for impact.* Collaboration will largely depend on (a) the ability to access diverse perspectives and expertise, and (b) having a shared purpose and transparent exchange of information (Buckingham & Al-Shawaf, 2012). Where adversarial relationships once existed between government, NGOs, and big business, now there is movement to strategize and design solutions together, and use the best of what each sector has to offer (Bhattacharya, Sen, et al., 2011; Coulter & Erikson, 2012; Grayson et al., 2008; Kourula & Halme, 2008; Mainwaring, 2011).

Zadek (2007) believes that this is a time when people will need to reconsider *how* to learn in different ways, rather than just learning about new things. He suggests taking an action-learning approach that engages multiple stakeholders is the formula for doing so. This researcher, in fact, proposes a *collaborative learning loop.* The researcher views the collaborative learning loop as essential to the multi-stakeholder process of designing for TBL impact, wherein at least two sectors of society are coming together to partner on a shared concern and are required to submit to each other's competencies, break down existing mental models (beliefs or assumptions), and build a holistic solution which also creates additional opportunities for partnership, growth, and innovation.

Holistic intention. Scholars agree that the higher levels of *it*CSR development are holistic, integrated, strategic, and transforming (Googins et al., 2007; Werther & Chandler, 2011; Zadek, 2007). When properly applied, *it*CSR principles, activities, and purpose are embedded in the corporate culture throughout all business units; and they are practiced and promoted externally through the supply chain, industry, customers, government, and academia (Kytle & Ruggie, 2005). McElhaney (2008) believes that "companies make a big mistake with their CSR efforts when they [do not] build a sustainable strategy that is tied to the business objectives of the company" (p. 48). The entire organization, from the board of directors to the employees, from operations and financial reporting to human resources, are activated, and members of the organization at all levels then extend their CSR externally throughout the industry, the supply chain, consumers, and society (Boehm, 2011). This holistic intention involves marrying a corporate soul, grounded in core ideologies that include morality, with the physiological aspects of the corporate culture, otherwise known as the *DNA* of the corporation's functions, engagement, and dynamics (Crittenden et al., 2010). The CEO of Saatchi & Saatchi said: "The brands of the future will each have a purpose and that priceless competitive advantage which comes from doing the right thing when no one is looking" (as cited in Werbach, 2009, p. 74).

Courage. Being courageous in a business context equates to bold action that makes change happen in the overall marketplace. For example, in a groundbreaking move, Unilever, the U.K.-domiciled global consumer goods corporation, stopped providing quarterly financial reports to the investment community, and thereby stood up to Friedman-style economic thinking. Unilever believes that providing the marketplace with only biannual earnings allows them the capacity to be more balanced in their focus throughout a given year between social, environmental, and economic concerns. The CEO of Unilever reasons that quarterly reporting puts an unbalanced emphasis on the short-term economic component (Polman & Ignatius, 2012). However, changes such as this one need to happen from a systems thinking approach. The CEO of Unilever suggests that many organizations have not changed because their leaders are simply trying to keep things afloat in a tough economy during the three to five years that they have the c-level office; they are not approaching the business from a strategic, long-term, integrative mindset (Polman & Ignatius, 2012). Despite the financial crises that have occurred in the past two decades, it is surprising to CSR experts and practitioners that a new financial market that supports and rewards long-term thinking has not yet emerged (Cramer, 2013). Nevertheless, active *it*CSR development means that the organization is a market leader rather than letting the market define the organization (Lake & Calandro, 2012), and long-term thinking, even beyond the tenure of any c-level executive (Polman & Ignatius, 2012), is a necessary component.

Methodology

This study identified the U.S. Fortune 500 global corporations that closely match the characteristics of *it*CSR by (a) cross-referencing five indices/lists that measure various parameters of the *it*CSR criteria, and (b) evaluating total trailing financial returns for 1-year, 3-year, and 5-year periods compared to the S&P 500 Index results for those time frames.

First, a cross-analysis of five indices/lists known globally for recognizing corporate sustainability, CSR, and corporate citizenship was performed, and only the U.S.-domiciled corporations that appeared on at least three out of the five lists were chosen, with one of the lists being the DJSI 2012 World List or the FTSE4Good 2012 Index. The five lists were the 2012 DJSI, the 2012 FTSE4Good Index, the Corporate Responsibility's (CR) 100 Best Corporate Citizens 2012, the Corporate Knights' 2012 Global 100 Most Sustainable Corporations in the World, and the Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship 2011 CSRI 50. To be recognized on an index is indeed value generating and leads to even greater recognition; companies on these lists have demonstrated an approximate 2.1% increase in value (Robinson, Kleffner, & Bertelsmann, 2011). The role that these intermediary assessments play is significant in flushing out the organizations that are focused on the *window dressing* of public relations, marketing, or compliance versus meaningful TBL impact (Robinson et al., 2011). The public views these indices as being fairly objective and professional (Dubbink et al., as cited in Robinson et al., 2011; Fowler & Hope, as cited in Robinson et al., 2011).

Secondly, a financial analysis of 1-year, 3-year and 5-year total trailing returns was performed of those remaining, and only those corporations that demonstrated this economic viability fulfilled the criteria for the data sources (Elkington, 1998; Googins et al., 2007; McElhaney, 2008; Savitz & Weber, 2006; Visser, 2011; Werbach, 2009; Zadek, 2007). At this time, there is no universal agreement for an exact measurement of *it*CSR. Cowe (2012) points out that, "there are no neat league tables showing wins, draws, defeats and points scored to pinpoint the best. There are as many ways of judging a company as there are judges" (para. 3). While it can be argued that bias and subjectivity are inherent in each of the indices, at the same time the indices serve as benchmarks for the corporations and externally among stakeholders (Heyns, 2012). In the aggregate, using a cross-reference between five indices served to reduce some of the bias and also provided greater evidence of social and environmental efficacy and balance between these two components. In short, the indices provided "useful ways for companies to conceptualize and to monitor their triple bottom line performance" (Googins et al., 2007, p. 124).

