

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

It is posited in this study that relationships with stakeholders are an inseparable part of communication in organisations. Although stakeholders are generally associated with organisational goal attainment and corporate success, not all stakeholders that are important are necessarily important from an economic perspective. The larger society and ecology of which the economy – and therewith organisations – is part implies societal and ecological stakeholders that do not hold immediate benefits in terms of profitability. It is argued throughout this study that even though societal stakeholders generally hold less threat or opportunity for corporate goal attainment than say stockholders or employees, they are important when considering long-term sustainability.

When considering business-societal relationships from the perspective of sustainability, organisations are seen to be intertwined with their society and have to bear some of the social responsibility by means of good governance and corporate citizenship. One of the critical components of citizenship is CSR that is implemented in organisations by means of CSI with financial assistance and other kinds of contributions to social and developmental causes. This study explored and described one of the relationships that emanate from CSI: the relationship between corporate donors and recipient NPOs. Because organisations cannot implement CSI activities on their own, they fund NPOs to act as implementers of initiatives.

This concluding chapter shows how the compilation structure of the thesis was used to address the research questions and research objectives, and synthesises the conclusions to illustrate the contribution of this study to communication and relationship maintenance within CSI.

7.2 STRUCTURE AND SYNTHESIS

The research reported on in this thesis set out to answer four research questions in order to address the main premise to explore and describe the stakeholder relationship between corporate organisations and the NPOs they fund within the context of CSI.

The research questions, true to the overall qualitative nature of the study, unfolded as the research progressed. The initial exploration identified the two parts that would direct the rest of the project when it was concluded that the relationship between donors and NPOs was problematic in some respects, and that the indicators used to explore and describe stakeholder relationships may not be suited for this context. These two conclusions resulted in the formulation of four research questions. Two of these questions are mostly seated within the realm of applied research while one was within the scope of basic research and the last could be part of both applied and basic research goals. The distinction between basic and applied communication made by Du Plooy (2009:50) is that basic

research points to the investigation that develops new theory or comments on existing theory to expand the scientific knowledge base, similar to the metascience world in Mouton's (1996:9) *three worlds model*. Applied research, therefore, demonstrates inquiry into the application of theory to solve practical problems or address practical issues just like the world of scientific research described by Mouton (1996:9). In this study research question 1 (How do the parties in the corporate donor-NPO relationship view it in terms of control, trust, commitment and other realities of this relationship?) and research question 4 (What are the predominant communication challenges in the relationship between corporate organisations and the NPOs they fund?) are questions that called for applying theory in order to describe applied problems. Research question 3 (How can the relationship between corporate organisations and NPOs possibly be defined and measured?) however, called for basic research to develop new theoretical definitions and constructs. Research question 2 (What is the nature of stakeholder relationship management between corporate organisations and the NPOs they fund according to the literature?) could be seen as both applied and basic research as both the theory and the literature were used to direct the applied and basic parts of this study.

Figure 7.1 graphically depicts the two streams of research and the progression of the five articles answering four research questions.

