**School of Social and Political Sciences**

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**Folk Theories of Corporate Social Responsibility**

**and Philanthropy in the Digital Society**

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'Folk Theories of Corporate Social Responsibility and Philanthropy in the Digital Society' is the culmination of two years of academic inquiry investigating how United States cultural institutions could improve visitor engagement by implementing immersive technology. Like most research projects, questions often lead to more questions prompting the research to take new approaches, take steps backwards, change directions, and so on. This project is the outcome of just that – a question that turned into a project, leading to a master's program, where learning informed a change of direction, uncovering an unknown interest, and thus resulting in a dissertation project on corporate social responsibility and corporate philanthropy (CSR/P). Driven by the desire to find a solution to US cultural institutions need for digital resources, specialized expertise, and funding to bring technology to their visitor experiences,' I began researching CSR/P as part of my masters' studies. However, I discovered CSR/P was a complex academic topic, that simultaneously offered vast amounts of information, but was limited in the specific answers I was looking for. Additionally, it quickly became clear I knew very little about CSR/P and how it operated in our Digital Society. So, following personal curiosity I explored a new line of inquiry in hopes of understanding the complexities of CSR/P and what the public believed CSR/P to be in the Digital Society.

## Background

I began by evaluating existing literature which revealed the complexities of CSR/P in the Digital Society. Existing literature on CSR/P "remains deeply scattered between academic disciplines" (Gautier and Pache, 2015) and lacks interdisciplinary conclusions. Therefore, this ISP project takes a digital sociological approach investigating the intersection between our digital and social worlds with corporations' 'do good' activities. The variety of empirical and

conceptual debates reflect the "complexity of the practice and the difficulties for both practitioners and observers to get a solid grasp of" CSR/P (Gautier and Pache, 2015). As such, it is important to note that CSR/P is technically two distinct practices: (1) corporate social responsibility (CSR) which can be defined as the "context-specific organizational actions and policies that take into account stakeholders' expectations and the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental performance" (Aguinis, 2011, as cited in Aguinis and Glavas, 2012); and (2) corporate philanthropy (CP) which can be defined as the "voluntary and unconditional transfers of cash or other assets by private firms for public purposes" (Gautier and Pache, 2015, p.343). Though CSR and CP can and *should* be understood as separate entities (von Schnurbein, Seele, and Lock, 2016) this research project will refer to them as one collective concept – CSR/P. Furthermore, to minimize the complexities of CSR/P from a practitioner's standpoint this research project relies on a *big picture* understanding of CSR/P in our digital world; one that integrates the underlying concepts of digital economy, gift giving, data philanthropy, marketing practices, and ethical business practices to name a few.

CSR/P predates mass digitalization, dating back to business practices of the late-nineteenth century. The history of CSR/P prior to the rise of the internet is important as it demonstrates the role and potential for individuals to influence corporations' CSR/P practices. Following the social and cultural change brought on by the industrial revolution, early forms of CSR/P began to take hold. CSR/P eventually became what some regard as a "building block of American civilization" (Gautier and Pache, 2015, p.344). Rooted in the social, cultural, and religious practices of benevolence that dominated elite circles in the late 19th century (Agudelo, Jóhannsdóttir and Davídsdóttir, 2019) it is unsurprising that corporations integrated charitable practices into their business models. These early forms of CSR/P included welfare schemes in

the form of creating community and employee programs, donation of monetary gifts, and the development of policies (Agudelo, Jóhannsdóttir and Davídsdóttir, 2019). However, the standardization of CSR/P practices occurred between the 1950s and 2000s partially overlapping with the changes brought on by the development of the internet, the launching of the World Wide Web (WWW), and the rise of the digital economy. The modern CSR/P initiatives in the Digital Society are shaped by pre and post digitalization business practices. Therefore, requiring the acknowledgment of historic CSR/P giving traditions and business practices as they have the capacity to shape individuals' interpretations of modern CSR/P activities.

To conceptualize individuals' modern folk theories of CSR/P, CSR/P must first be framed within the context of the Digital Society. Within the field of digital sociology, the Digital Society can be understood as "our present society… society affected by digitally networked communication tools and platforms, such as the internet and social media" (Lindgren 2022, pg. 2). Born out of the "rather unlikely intersection of big science, military research, and libertarian culture" (Castells, 2002, p.17; Lindgren, 2020, p.15) the development of the internet and launch of the WWW rang in a new digitally driven era. The "digitally networked social reality" created by the internet and the WWW brought with it a "new economic system where everyone could take part" (Lindgren 2022, p.15) – one known as the *digital economy.* Collectively the internet, WWW, and rise of the digital economy paved a way for new forms of digital gift giving to arise including donations of user data, digital resources, and digital expertise (Elder-Vass, 2016; 2022) transforming corporations' CSR/P models. The drastic changes brought on by the transition to a Digital Society positioned CSR/P at the intersection of businesses and our social world. Despite existing literature's ability to address the complexities of CSR/P, there are few studies that explore the public's perceptions and capacity to grasp CSR/P in the Digital Society.