This analysis captures a moment in time in the short-term returns and reveals sustainable financial results in the long-term returns (D. McNamee, personal communication, September 5, 2012). The researcher conducted this analysis in November 2012. The S&P 500 Index is considered to be the most widely used market-cap weighted index of 500 U.S. corporate equities (Istock Analyst, 2008) so it was used as the financial benchmark. The S&P 500 Index showed 1-year total returns of 16.76% on November 20, 2012 (Morningstar, n.d.). Since industry standards allow for a swing in a benchmark evaluation on the one-year returns against the S&P 500 Index's returns, the researcher accepted any individual corporate 1-year trailing total return of 1% or higher (D. McNamee, personal communication, September 5, 2012). On the 3-year analysis, the researcher accepted a trailing total return of 5% or higher, as an acceptable comparative range to the S&P 500 Index total returns of 10.64% for the same 3-year period. Finally, on the 5-year analysis the individual total trailing returns had to surpass those of the S&P 500 Index returns of 1.50% for the same period. These three measurements of positive financial returns demonstrate financial strength, stability and sustainability (D. McNamee, personal communication, September 15, 2012).

Moreover, these three analyses are significant in confirming viability and longevity of corporate profitability, while still allowing for times of adversity, economic recessions (such as the one that took place in 2008), and ebbs and flows in operations (C. Doyle, personal communication, August 8, 2012; D. McNamee, personal communication, April 19, 2012; D. McNamee, personal communication, August 28, 2012.) Since TBL reporting is an important construct in the sophisticated models of corporate citizenship, and the literature underscores universal agreement to the importance of sustainable profitability, then studying the corporations that have demonstrated multi-year financial success is an essential ingredient of *it*CSR. The analysis yielded ten U.S. Fortune 500 global corporations. Of the ten, eight agreed to participate in this research. Additionally, all these companies subscribe to the GRI reporting guidelines for global corporations, which are important in establishing credibility and transparency in reporting within the global community (Epstein, 2008; Grayson et al., 2008; Global Reporting Initiative, n.d.).

The research followed a phenomenological qualitative approach designed to explore, describe, and gain understanding of *it*CSR development from the perspective of a senior executive in charge of *it*CSR at these companies. The phenomenological approach was used to describe details, explore the central concepts of *it*CSR development, and get in-depth data (Roberts, 2010). This approach was used to provide the varied narratives of the experience, rather than characteristics of the overall group or any statistical generalizations (Polkinghorne, 1989). Googins et al.'s (2007) four areas of the Global Leadership Network framework were explored to provide insight into what it means to *do CSR the right way*: (a) business strategy, (b) leadership, (c) operational excellence, and (d) engaged learning. This format of research falls under the social constructivism worldview, which is based on complex meanings and personal views of experiences. The survey questions were purposely broad so that participants had the latitude to construct the meaning of the situation. The researcher then interpreted the findings to make sense of the shared experiences among the participants (Creswell, 2007).

Summary of Findings for "have soul"

There are three subjects that the researcher observed as significant in this study on what motivates leaders to pursue *it*CSR development, and consequently why certain U.S. Fortune 500 global corporations have developed *it*CSR: circular wisdom, business logic, and executive efficacy. The findings reveal that these three areas are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they are all fundamental to explaining why these eight organizations have developed *it*CSR. Therefore, these three facets are present and uniquely blended at each organization.

Circular wisdom. The principle of *circularity* provides the context for *circle wisdom*, or *circular wisdom*. Circularity is constructed with a metaphoric image of Earth as a "spaceship" with finite resources and the necessity to function as a "cyclical ecological system" (Visser, 2011, p. 291). Indeed, as Sachs (as cited in Horrigan, 2010) notes, "The defining challenge of the twenty-first century will be to face the reality that humanity shares a common fate on a crowded planet" (p. 339). Choyt (2013) ties together the relevance of circularity to the premise of circle wisdom. Leaders need to move away from a hierarchical/triangular approach to business and instead adopt nature's more circular approach to how systems function and thrive. In addition, “[businesspeople] have to start working like nature and think about profit that is regenerative to communities” (Choyt, 2013, “Fragmentation,” para. 2).

Arguably, every company has values. Furthermore, *great* companies that have been studied by thought leaders like Collins (2001) have been identified as consistently demonstrating strong vision, positive financial returns, innovative thinking, collaboration and learning, resiliency, and agility for change (Kanter, 2009; Zadek 2007; Collins & Porras, 2002). However, only ten U.S. Fortune 500 global corporations met the criteria for this study. Why have only these U.S. Fortune 500 global corporations, in particular, been tagged as *it*CSR companies? First, they exhibit the qualities that put them squarely in the league of *great* companies. Secondly, all eight participants spoke of an unwavering commitment to core values of the company that date back to the origin and founder of the company, and in each case, there is an emphasis on the values of service to community. They reference corporate-wide overarching conviction *to improving lives and communities*. In all cases, it seems that these core values are the beacon that holds everyone in the company accountable to produce products and services designed to “change lives,” “improve lives,” “sustain lives,” “save lives,” “nurture the well-being of families,” “elevate communities,” and “help the next generation.” P3 provided this insight:

> Our corporation is unique in that we have long-standing [values that are] really our north-star on how the corporation behaves and how our employees are expected to work with the corporation. It is the foundation for all of the business decisions that we make….It really does set the expectations of our company to the world, and is that foundation of how we expect to act as corporate citizens.