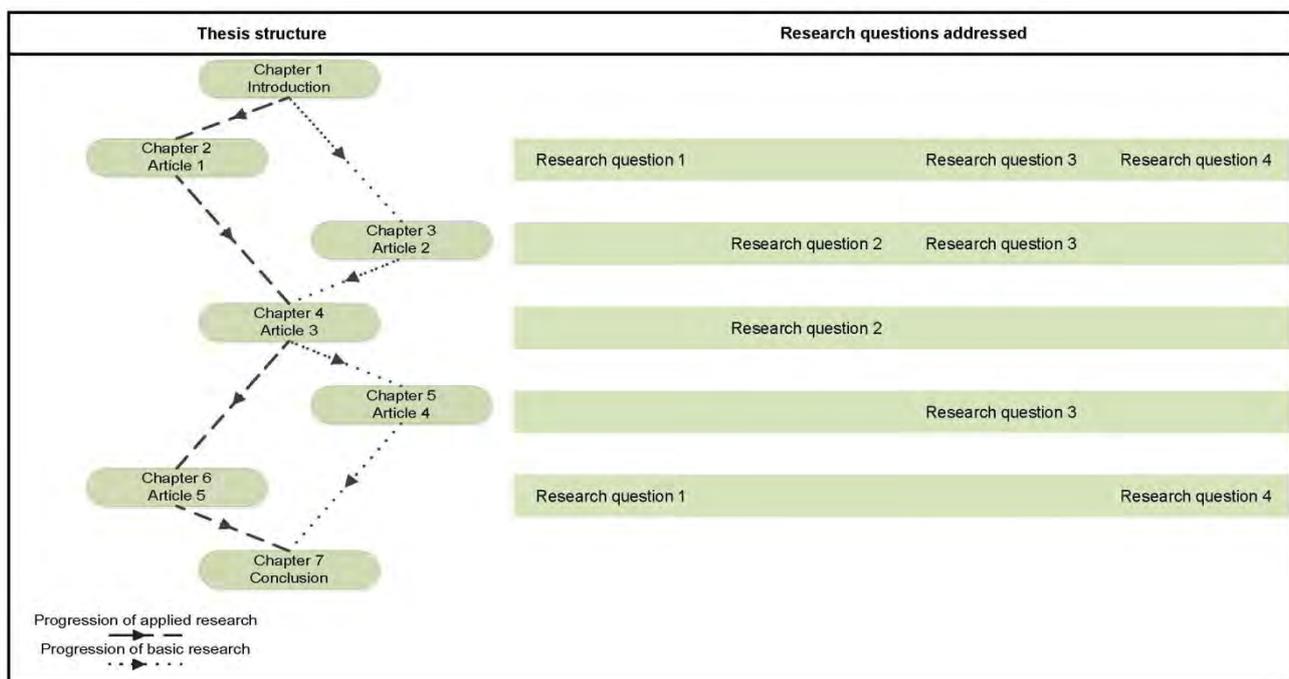


Figure 7.1: Thesis structure

With the interplay of basic and applied research each article addressed one or more research questions/objectives to form a scientific unit while still representing five stand-alone research articles. In the subsequent sections each research question/research objective is addressed separately followed by a synthesis to address the main issue of this study.

7.3 PERCEPTIONS OF NPOs AND DONORS REGARDING THEIR RELATIONSHIP

Research question 1: How do donors and NPOs view their relationship in terms of control, trust, commitment and other relational realities?

Research objective 1: To explore the latent constructs of control, trust, commitment and other relational realities in donor-NPO relationships as perceived by the parties reflected in the results of partially structured interviews and a quantitative online survey among employees of corporate social investment departments of corporate organisations in South Africa

While the partially structured interviews focused on negative perceptions the parties have of each other and of their relationship with each other (Chapter 2/Article 1), the survey results indicated that the relationship between donors and NPOs is not negative in its entirety (Chapter 6/Article 5).

The participants in the interviews described the relationship as unequal, lacking trust, commitment and transparency from both sides. The disproportionate power that resides with donors is a characteristic that was emphasised repeatedly by the participants. Both parties perceived the NPOs as being relatively incompetent and the length of funding terms was evidently a contentious issue between donors and NPOs. The differences between the parties – different organisational goals, contrasting motivations and expectations – were apparent from the interviews. Other relational problem areas that were identified are time and resource constraints, especially from the side of NPOs.

The findings based on the corresponding surveys are based on a contextualised measurement and the result was a more positive view on the relationship. The more positive perceptions evident from the survey results could be due to the fact that the contextualised measure resulted in a more balanced and realistic view of the relationship where the participants in the partially structured interviews were questioned mainly with the existing relationship constructs as defined by Hon and Grunig (1999).

NPOs seem content with control mutuality (Mean: 3.54) and generally accept their dependence on their donors (Mean: 3.90). They have mixed feelings about the dominant position of donors (Mean:

2.94) and the possibility of future independence from donors (Mean: 3.02). Similarly, donors generally feel that some of the power in the relationship resides with them (Mean: 3.51) and they believe that they act in a sustainable and responsible manner with their powerful position (Mean: 3.62,) while the donors also show lower agreement about their dominant position (Mean: 2.63).

Although NPOs generally seem to trust their donors' intention, integrity (Mean: 3.71) and competence (Mean: 3.82), they are unwilling to hand decision-making power to their donors (Mean: 2.70). Donors also seem to trust the integrity, intention (Mean: 3.61), skills (3.34) and consideration on the part of the NPOs while they also are unwilling to allow NPOs to take decisions in the relationship (Mean: 2.57).