The purpose and significance of this research project lies in understanding the public's capacity to grasp the complexities of CSR/P based on their lived experiences. This project recognizes individuals' ability to understand CSR/P by uncovering their preconceived notions, perceptions, opinions, and beliefs - *folk theories* - of CSR/P. This project uses the folk theories definition created by Benjamin Toff and Rasmus Kleis Nielsen (2018) from their research entitled *"I just Googled it": Folk Theories of Distributed Discovery*:

> …we define folk theories as the culturally available symbolic resources that people use to make sense of their own media and information practices and use this theoretical approach to examine how ordinary people navigate digital media and information about public affairs in an environment increasingly shaped by digital intermediaries and platform services (Cohen, 2012; van Dijck, 2013).

Essentially, folk theories come from individuals creating meaning out of the information distributed to them. As Toff's and Nielsen's (2018) research on folk theories specifically address elements of the Digital Society, I found it a suitable working definition for this project. The aims and objectives of this practical project are driven by two research questions: 1) How do existing folk theories influence public perception and trust of organizations CSR/P initiatives in the digital society 2) How does the public conceptualize their role within corporations giving strategies? The first question seeks to uncover internalized thoughts, emotions, and beliefs people have about corporations' responsibilities to 'benefit society' and their capacity to 'do good.' While the second question investigates the changing power structures within the digital gift economy between users, consumers, and corporations. Both questions are supported by additional questions that explore how participants CSR/P folk theories account for the role of digital technologies, perception of personal autonomy, and beliefs about CSR/P impact. The hope

is that this project will fill a hole within existing literature, while spreading awareness and educating the public on the implication of CSR/P on their everyday experiences.

This research project and its outcomes were also shaped by my decision to undertake an Independent Student Portfolio (ISP) instead of a traditional dissertation. I decided to move forward with an ISP project for three reasons: the complexities of CSR/P, my choice to use creative research methods, and my desire to publish research findings to a website. Based on my previous exploration of existing CSR and CP literature and research I knew that the complexities of the topic would challenge my explanation and investigation of CSR/P in the Digital Society. This was also part of the reason behind why I wanted to use a creative research workshop for my data collection method. Another, reason is that after learning about creative research workshops in my Methods core course I was very intrigued by these methods and wanted to challenge myself to include them in my personal research project. Lastly, I learned about the power of open-access research and data in the 'Living Lab' core course and wanted to create a space where anyone, including researchers, would be able to view and learn from my study on CSR/P folk theories. Since the ISP project required the research to have an education or awareness mission and produce a creative deliverable, I felt that it was more suitable than the traditional dissertation approach. Furthermore, the use of an experimental method provided an additional reason to choose an ISP over a traditional dissertation. The chosen data collection method became a vehicle for which I could collect data and educate participants. While the creation of a website worked to further spread awareness on CSR/P folk theories by making them easily accessible to interested parties. I specifically designed the website to educate visitors on the research process, my research design decision, research findings, and personal reflections. I purposefully wrote the website content using language accessible to all visitors, regardless of

their academic backgrounds, and provided a comprehensive definition list including terms relevant to the project and general academic research for visitors to reference. The website was designed for individuals to explore based on their own curiosity, with recommendations for entire pathways or related tiles in hopes of engaging visitors based on their interests while encouraging them to learn more. As this paper is a reflection on the ISP process, research design, and my findings, additional information and specifics on this project components can be found on the website (www.lenaweisman.com/dissertation.html) and in Appendix A (which includes the website's text elements). I believe my choice of an ISP was the right one, as the process of conducting research, using a creative research method, and building a website to publish my findings taught me a lot about CSR/P folk theories, the chosen creative research method, and the development and completion of high-level research projects.

## Participants and Location

For this research project I selected a group of graduate students from the University of Glasgow in Glasgow, Scotland to be my sample group. I choose university students because I anticipated they would be a suitable representative population for this research, given their position as 'soon-to-be' professionals, their education level, and their status as digital natives. Additionally, students represent a diverse demographic varying in age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, expertise, and lived experiences providing a range of perspectives on this research. As a graduate student at the University of Glasgow, access to university students was relatively easy, allowing for snowball and purposive sampling to be used. This means that I recruited the research participants for this project using my existing relationships and networks with other University of Glasgow students. Prior to prospective participants agreeing to participant, they were provided a brief synopsis of research project, a plain language statement, and a description

of how their data would be used included the publication of drawings and quotes to the project website. Following the recruitment process, thirteen University of Glasgow graduate students were selected to participate in this research project. Participants were divided into three workshop sessions located on the University of Glasgow campus based on their preferred availability. The recruited participants are a small sample of the public and their lived experiences informed the results of this project.