While this company may be unique in the Fortune 500 publicly-traded arena, remarkably, it stands in good company among the eight participants of this study. P6 offered this: “I have read so many companies’ sustainability reports, and I go back to asking about the core values of the company…We have been doing CSR long before anybody knew what it was called because what we do is follow our values, and we follow what we call our internal moral compass.” So, there is a general consensus that strong core values that advocate for the care of community (which includes the environment in which community thrives) is at the epicenter of circle wisdom. P7 advised that:

> This may be relatively unique, but generally citizenship as we think about it at the company has really been part of the company from the beginning of its origin. And, I think you might find that for the other companies who are in a good position with CSR - that that is true and it is because of their values…The idea of giving back to the community, and helping nurture the well-being of people is always what the founder thought for the ethos of the company. Even environmental stewardship has always been a part of what he felt was important for the company, and it has always been part of the product, most importantly.

The epitome of circle wisdom is summed up best by the additional discussion that P6 provided.

> We are very active in the areas of community and economic development. We do believe that with a good environment, safe [neighborhoods], young people who are learning, maturing, and developing, you then have to make sure that the community is growing, and that there is real economic progress and job creation within the communities. If those things happen, we think you have helped

> improve society…And that is how we get to the TBL benefit…and usually then the economics of that community grow and ultimately that means more [growth and prosperity] and more [opportunities for our products] to be purchased, and bingo. It helps our business, and we think it also helps the families that are our customers.

The values that drive this circularity run deep in these organizations and represent each corporation's core ideology. As an example, this notion of core ideology is represented in Johnson & Johnson's Credo that is introduced as follows:

> Robert Wood Johnson, former chairman from 1932 to 1963 and a member of the Company's founding family, crafted Our Credo himself in 1943, just before Johnson & Johnson became a publicly traded company. This was long before anyone ever heard the term "corporate social responsibility." Our Credo is more than just a moral compass. We believe it's a recipe for business success. The fact that Johnson & Johnson is one of only a handful of companies that have flourished through more than a century of change is proof of that. (Johnson & Johnson, n.d., "Our credo values.")

From this research, there appears to be a strong connection to the construct of Rousseau's social contract, amplified for a contemporary global economic landscape. His social contract was based on his account of the civil state, which represented an inherent passage of mankind from animalistic instinct to morality-centered justice and "moral liberty" (Rousseau, 1920, p. 15). Two hundred and fifty years later, society finds itself at a crossroads marked by increasing usage of finite resources (Visser, 2011). Global corporations can no longer stand at a distance from playing a substantive and integral part in taking care of the planet and its people. Savitz and Weber (2006) refer to this as preserving the natural inheritance for future generations, which brings to light the notion of citizenship and moves its construct beyond a political theory application:

> Citizenship consists of a bundle of rights conventionally granted and protected by governments of states…The more that governmental power and sovereignty have come under threat, the more that relevant political functions have gradually shifted towards the corporate sphere — and it is at this point where "corporate involvement" into "citizenship" becomes an issue. (Matten et al., 2003, p. 109)

Accordingly, Rousseau's notion of finding a balance between individual freedom versus protection of people based on their needs (Cole, 2010) is a basis for appreciating the finer nuances of circularity. Four participants specifically mentioned examples of how their companies maintained their social obligations during difficult economic times, such as the 2008 recession, against the suggestions of their financial advisors. Two participants spoke about thought leaders in their organizations who harnessed the corporate stature and even the power of the company to proactively elevate public policy issues for the overall good, such as in areas of congressional leadership, education, and marriage equality.

Circular wisdom was also evident in conversations about protection of brand longevity and a self-perpetuating commitment to uphold the corporate presence and essence - both internally, in terms of its organizational culture, and externally, in terms of its brand legacy and identity as its tied to its unique products and services. P1 said that external corporate presence is preserved, "if it is done in a way that is respectful to all those communities and that elevates all those communities at the same time." Each of the eight participants believed that being a values-based organization puts their brand out in front of others in the market because they are genuinely making a positive impact on their present customer base, and cultivating future customers. P1 provided the following additional insight:

> It is a delicate balance. I mean, some believe it is a delicate balance, but our team has really done its due diligence in helping people understand that there is significant business risk to assuming that balance, and what I mean by that is, if people continue to assume that it is an either or, either I procure sustainably or I get a better price, or either I procure sustainably and ethically or I get to have more choices in factories with whom we work, that is a demonstration that people do not really understand the other aspects of risk to the brand and risk to their product. There are so many good case studies out there of the risk mitigation factors associated with ethical sourcing and of evidence that ethical sourcing pays for itself thousand-fold, but unfortunately, I think a lot of businesses out there probably have to get burned before seeing the light.

From the literature, Dhanda (2013) provides some additional context, particularly citing, "sustainability and profitability are closely intertwined and reinforcing...The sooner we all recognize this, the better - for business and society" (p. 11). This speaks to Hart and Milstein's (2003) Sustainable Value Framework in which they outline four key variables, where *it*CSR development can be a driver toward generating the economic value component of *it*CSR development - risk reduction, reputation, innovation, and growth. The factors in this model are time - on a scale of current placement to future placement, and space – characterized by the range between internal cultural preservation to an openness to new perspectives and knowledge (Dhanda, 2013). For example, ethical sourcing can reduce risk and increase reputation. It can be a source of innovation along the supply chain. However, quantifying the variables is arduous and the growth factor is not 100% predictable.