Although the parties differ in their perception of commitment in their relationship, both seem generally confident in their own commitment and the other party's commitment to them. The NPOs perceive their donors as desiring a long-term commitment to them (Mean: 3.57). They perceive also their relationship with their donors as being generally affectionate (Mean: 4.40) and believe that their donors are concerned with compliance to governance requirements (Mean: 3.90) and the causes they fund (Mean: 4.61). Donors want to relate to their NPOs and generally feel NPOs also have the desire to relate to them and maintain a relationship with them (Mean: 3.80). They also generally value their relationship with NPOs, experience loyalty from NPOs and seek a long-term bond with the NPOs they fund (Mean: 3.50). Donors also reported that they have an obligation to relate to NPOs (Mean 4.14) because of governance requirements.

Regarding the relational realities experienced by NPOs, they generally believe that they are transparent (Mean: 4.31) and, to a lesser extent, that their donors are transparent (Mean: 3.52). NPOs also believe that they understand and accommodate the differences between them and their donors (Mean: 3.96) and understand that their needs are insatiable (Mean: 3.58). Donors also perceive themselves (Mean: 3.18) and the NPOs (Mean: 3.32) as generally transparent. They also believe they are accommodating of the differences between them and the NPOs (Mean: 3.97) and generally agree that they require reporting on all expenses (Mean: 3.90). The lower mean scores here were for their perception regarding the understanding from NPOs of their profitable nature and the output demands that flow from it (Mean: 3.07). They also seem less confident about the NPOs' understanding of the differences between them (Mean: 3.11) and show a neutral opinion about the internal constraints of NPOs (Mean: 2.79).

The overall mean scores for the relationship indicators from both surveys are positive although lower mean scores for some of the contextual elements show relationship challenges. Some of the challenges visible from the survey results include varied responses with reference to the dominance and power of donors and the unwillingness of parties to trust each other when it comes to decision

making. The positive aspects highlighted in the survey results comprise general affection perceived by the parties and agreement in terms of compliance commitment and the obligation to relate to each other.

The nature of stakeholder relationship management between corporate organisations and the NPOs they fund is generally positive when measured with contextual relationship indicators and while relational challenges need to be addressed; the relationship shows opportunities for sustainable development.

7.4 THE NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP: PERSPECTIVES FROM LITERATURE AND PRACTICE

Research question 2: What is the conceptual nature of stakeholder relationship management between corporate organisations and the NPOs they fund?

Research objective 2: To explore the conceptual nature of stakeholder relationships between corporate organisations and the NPOs they fund by means of partially-structured interviews and a critical appraisal of literature

Two of the articles (Chapter 3/Article 2 and Chapter 4/Article 3) in the thesis addressed this research question. The first article interpreted responses of partially structured interviews and found that the relationship indicators used to describe the relationship seemed unfitting for the context and the second investigated the different theoretical perspectives informing the study of relationships both from an organisational and development context in order to expand and refine the relationship constructs.

The theoretical interpretations emergent from the comments made during the partially structured interviews included that the setting or context of the relationship is unique and that it is necessary to understand the context before one can understand the relationship. The challenges in the relationship were found to relate to the specific context of the nature of NPOs and the nature of CSI in South Africa as well as the context where the two worlds collide. This special context is the reason for at least some of the relational difficulties: donor dominance, perceived incompetence of NPOs and time and resource constraints. Understanding the context of the relationship itself revealed the theoretical indicators for stakeholder relationships to be less than perfect for describing these relationships.

Based on the results from the initial exploration, the differences between the two theoretical approaches were subsequently theoretically investigated to further clarify the context. It was argued that the theoretical differences and similarities indicate the possible relational challenges and strengths of the relationship.

The theoretical differences include divergent historical ideologies: the function is based on different economic models and the creators and intended users of the theories are from different locations on the globe with stakeholder theory being a Northern/Western theory intended for the First World businesses while the participatory development theory is mainly associated with developing countries of the global South. The stakeholder theory views the world as a global community whereas participatory approaches favour localised small-scale development. With corporate organisations as its focus, the stakeholder theory is designed in a top-down manner, with the organisation central to all decisions, while participatory development follows a grass-roots approach with bottom-up communication to favour the recipients of development.

These differences signal relationship turbulence, a possible lack of shared meaning and other challenges associated with the different worlds from which the parties come.

The theoretical similarities between stakeholder theory and participatory development were found to be shared values of fairness and ethics, similar views on adding value and acting transparently and truthfully. Both theories also understand the multiplicity and plurality associated with complex human relations and both theories subscribe to two-way dialogical communication. Participatory development and stakeholder theory also show similarity in their people orientation.