Certainly, as P1 noted, buying supplies from a distributor who employs indentured labor or child labor might be an easy way to produce a quick, higher ROI on the end products, but it is not a sustainable business strategy to rely on sketchy third parties' business practices. Furthermore, this business practice will catch up to the corporation, the ethics of the corporation will be called into question, and it will not play out well to reputation, customer loyalty, and employee morale. A product being ethically sourced might require some additional steps, e.g. upfront systems thinking to move the supplies effectively and efficiently from a lesser developed region, but once that is in motion, there is stability in the system, and then measuring ROI becomes a possibility. More significantly, the risk to the brand "halo" and the expenses of having to correct wrongdoing in the public eye, if caught having a less than stellar strategy with suppliers, are mitigated.

This notion of protecting the brand halo is tied into the kind of presence the corporation has established internally that fosters the organization's culture. That presence is a spirit based on a strong allegiance to the core ideologies that have been passed down through generations of CEOs and employees. The root of these core ideologies – an overarching commitment to deliver high quality products and services – is shared by all eight corporations. P3 commented that the company's heritage:

> It is founded on the good work that is done around the world and the innovative products that it has created. We try to bring that same level of innovation that we have in our products to our sustainability.…This is not a management doctrine or a manifesto. This is truly cultural and I have never experienced in my career anything like it.

All of the other participants commented on their own corporate cultures and the notable, widespread commitment among the employees to the core values and ideology. Several participants tied this commitment back to the innovative nature of the organization. They said an innovative spirit inherently relies on collaborative efforts and a continuous drive to make something better and invent something else, so *it*CSR activities are an extension of the instinct and foundation.

This innovative spirit also generates energy to "keep getting ahead of things, versus reacting to market conditions," said a couple of the participants. In fact, this spirit and energy to create, innovate, stay in front of the market, and even define and lead market conditions seem to permeate each of the eight cultures. This common denominator is a driver in understanding why these companies have gravitated to *it*CSR development, as well as providing insight into how it happens. All innovation for these companies revolves around designing products and services for maximum meaningful impact.

Notably, each of the eight participants alluded to the corporation's vulnerability. They all talked about *it*CSR development as a journey, and they will never be perfect. They were humble in the discussion about taking risks and putting themselves front and center on social and environmental issues that could expose the corporation to criticism.

They were all clear in the understanding that they are vulnerable because they will make mistakes along the way. However, as Brown's (TedTalks Director, 2010) research on vulnerability indicated, an absence of vulnerability yields a feeling of being numb, which robs people of joy, gratitude and a sense of purpose. When that happens, people become afraid, and then they seek to turn uncertainty into myopic certainty. And that certainty breeds fixation, stickiness, and deeply embedded mental models that are hard to shake. This behavior, this absence of vulnerability and compassion, do not bode well along the path to *it*CSR development because, as previously described, *it*CSR requires agility, a consciousness, courage to step into the ring, to get messy, to admit imperfection, to show humility, to accept uncertainty, and to put the corporate resources on the table. *It*CSR requires vulnerability.

Most significantly, though, these companies inherently understand that the viability of business and society are inherently intertwined, and that this bond is becoming a tighter weave of dynamic parts as the world's challenges grow (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2012; Idowu, 2009; Kanter, 2009; Mainwaring, 2011; Schumpeter, 2012). The participants all had a central belief in the necessity of *the power of three* - that the private sector, plus civil society, plus the public sector can have the power to design and realize meaningful impact that is greater than the sum of their individual parts in the equation for social good, economic prosperity, and a thriving ecological system. P1 commented that "If you look at sustainability specifically, and I think CSR in the general sense, the sort of necessary triumvirate to make the world a better place between private sector, between government, and between NGOs is essential and it is essential that all three of those players have a strong presence and have a strong say in shaping society."

P6 added, “We have to realize that for our business to prosper and for our business to grow, society itself has to grow.”

Business logic. It seems that with these eight corporations, “the business case” was not consistently present for *it*CSR development. Rather, the majority submitted that *it*CSR has developed intrinsically, not because “it is the right thing to do,” but because it is a very logical, holistic way of living and working. Four participants said that they are cautious when they hear colleagues at other companies using these statements. They believed that these statements could be a little disingenuous. Instead, P1 pointed out that they “shift the conversation” from one that has to do with meeting CSR targets to a conversation about customizing CSR to incorporate it into the different business units and their goals and targets. P1 went on to add: “When you talk to other companies out there, and you say, ‘why do you guys do CSR or why do you guys do sustainability,” and if the first thing that comes out of their mouth is ‘it is the right thing to do,’ you can tell that they do not really actually have much level of maturity when it comes to the business drivers for CSR.” P1 believed that this “reversal of conversation” has helped make great in-roads with some areas of the organization that are a little bit more challenged in *it*CSR development. P6 further noted:

> It was not done because back then the care of the environment was in vogue. It was because our leadership said this makes sense, and also there was a business motivation. We started realizing that by using less fuel and recycling, we saved money, and it was also good for the environment. If it is in the DNA of the company, you just somehow know that it is the thing to do.

On the other hand, these eight corporations do believe it *is* the right thing to do, and they believe it in an organic way. It is not something that they *retrofit* for the organization, but rather something that is inherent in their business model. *It*CSR does not require "a business case," per se. That is not mean that they do not build in measurements and track impact, but they follow an iterative process wherein qualitative aspects are understood and accepted. Quite possibly, *it*CSR is not only a movement, but it is its own business model within an organizational development context.

ItCSR is its own business model. The participating companies *lead* their businesses with *it*CSR principles. P6 noted that, "To me, CSR and environmental sustainability only can be done, and done properly, when it is just innately the right thing. And when you try to apply all of this, what I call, highfalutin voodoo to it, it really does not work." P1 commented that "for us, it did start with the social and it started with the personality of the company and it started with the drivers of the company and basically what kind of company we wanted to be." Only later did they "start to see the creation of an identification of the business value for sustainability." P3 remarked that "[with a] public health issue, the conversation is not about what product can we sell, but what can we do as a company. And that is typically how those conversations start." P3 further noted that "they govern *it*CSR innately through the same lens as they govern the company," and this seemed to ring true for seven of the eight participants' organizations. For one organization, evidence of systems based thinking was inconclusive.

Each participant indicated a built-in commitment within the organization to honor the respective legacy and protect the brand "halo" by leading with their values.

Furthermore, the participants indicated that preserving the reputation of the brand, and even heightening it by continuously evolving its significance, is naturally a driver for these businesses. P7 stated:

> The research that we do from a brand perspective, we can see over time the increasing importance that [our customers] are placing on things like environmental responsibility, and safety, and giving back to community, and protecting the well-being of [people]. Those are becoming increasing factors into our overall brand reputation. It is, for us, an obvious brand driver that has long term business value for the company and that will pay off in the long-term by making us become the company that [our constituents] love and trust, that is, from an overall justification for the company.

Conversely, this study finds that the model of leading with *it*CSR principles manifests in a unique way for each company. For example, a couple of the corporations run their businesses with a heavy emphasis on metrics. As a result, these companies apply performance metrics to all the activities that affect the social and environmental concerns. Two other corporations take a more qualitative approach to their business, so they rely on gut and leadership instincts more frequently, and they apply more trust-based approaches to the notion of their impact. Still other corporations realize that as the marketplace evolves, they need to focus on metrics and employing business language to frame *it*CSR for certain operations. P7 explained how *it*CSR manifested itself at the company.

> It had always been part of what we are doing in terms of charitable giving and part of the community and environmental responsibility and responsibility in our

supply chain, and sometimes they are top-down efforts, but often times they are pretty diffuse and bottom-up. Then we had a realization and understanding that we needed to combine those things together in order to have a more overall vision for CSR, or citizenship, as we call it, and to both leverage the competencies across the different disciplines and make sure they were adding up to an overall message, or an overall story.

Much as the world would like to see uniformity in the *it*CSR development model, the study reveals that there will always be differences between companies - based on the unique history, evolution, development of product lines, growth trajectories, manufacturing characteristics, geographical spread, nature of the operations, and the dynamics that affect group culture – according to the fabric of the organization. The research suggests these unique attributes are necessary in the entire societal ecosystem to breed different forms of innovation, and touch on different aspects of society and environment. Therefore, a critical component of *it*CSR development is to herald the distinctive qualities that the organization has to offer, and harness each of them to design for meaningful impact.

Business drivers. Despite skepticism about the notion of "a business case," it was evident that there are business drivers at work. Phrased a different way, there are competitive advantages to running a business using an *it*CSR model, and these advantages are self-sustaining and therefore become inherent business drivers. Consequently, *it*CSR companies are oriented around: a) their ongoing fiduciary responsibilities as a good company; and b) creating shared values, that reinforces an intersection of mutual interests with employees, strengthens customer loyalty, and inherently produces deeper bonds with local communities, and these shared values are constructed on the backbone of innovation that keeps the company ahead of the market and builds progress and positive momentum.

Fiduciary responsibilities. An essential ingredient in the meaningful TBL impact construct of *it*CSR development is economic success and viability. P2 commented that "if we are satisfying the needs of [our constituents], our shareholders should expect a fair return." P6 observed:

> We do manage the dollars very mindfully, knowing that they are the shareholders' dollars, not ours. But… again, I view [application of TBL] as something that is natural, as opposed to something that we sat down one day and said this is how we are going to apply this strategically. We do adhere philosophically to the collective impact model and we've been doing that for [many] years.

Dhanda (2013) supports the importance of the fiduciary responsibilities and adds that *it*CSR dovetails with the firm's economic goals and targets by pushing an organization to invest more resources toward implementing a proactive environmental program, for example. The proactive approach has been known to decrease future environmental-related expenses and risks more than a reactive approach. Thus, there is high probability of a positive return on investment. Essentially, *it*CSR is a holistic strategy to protect shareholder value and, one participant in particular noted, it is a more realistic and sustained approach to business in these contemporary times.

A participant spoke of their business adhering to a collective impact model, which was cited as including: a) making sure that the environment is protected, b) helping with community health and wellness, c) creating products and services that support family life and living, d) engaging in youth education, and e) promoting economic development. The participant further said, "We absolutely believe that when it comes to individuals, you have to focus on health and wellness, because when you do not have health and when you do not live in a society or environment with access to healthcare to keep you well, you are not going to be able to succeed in anything else." P2 indicated a similar thinking:

> I don't know that I can say we were always driven by profit. If you look back, we have always been proud of our sense of community at this company, and our employees have been proud of it. So, I would be uncomfortable saying that even long ago we were driven by profit. But when I think about really accelerating how we are approaching the development and articulation of sustainable business practices, there are some moments that come to mind. I would say one of them, actually, is when our CEO decided to direct and support a huge effort in education, including substantial funding and hands-on mentorship programs between students and employees.

Hand-in-hand with the fiduciary responsibilities of operating as an *it*CSR company is the understanding among the participants (as explicitly referenced by half, and implicitly referred by the others) that they not only need to be leaders in governance and compliance on a global scale, but they also need to be proactively engaged in self-regulation. P3's perspective came from understanding that "consumers are expecting products to be, first of all, safe. That is number one. They are more conscious than ever about the ingredients that go into products. So, that is a tangential aspect of sustainability." And P1 believed that:

> It makes sense for us to lead the industry because the alternative is that local

> governments will regulate the industry…in the absence of industry leadership. In lieu of industry leadership, regulators take action and say we will ban this product or we will regulate this product, or we are going to charge a fee, or they take action that they feel are best at solving the issue because industry is not solving it. That costs us a lot of money. For example, there can be variances between one community and the next, if they have different regulatory schemes. For a global company, when you have to say to your distribution centers that this town gets this specification, and in this town gets a different one, and in this town the product is banned altogether, and in this town you have to charge your customers, and in this town you have to make the product out of a different blend of material, that breaks down your supply chain really quickly, and causes massive inefficiencies within your supply chain, and that inefficiency is an unnecessary cost to our bottom line that could have been avoided. Point after point, we can really demonstrate that values driving the company also makes absolute financial sense, and inherently also makes absolute business sense to the company. That's the sweet spot.