The parallels found in the literature on both approaches indicate possible strengths of the relationship between the two – these strengths include integrity, dialogue, consideration and compassion. These strengths could be used by corporate donors and NPOs to build and maintain stronger relationships from which both stand to benefit.

In addition to indicating the similarities and differences, the critical appraisal of the literature also found that neither of the theories can be absolute when applied to this specific context. It is important for both parties to compromise to some extent and to be realistic about their intrinsic differences and rely on their sameness to build and maintain successful relationships.

7.5 DEFINITION AND MEASUREMENT OF THE DONOR-NPO RELATIONSHIP

Research question 3: How can the relationship between corporate organisations and NPOs possibly be defined and measured?

Research objective 3: To suggest redefined stakeholder relationship constructs based on the findings and results of both qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys

Three of the articles in the thesis addressed research question 3 (Chapter 2/Article 1, Chapter 3/Article 2 and Chapter 5/Article 4) and both the qualitative and quantitative parts of the study addressed the definition and measurement of stakeholder relationships in this context.

The relationship indicators; control/power, trust, commitment and relational realities were found to be relevant to this context and were operationally defined as follows:

Control and power relations in this relationship are in some respects similar to other stakeholder relationships where the control mutuality is dependent on some control being in the hands of both parties. In this relationship, however, the dominance of donors and the dependence of NPOs are part of the definition of power within the union. The responsibility with which donors handle their powerful position and the possibilities for NPOs to be independent in the future also help to define the control/power.

Similarly, trust includes the well-known elements of integrity, but also includes mention of the intention of the other party. Trust is also defined partly by the skills or competence of the parties and the willingness to allow the other party decision-making power in the relationship. Donors value consideration on the part of the NPOs.

Commitment is perceived differently by donors than by NPOs. NPOs define commitment by donors as the desire to commit in the long term; by the affection they perceive from donors; by commitment to governance requirements they perceive from donors; as well as their own and their donors' commitment to a social cause. Donors view commitment as the value they attach to their relationship with NPOs and appropriately link loyalty and the length of the commitment. They also partially define commitment by referring to the obligation they feel to relate to NPOs in this context.

The realities experienced by the parties as part of their relationship with each other include transparency of the self and of the other as well as accommodation of the other party. Donors also define their realities by referring to their belief in the extent to which NPOs understand the differences between themselves and their donors, including the profitable nature of corporate organisations, and their own requirements for reporting of expenses. NPOs regard their needs and the ability of their donors to satisfy those needs as part of their reality within this relationship.

The contextual elements of each relationship indicator are operationally defined in Table 7.1 below. Each table is followed by a general contextual definition for each relationship indicator.

Table 7.1: Redefined contextual elements and relationship indicators for donor-NPO relationships

Relationship indicator	Contextual elements of relationship indicator	Defined for donors	Defined for NPOs
Power/Control	Control mutuality	Control mutuality measured the general control/power balance in the relationship. The degree of control mutuality depends on whether the parties in the relationship experience some degree of control, whether they believe the other party listens to them and their opinions.	
	Acceptance of donor dependence	Acceptance of dominance is the degree to which the donors accept that they are dominant in their relationship with NPOs.	Acceptance of dependence is the degree to which NPOs accept that they are dependent on their donors for survival.
	Donor dominance		The NPOs define control further by the dominant position of the donors (apart from them being dependent on their donors).
	Sustainability and responsibility	The element of sustainability and responsibility in the relationship depends on whether donors intend to secure sustainability for the NPOs they fund and whether they use the power they do have in this relationship responsibly.	
	Future independence		NPOs define their control in the relationship also by the degree of confidence they have in becoming independent of donors in the future. This includes their perceptions on whether they think independence is important.