P2 commented that sometimes self-regulation means driving an initiative that is counterintuitive for the company in the short-term, but makes sense in terms of preserving community well-being, and ultimately creating greater prosperity that leads to the potential for more customers in the long-term.

Shared values. Another strong recognition among these eight participants as a driver for developing *it*CSR is the value the organizations place on connecting with their constituents at a deeper, more impactful level. The constituents include employees, customers, and the wider community. Maintaining the trust of customers by making good environmental and social decisions is important to these organizations. They want their customers' respect, and they want to create products, services, and solutions that meet the customer where they are or, even better, where they are going to be. P1 indicated that they are "dedicated to remaining on the bleeding edge of culture and relevance." P2 said that they "want to be, and want to continue to act responsibility, and we want to be on the leading edge…And that is what we do when we design a product or [come up with a new design], but we also want to do that in sustainability and CSR and we want to be better…We strive to be better." Moreover, customers are increasingly expecting companies to have a conscience. Horovitz (2013) reports that "With nearly a third of the population driving this trend [known as capitalism with a conscience], kindness is becoming the nation's newest currency" (para. 5).

Staying ahead of unmet needs, keeping up with the global pulse, engaging customer feedback, and staying relevant are important factors in maintaining sustainable longevity as a corporation. In several cases, the nature of the business compels a built-in responsibility to the world and its people. In other cases, like many *great* companies, there is a strong pull to "raise the bar" that is in a constant state of change anyway.

Talent recruiting, development, and retention were top-of-mind for all eight participants as a major benefit of *it*CSR. Therefore, it is logical that these companies place a premium on employee pride. P1 noted:

> The longer someone sticks around the more productive they become… And it gives us the ability to recruit the best people in the world to come work for us… So, if we are aligned with [employees'] values, they will stick around with the

> company for the long-term…[Particularly], survey after survey shows us that sustainability is one of the primary social values of people in the [young professional] age demographic. Really one of the reasons they choose to stick around with the company is because of their belief that we are doing right by the earth.

Furthermore, these participants are demonstrating that building proactive wellness programs for employees not only helps them to be more productive because the employees are healthier, both in physical care and educational health support, but also the company is saving money. Some of the participants have been able to track the reduction in benefits and insurance costs, which affect the economic component of the TBL. That is the sweet spot, as P1 pointed out, of designing for meaningful, circular impact on the TBL.

It is for this reason that all the participants have a central focus on education and/or healthcare. P2 commented on the foresight that is necessary in *it*CSR development.

> We saw that we were going to be struggling with finding the right talent and human capital which is so critical to the competitive nature of our business. And then our CEO saw the statistics in the marketplace that we were losing a third of our kids out of high school and even more from a minority standpoint. So, there is this confluence of a lot of things. A talented workforce is critical to us. A diverse workforce is critical to us. When you see that over 40% of African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans were dropping out of high school, you start to consider what that does to our talent pipeline? And you see where things are

headed, and begin to realize that this is not sustainable and we have to do something about this.

There was a general consensus on the importance that their respective corporations place on building a diverse workforce, and they all proactively offered this information. There was a strong sense of pride from each participant that they fostered diversity, and in many cases, had higher-than-average tenure among their employees. All of the participants acknowledged that the employees are the backbone of the organization, and having a strong talent base under an *it*CSR framework helps to attract and retain key talent, especially significant among the next generation who have a greater aptitude for wanting to be positive change agents in the world. Almost all of the participants specifically stated that *it*CSR development is important for bringing in the next generation of talent who express a desire to work in an organization where they can also contribute to a higher purpose. In interviews with the younger generation, one of their top three questions is about the company's community profile, and what the company does to promote activism among employees.

In fact, these findings support the literature. The incoming generation of young adults highlights a new level of social consciousness and demand for participation in nonprofit affairs from their employer (Kanter, 2009; Tapscott, 2009). They are driving what Mainwaring (2011) calls "contributory consumption" (p. 3). A Harris poll found that 97% of "GenY," also known as "Millennials," who were born between 1982 and 1999, and up to 2004, and are at the early stages of their career trajectories, want to have an impact on the world and belong to an organization that is serving the greater good (Bornstein, 2007; Horovitz, 2013). Furthermore, the 2006 Cone Millennial Cause Study found that 80% of Millennials want to work for a company that cares about society and is contributing to its well-being by showing a deep commitment to improving the world (McElhaney, 2008), and “this trend-setting, if not free-spending group of 95 million Americans, …are broadly convinced that doing the right thing isn't just vogue, but mandatory” (para. 4). Finally, Bhattacharya, Sen, et al. (2011), studied the link between employee retention and the notion of *it*CSR and proved that there is a strong correlation.

Furthermore, by designing business strategies that tap into shared values with employees, the companies foster momentum for change and positive results. Encouraging involvement engages the employees into owning their own role in designing for impact. These companies recognize that *it*CSR initiatives cannot all be driven top-down. There has to be a groundswell that bubbles up too. P2 noted on this point:

> We want it to be organic. We want it to take off. We do not want our efforts to be 100% orchestrated. You are always going to have to have certain things orchestrated because some of them are just huge things that you have to operationalize. But, when the whole company is raising itself up through individuals taking their own initiative and driving change, that is when you start to realize, “Oh, this is happening. We are really driving some change.”