Table 7.1: Redefined contextual elements and relationship indicators for donor-NPO relationships (continued)

Trust	Integrity and intention	Trust on the basis of integrity and intention is measured by the degree to which both parties find the other party fair, just and honest.	
	Skills/competence	Trust on the basis of skills is the extent to which donors believe NPOs can be trusted to work unsupervised and whether NPOs are known to be successful.	Trusting the competence of donors is the extent of the NPOs' belief that their donors are competent and can be relied on to keep promises.
	Willingness to allow decision-making power	The willingness to surrender decision-making power to the other party is an element by which trust is partly defined and measuring this willingness can be done by the degree to which parties will surrender decisions that may affect them or decisions taken on their behalf.	
	Consideration of the other	Consideration of the other party is the degree to which donors believe their opinions are taken into account by the NPOs and whether the NPOs are concerned with them.	
Commitment	Desire to relate and maintain	The desire to relate and maintain a relationship considers the level to which donors value working together with the NPOs they fund and how they judge the relationship maintenance attempts of the NPOs.	
	Desire for long-term relationship		The desire for a long-term relationship depicts the NPOs opinions about the long-term commitment they perceive from their donors.
	Affective commitment and desire to relate		Affective commitment and desire to relate represent the degree to which NPOs value their donors and perceive their donors as loyal to them.
	Loyalty and importance	Loyalty and importance reflects the donors desire to have a long-lasting bond with NPOs, the value they attach to their relationship and whether they experience loyalty from the NPOs.	
	Obligation to relate/Compliance	The obligation to relate represents the degree to which donors feel they are responsible for their society and have an obligation to adhere to the regulations pertaining to corporate governance.	Compliance commitment is the belief that their donors should comply to governance regulations and also keep those regulations in mind during interactions with them.
	Cause commitment		Cause commitment represents the degree to which NPOs believe they and their donors are committed to societal causes.

Table 7.1: Redefined contextual elements and relationship indicators for donor-NPO relationships (continued)

Relational realities	Own transparency	Own transparency is the extent to which each party believe they themselves are open and transparent about finances and other relevant information in the relationship.	
	Transparency of the other	Transparency of the other is simply how open and transparent the parties believe the other to be with information regarding the relationship.	
	Accommodation	Accommodation is the degree to which both parties feel supported, differences are taken into account and parties are working together.	
	Profit/Output demands	The demands rooted in the profit-driven nature of corporate donors are measured by the extent donors feel that NPOs understand the nature of their endeavours and whether NPOs believe in the importance thereof.	
	Expenditure reporting requirements	Expenditure requirements represent the extent that donors require reporting from NPOs on how funding was spent.	
	Understanding differences	Understanding differences between the two parties is the degree to which donors believe NPOs to understand the realities of their world and the general differences between the two parties.	
	Internal constraints of NPOs	Internal constraints measured the extent to which problems internal to NPOs cause challenges in the relationship such as time constraints and tardiness when acting on promises.	
	Insatiable needs of NPOs		Insatiable needs cover the perceptions of NPOs regarding their needs and the ability for donors to satisfy those needs.

Control and power in this context is the degree of control mutuality, the extent of acceptance of donor dominance and NPO-dependence. For the donor-perspective control/power can be further delineated by the intention of donors to secure sustainability and by the responsibility with which they manage their relationship with recipient-NPOs. For the perspective of NPOs control/power in their relationship with corporate donors are also defined by the confidence they have in becoming more independent from their donors in the future.

For both donors and NPOs, trust is defined by integrity and intention as well as the willingness to allow the other party some decision-making power in the relationship. From both perspectives, the skills/competence of the other party contributes to trust in the relationship and for the donor perspective, trust partially depend on the degree of consideration perceived in the relationship.

The definition of commitment in this context depends on the perspective it is defined from. For the donor perspective, commitment is defined as the extent to which the relationship is desired and perceived to be desired by the other. Commitment is also loyalty and importance from both sides as well as the extent to which donors feel obliged to commit to their relationship with NPOs.

For NPOs, commitment is the perceived long-term commitment of donors perceived by NPOs, the affection and desire to relate from both sides of the relationship, the extent to which NPOs believe donors should comply to governance regulations and the belief that donors are perceived to be committed to the cause served by the NPOs.

The relational realities from both parties' perspectives are perceptions of own transparency and the transparency of the other and the degree of accommodation experienced by the parties. From the donor perspective, the relational realities further entail their own profit/output demands, requirements for reporting expenses, the degree to which both parties understand the differences between them and the extent of internal constraints hampering the activities of NPOs. From the perspective of NPOs, the relational realities also include an awareness of their insatiable needs.

On the whole, the relationship is defined by all of the contextual elements and relationship indicators discussed above. Summatively, the stakeholder relationship between corporate donors and recipient NPOs are defined by the following:

- The indicators control/power, trust, commitment and relational realities are reliable and valid measures of this specific relationship and could be used to accurately describe this relationship.