These companies also place a premium on their brand reputation and customer satisfaction. While two of the participants questioned the statistics on consumer loyalty to “greener” products, according to a recent survey, 70% of consumers would switch brands to one with a good cause with all things being equal (Bhattacharya, Sen, et al., 2011). Meanwhile, in another survey, social responsibility was featured as the third highest attribute in ability to predict reputation, but it is the attribute about which consumers know the least (McElhaney, 2008). Nevertheless, *it*CSR can help customer relationships by building loyalty and brand reputation, and can improve business performance by revealing new revenue streams and creating a positive marketing image (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2012; McWilliams & Siegel, 2011) because "People want to build relationships with strong brands…They want to give them their business, and they want to work for the winning team" (McElhaney, 2008, p. 36). Thus, *it*CSR generates innovation, creativity, and ongoing learning that continue to push the organization and society to new initiatives and solutions (Amabile & Kramer, 2012; Werbach, 2009).

Executive efficacy. This study on why U.S. Fortune 500 global corporations have developed *it*CSR would be remiss without giving proper attention to executive efficacy. While the manifestation of executive leadership varied between the eight participants, overall it was clear that without distinct involvement and all-encompassing commitment from the c-suite, any kind of social and environmental initiatives would not be sustainably embedded into the thinking of the organization. In some of the companies, the CEO has been passionately involved in driving *it*CSR development, and in pushing key initiatives to the front of all strategic discussions. In other cases, the CEO been front and center, but the efforts are driven by a larger base of leadership.

As leaders of eight of these global corporations, the CEOs are very involved in *it*CSR development, according to the participants. They all uphold the high ethical standards and subscribe to the philosophy that the system is not sustainable under a different business model. This approach holds true for each participant's CEO, whether the mastermind behind the company's *it*CSR development, or successor to a founder who set the corporation's core ideologies that ultimately drove *it*CSR, or one who takes on the characteristics of shared leadership with respect to how *it*CSR evolves and matures. Five participants described their current CEO as visionary; all participants described the executive leadership as being visionary, in the past and or in the present. Four participants characterized their CEO as courageous, specifically noting their position on social and environmental commitments relative to the effects of recessionary times. The leaders believe in a higher purpose than making money for the shareholders. P1 noted:

> To me, ethical is a characteristic, and in the most pure sense of the word, ethical, because you never see our CEO forego his ethics or the ethics of his company for a quick win. And that can be really difficult to do in a publicly-traded company. We are, like any publicly-traded company, at the mercy of quarterly predictions of our stock by Wall Street and we are at the mercy of the demand for quarterly improvements year after year and quarter after quarter. And, I have seen a lot of companies out there sacrifice their ethics in the short-term to make sure they are on the right trajectory in Wall Street's eyes. I have never seen our CEO violate his ethics to make sure we meet a quarterly earnings report. It does not mean he does not demand efficiency and performance out of every one of us, but he also refuses to allow us to violate our ethics and the ethics of this company, or the brand ethics of this company, in order to achieve those short-term gains.

As noted, these leaders still hold their people accountable to high standards, and they still answer to the fiduciary responsibilities of the firm as a publicly-traded entity. However, they hold true the notion of circular wisdom in driving sustainable economic results for the company, and they will take a hit on the quarterly return when they know the long-term result will pay off. They believe that profitability is enhanced if the entire value chain is elevated, whether they are the ones leading the initiative and the drive, or they are the ones that are leading by example by being engaged, authentic, and consistent in their actions and words. All of the participants indicated a strong commitment from the top to uphold the values of the company. Furthermore, company leaders are engaged in committing the firm's global resources. For example, P3 stated:

> Ultimately, what we all recognize is that the public sector cannot solve the world's most intractable problems alone. It takes the private sector, the public sector, academia, MNCs all working together to figure out how to solve some of these issues. And that is very much a core tenet of what our previous CEO and current CEO believe. We have to participate. We have to provide what we can - whether it is resources, whether it is expertise, whether it is relationships.

Most of the participants described their CEO as passionate, and all of them indicated that the CEO is personally dedicated to a specific initiative, whether it is healthcare and wellness, education, or longevity of the people along the supply chain. There is no doubt that, at the helm of these companies, these leaders exude many of the qualities in the literature that go hand-in-hand with transformational and authentic leadership. Authentic leaders are described as being visionary, disciplined, innovation-focused, humble, and soulful. In particular, in a review of 1,000 studies to define the characteristics of *great* leaders, authenticity was the most common attribute (George et al., 2007). They put the team and business ahead of their own individual gain; they empower those around them and spotlight others' strengths; and they are employee-oriented and customer centric (Collins, 2001; Drucker, 2006; George, Sims, McLean, & Mayer, 2007; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Waldman et al., 2006). Authentic leaders are thus fulfilled when they have led “a group to achieve a worthy goal,” have empowered others, and “thus made the world a better place…That’s the challenge and the fulfillment of authentic leadership” (George et al., 2007, p. 138).

Furthermore, the participants indicated that their executive leaders recognize that just writing checks does not create as much impact in communities. One participant talked about the kind of one-dimensional, linear approach to philanthropy that does not allow for a deeper understanding of the requirements needed to create systemic improvement and betterment. If corporations are not engaged as strategic partners with other sectors of society, there is a possibility that the impact of the activity will not be as great as it could have been. One can draw an analogy to the ancient proverb of the blind men examining the elephant. Each individually only takes away their own perspective, but collectively they put the pieces together to realize the whole part.