- Each of the two divergent parties defines the relationship differently. The different views could indicate problems in the relationship, but are mostly a result of the varied functions, backgrounds and worldviews of donors and NPOs.
- The context is intrinsic to how the relationship is defined and measured and is essential in understanding the relationship.

7.6 COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES IN THE DONOR-NPO RELATIONSHIP

Research question 4: What are the predominant communication challenges in the relationship between corporate organisations and the NPOs they fund?

Research objective 4: To describe the predominant communication problems in the relationship between corporate organisations and NPOs they fund, based on the findings and results of both qualitative and quantitative methods

In order to answer the last research question, the challenges found in the qualitative and quantitative research are explicated further to describe and possibly explain the communication problems in the relationship between donors and NPOs. The research question and corresponding objective are:

The qualitative inquiry alluded to problems ranging from power imbalances, perceived incompetence of NPOs, time constraints regarding funding terms, different goals, motivations and expectations (Chapter 2). The challenges and an initial glimpse on the nature of those challenges were evident from the results of the partially structured interviews. After these initial findings and a critical appraisal of literature on stakeholder theory and participatory development, the researcher used the challenges evident from the corresponding survey to describe the relational challenges and how they could relate to the challenges faced by NPOs in their day-to-day functioning (Chapter 6).

Table 7.2 summarises the relational challenges found and their possible relation to challenges NPOs face.

Table 7.2: Relational challenges and their possible links to challenges faced by NPOs

Relational challenges	Possible link to challenges of NPOs
Power imbalance in favour of corporate donors	Dependence on and limitations of resources such as funding and infrastructure
Lack of transparency on the side of the NPOs	
Divergent views on commitment in the relationship	
Questionable competence of NPOs	Problems with recruiting and retaining of competent staff
Time constraints in project execution	
Perceived incomprehension of NPOs of the business world	Strategy, management and environmental challenges regularly associated with NPO management
Unwillingness from donors to allow NPOs decision-making power	

Visible in both qualitative and quantitative results and supported by the literature, it is clear that the challenges faced by NPOs in their general functioning have bearing on their relationship with their donors. The power imbalance in the favour of donors, a perceived lack of transparency of NPOs about funding issues, and the divergent views on commitment all link to the limited resources generally associated with NPO management. The results also indicate that the questionable competence of NPOs and time constraints in project execution are connected to challenges in recruiting and retaining competent staff. The perceptions of donors that NPOs do not understand the realities of the business world and their reluctance to allow NPOs decision-making power could be traced to general management and environmental difficulties faced by NPOs.

7.7 MAIN RESEARCH ISSUE

The main issue of this study was to explore and describe the stakeholder relationship between corporate donors and recipient NPOs within the context of CSI.

The initial exploration was done by means of partially structured interviews with key informants on both sides of the relationship as well as with consultants who could give insight into the relationship from a more objective stance. From the initial exploration it became clear that the relationship is perceived largely negatively and that the relationship indicators are unsuited for the context of this relationship.

After preliminarily contextualising and redefining the relationship indicators, the relationship was measured quantitatively to establish the contextual relationship indicators and elements and then to describe the relationship based on these contextual measures.

The description based on the redefined relationship indicators and contextualised elements revealed a much more positive stakeholder relationship than found in the explorative research. It is reasoned that the contextualised measure resulted in a balanced and much more realistic overview of the relationship than the standard relationship constructs defined in the Grunig (2002) and Hon and Grunig (1999) instruments.

The relationship between corporate donors is broadly defined by the following characteristics:

- The indicators control/power, trust, commitment and relational realities could be accurately used to describe this relationship if they are contextualised and redefined for the context.
- The two parties in the relationship define the relationship differently and both perspectives are important for an analysis of the relationship itself. Differences in how the relationship is defined could indicate possible challenges in the relationship, but could mostly be based on the different worlds from which the two parties come.
- As initially assumed, the context proved to be fundamental for understanding the relationship.

In the articles that are compiled to form this thesis, the stakeholder relationship between corporate donors and recipient NPOs has been explored, described, defined, and contextualised relationship indicators and elements have been identified and explicated in order to address the main issue of the study.

7.8 CONTRIBUTION

In a narrow sense, the exploration and description of the relationship between corporate donors and NPOs in South Africa as well as the redefinition of relationship indicators specifically for this context represent the contribution of this study.