The executive efficacy measurement is the degree that the executives harness the strength of the people and the organization to work toward meaningful TBL impact. Specifically, leaders of multi-dimensional businesses are increasingly being called upon to make “intellectual and behavioral shifts...[and] for the entire private sector to come together as a third pillar of social change, working with governments and philanthropic organizations to advance the well-being of all” (Mainwaring, 2011, p. 6). More than 50 global corporations rank in the top 100 largest economies in the world (Googins et al., 2007; Zadek, 2007). Employing more than 90 million people and producing 25% of the world’s gross product, these global corporations are among the largest consumers of the Earth’s resources, and the beneficiaries of many people’s talents and output.

Finally, it is to be mentioned that executive efficacy would be weak without the leadership role that these participants, and their colleagues, have within their respective organizations and their commitment to *it*CSR principles. Whether it is one Chief Responsibility Officer (CRO) or a team of environmental and community advocates, these leaders are front-runners in systems thinking, in strategic and inventive planning, and they all seemed to be a critical driver in designing for meaningful impact. Each of the participants in this study was highly accomplished, intelligent, and persuasive. They all were very good communicators and public representatives of their companies. Though their backgrounds were somewhat diverse – public policy, environmental science, non-profit and community advocacy, law, and PR/marketing – they all had extensive professional experience, and all were very knowledgeable about their company's capabilities and resources. Furthermore, there was a noticeable, deep-seeded, humanitarian personal interest among the participants that was fostered in these organizations and their roles and career trajectories.

Executive efficacy, in fact, is a critical component in why these corporations have developed *it*CSR, and it seems to come in the form of shared leadership. Angus-Leppan et al. (2010) believe that shared leadership can improve sense-making capabilities, as well as identify emergent leaders who are not necessarily formally appointed into a leadership role but exhibit leadership characteristics nonetheless. In fact, some of the leaders of *it*CSR initiatives may not even be readily identifiable at times (Senge et al., 2008). They may be people within an organization who have no real power of authority, but may be:

open-minded pragmatists, people who care deeply about the future but who are suspicious of quick fixes, emotional nostrums, and superficial answers to complex problems. They have a hard-earned sense of how their organizations work, tempered by humility concerning what any one person can do alone. (Senge et al., 2008, “A Final Word,” para. 1)

Recommendations for Future Research

There seems to be an endless amount of further research that can be conducted, as this researcher believes that the study of *it*CSR development is as broad as any other model for organizational development. Some ideas for future research about what motivates U.S. Fortune 500 global corporations to develop *it*CSR include:

1. Explore the correlation between the development of manners among executive leaders and the corporate culture.
2. Compare the vision, mission, values, and cultures of the corporations that are now defunct with these most thriving organizations to learn more about the characteristics of core ideologies.
3. Study the intersection between a consciousness around kindness and vulnerability in having a corporate soul that promotes *it*CSR development.
4. Explore what kinds of symbols, rituals, stories, icons, music, and fun executive leaders use to nurture the corporate soul and core ideologies.
5. Study the connection between right side of the brain strengths among CEOs and development of *it*CSR.
6. Investigate the effects of “play at work” on the collective impact.

“Have soul” conclusion

It is quite relevant to resurrect the exploration of corporate soul so as to bring it into focus within the *it*CSR business model framework. The findings remarkably reveal that all eight of these corporations, first and foremost, have resilient core ideologies around improving lives and communities that run deep through their corporate spirit and energy, demonstrating that it is part of their DNA as well. This soulfulness and the DNA in each of the eight companies are grounded in circular wisdom and virtuous responsibility, upheld by and passed down through the c-level leadership, and nurtured by the employees. Furthermore, they all indicate a central belief in *the power of three* - that the private sector, plus civil society, plus the public sector can have the power to design and realize meaningful impact that is greater than the sum of their individual parts in the equation for social good, economic prosperity, and a thriving ecological system. It was unexpected to find such similarity at the root of all of these eight U.S.-based corporations, and it was inspiring to think that they span industries, origins, growth patterns, products and services, and administrative styles.

It is disheartening, however, to know that less than a dozen U.S. Fortune 500 global corporations were identified as closely resembling *it*CSR. Perhaps it truly is not an exaggeration to say that the world has been witness to too many stories of greed, fiduciary irresponsibility, corporate selfishness, bad manners, myopic thinking, and unimpressive leadership. Millennials, in particular, “who got burned by the recession feel a resentment to consumerism [and demand kindness in a] show-me-what-you're doing-for-others sense...Some [companies] are talking the talk but not walking the walk…Several large retailers, for example, embrace the image of kindness by asking customers at check-out to donate to charitable causes. That's, arguably, a far cry from a sustained and deep-seated effort from within." (para. 10-13).

On the other hand, as Hollender points out, "business [is] the only force in today's world that's got it all: a universal presence, an ability to get things done quickly and on as little as a CEO's say-so, and the economic clout required to engineer widespread systemic change with remarkable speed. Business is our best and indeed last hope, and it's time to put that hope to the test" (as cited in Visser, 2011, p. xv).

To that end, it might be a wise decision for the leaders (and subsequently the employees) of other U.S. global corporations to embrace a development of the *CSR* movement toward *it*CSR sophistication and pay attention to nurturing the corporate soul and its moral compass. There is no doubt of the existence of other publicly-traded U.S. MNCs that have this bedrock sense of identity and are ethically and morally grounded; they just need to step into the *it*CSR ring more boldly. Then again, there is equal confidence that there are some U.S. MNCs that need to spend more time on their core ideologies to develop an authentic and responsible foundation. The Cowardly Lion character in the Wizard of Oz getting some courage comes to mind, and so, as Visser (2011) provides, "Responsibility is the set of prints we leave in the sand, the mark of our passage. What tracks will you leave…The choice, as always, is yours" (p. 6).

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