The initial exploration (reported in Chapter 2/Article 1 and Chapter 3), as well as the subsequent quantitative description (reported in Chapter 6/Article 5), contributes to understanding this under-researched stakeholder relationship and highlights challenges and opportunities it holds for CSI and NPO management.

The findings that question the appropriateness of corporate communication theory (explicated in Chapter 4/Article 3) in this context and the resulting reformulation of relationship indicators (see Chapter 3/Article 2 and Chapter 5) constitute a second contribution. In fact, these redefined relationship indicators and contextual elements form the main theoretical contribution of the study. Current knowledge is thus expanded, not just by presenting contextually defined relationship indicators and elements, but also by providing a measuring instrument that could be used to measure relationships in this context. The process followed contributes to academic knowledge by proposing a method of

contextualising the way stakeholder relationships are approached and it could be used as the starting point for other context-specific stakeholder relationships.

In a broader sense, the exploration and description of the stakeholder relationship and its challenges contribute to the discipline of communication for social change and make a practical contribution to South African NPOs as well as corporate organisations that fund CSI activities in South Africa as part of their corporate governance practices. The study has contributed to the understanding of stakeholder relationships on the part of the NPOs by indicating the challenges they face and how these challenges affect their donor relations. Understanding the context of CSI and the position of corporate organisations clarifies operational aspects that could expand the capacity of donors to become more effective contributors to social development in South Africa.

From a presentation perspective, the compilation format of this thesis also contributes to communication science in the sense that it could serve as an example of alternative styles of presenting doctoral research.

7.9 LIMITATIONS

Although the exploration and description of donor-NPO relations as well as the redefined relationship indicators cannot be generalised, the proposed redefinition provides a valuable guideline and starting point for understanding donor-NPO relationships in CSI. The so-called *messiness* without easy generalizable answers actually mirrors the reality of the relationship in question where interpretation and human perception are central and should be unique to each situation.

The following methodological limitations should be noted:

- Because of the small realised samples the statistical calculations were limited in terms of scope and usability. However, triangulating the literature study, partially structured interviews and the survey responses provided the researcher with an overall view of the relationships without having to generalise findings.
- The intent of measuring the relationship from both sides posed various challenges. The fact that the exploratory factor analysis and reliability analysis as population-specific calculations were done separately for each of the two surveys resulted in different measures for the two surveys, making a comparison of means impractical. That the two parties view the relationship differently served the central argument of the thesis, but made a comparison on an item-to-item basis impossible.

→ The surveys were further limited because respondents were asked to judge their relationship with donors in general (in the NPO survey) or with NPOs in general (in the donor survey). This decision made the measurement accurate but less specific because it disregarded the unique circumstances of each individual relationship. Therefore, it was only possible to get an overall impression that was not based on one individual relationship.

7.10 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

For each of the limitations listed above, recommendations are made for further research to explore this specific stakeholder relationship.

- It is suggested that a similar study be done with representative samples of South African NPOs and corporate organisations with South African operations and CSI activities in order to arrive at generalisable findings.
- It is recommended that the measuring instrument be further refined by means of a grounded theory study where the operational definitions devised from the results of this study are used to adjust the measuring instruments and to administer them to another set of samples to enhance the understanding of this relationship even further.
- Another project that could further the research reported on in this thesis could be an attempt to sample corporate donors and NPOs in pairs where the donor funds a specific NPO and both respond to the survey with each other in mind. Understanding the perceptions of specific donors and specific NPOs about each other could produce results that resemble practical realities for donors and the recipient NPOs.

7.11 GENERAL CONCLUSION

This thesis intended to explore and describe the stakeholder relationship between donors who fund NPOs as part of their CSI activities and those NPOs that receive the funding. The main issue was addressed by breaking it down into four specific research questions and the parallel research objectives. The four research questions comprised exploring and describing the relationship and its challenges and then investigating the applicability of relationship indicators for this specific context.

The research questions were addressed in a series of five interrelated articles, each partially addressing one or more research questions using both basic and applied research goals and qualitative and quantitative, empirical and non-empirical methods in order to explore and describe the relationship from the perspective of both parties.

Aiming to contribute to both communication theory and applied science, the research delved into stakeholder relationships, the practice of CSI, the management of NPOs, the challenges in the relationship between them and the possible root causes of those challenges.