## Research Design

In addition to filling a hole in existing CSR/P research, the methodological approach selected for this project is significant. This project uses qualitative creative research methods distinguishing it from existing studies on perceived CSR/P that predominately use a quantitative research approach. The qualitative research approach enables this project to explore the nuances of CSR/P in our Digital Society through research participants lived experiences. Qualitative research relies on "*qualitative data* [which is] expressed as text" (Grønmo, 2019, p.11) and according to some scholars "only words are capable of describing complexity" (Loseke, 2017, p.30) justifying the suitability of this methodological approach. However, I remained concerned about research participants ability to fully express their CSR/P folk theories through their words. Based on curriculum from my master's core course I knew creative research methods could provide a solution. Upon further investigation, I found several research methods designed to encourage participants reflexive and critical thinking by integrating discussion, drawing, and writing tasks. Creative research methods are considered "creative solutions to research problems" meaning researchers are "not bound by" (Kara, 2020, p.8) their existing knowledge of methods. Instead, researchers are encouraged to use creativity to "manipulate and develop theories and methods, within the constraints of good practice, to help… answer… research

questions" (Kara, 2020, p.8). By using creative research methods, I was given leeway to adapt an innovative data collection method called Visual Focus Groups (VFG) for this project.

Developed by Dr. Elisabetta Ferrari (project supervisor) VFGs build upon graphic elicitation techniques methodology and the traditional focus group method to uncover unspoken assumptions about research topics. In situating a "creative task within a group setting" VFGs foster a space for "collective conversation" and participants' reflexive thinking through discussion and drawing. (Ferrari, 2022, p.2). Including a creative task in the data collection method helps participants to express their underlying folk theories through the mediums (i.e. drawing, writing, words, etc.) most natural to them. Ferrari designed two distinct VFG methods: the diagnostic VFG and the speculative VFG. Diagnostic VFGs "help researchers understand how activist [participants] conceptualize their relationship" to the research topic. Whereas speculative VFGs are "intended to stimulate participants… critique" of the research topic. As public folk theories include participants' conceptualization of their "relationship" to and "critique" of CSR/P I chose to combine Ferrari's diagnostic and speculative VFGs for this project. Following the philosophical approach and guidance from creative and qualitative research methods I develop an experimental three-part VFG workshop for data collection.

The data collection workshops consist of three phases. After informed consent procedures, the first phase asked participants to complete a questionnaire (see Supplemental Materials). Designed to establish a baseline of participants' demographics and their knowledge of CSR/P folk theories, the questionnaire asked a series of short answer, multiple-choice, and Likert-style questions. The questionnaire was followed up with a brief discussion regarding anything that participants wanted to share. The first phase encouraged participants to think deeply about their lived experiences with CSR/P. An individual drawing session and brief share-

out made up the second phase. For phase two, participants are presented with their own sheet of paper and asked to reflect on what they believe CSR/P is in the Digital Society. The individual drawing and presentation worked to establish participants' preexisting CSR/P folk theories prior to influences from the third, collective, phase. Consisting of a longer collective drawing task and an in-depth group discussion, the third phase sought to establish the group's collective folk theories and critique of CSR/P in the Digital Society. Participants were given a poster size piece of paper and asked to agree on what they wanted to draw through in-depth discussion before finalizing their collective drawing. This phase asked participants to consider digital technologies role and their autonomy in shaping modern CSR/P practices. Once finished, participants were asked to present their collective drawing and answer any follow up questions the researcher had. Throughout the workshop the researcher acted as the facilitator, time manager, and moderator paying specific attention to group dynamics and participants contribution levels. The three phase VFG workshop design sought to encourage participants reflexive and critical thinking from an individual to a collective level easing the complexities of the topic through progression and collective conversation.

For this project the data collected during the VFG workshops was analyzed following qualitative and creative research methodologies. The evaluation and interpretation of the data relied on coding and embodied data analysis strategies. Coding is an analytical process of "assigning meaning to chunks of text" (Hesse-Biber, 2017) using descriptive, categorical, and analytical codes to reveal patterns and themes in the data. NVivo software was used as the coding platform for evaluation and interpretation. Coding was used as a primary analysis technique for the audio recording transcripts and field notes, while embodied data analysis was used for the drawings. Embodied data analysis is an exploratory approach to the analytical work

in data analysis (Kara, 2020, p.142). For this project embodied analysis entailed reviewing, evaluating, and interpreting the individual and collective drawing in a physical manner by spreading them out and adding color coordinated sticky notes and memos. This projects' use of qualitative coding and embodied data analysis techniques successfully developed reliable and viable research findings. The outcomes of this research project are twofold: first are the empirically based conclusions to the research questions and the second are observational findings regarding the suitability of VFG workshops for this type of research.

## Research Outcomes

Collectively, the three phases of the data collection workshops worked together to achieve the aims and objectives of this ISP project. Together, the questionnaire, individual drawings, collective drawings, discussions, and presentations revealed how participants imagined, thought, perceived, and believed corporations perform and practice CSR/P in the Digital Society. The VFG workshops revealed individual and collective folk theories of CSR/P, providing both answers to research questions and insights for further research.

Participants' familiarity with concepts of CSR/P demonstrates the existence of public folk theories. Beginning with the questionnaire results, 10 of the 13 participants declared their familiarity with the CSR/P outright, though all participants demonstrated their familiarity with various CSR/P practices later in the VFG workshops. All participants successfully identified categories and methods of CSR/P practices through the short answer, multiple choice, and questionnaire responses (see Figure 1 and Table 1).
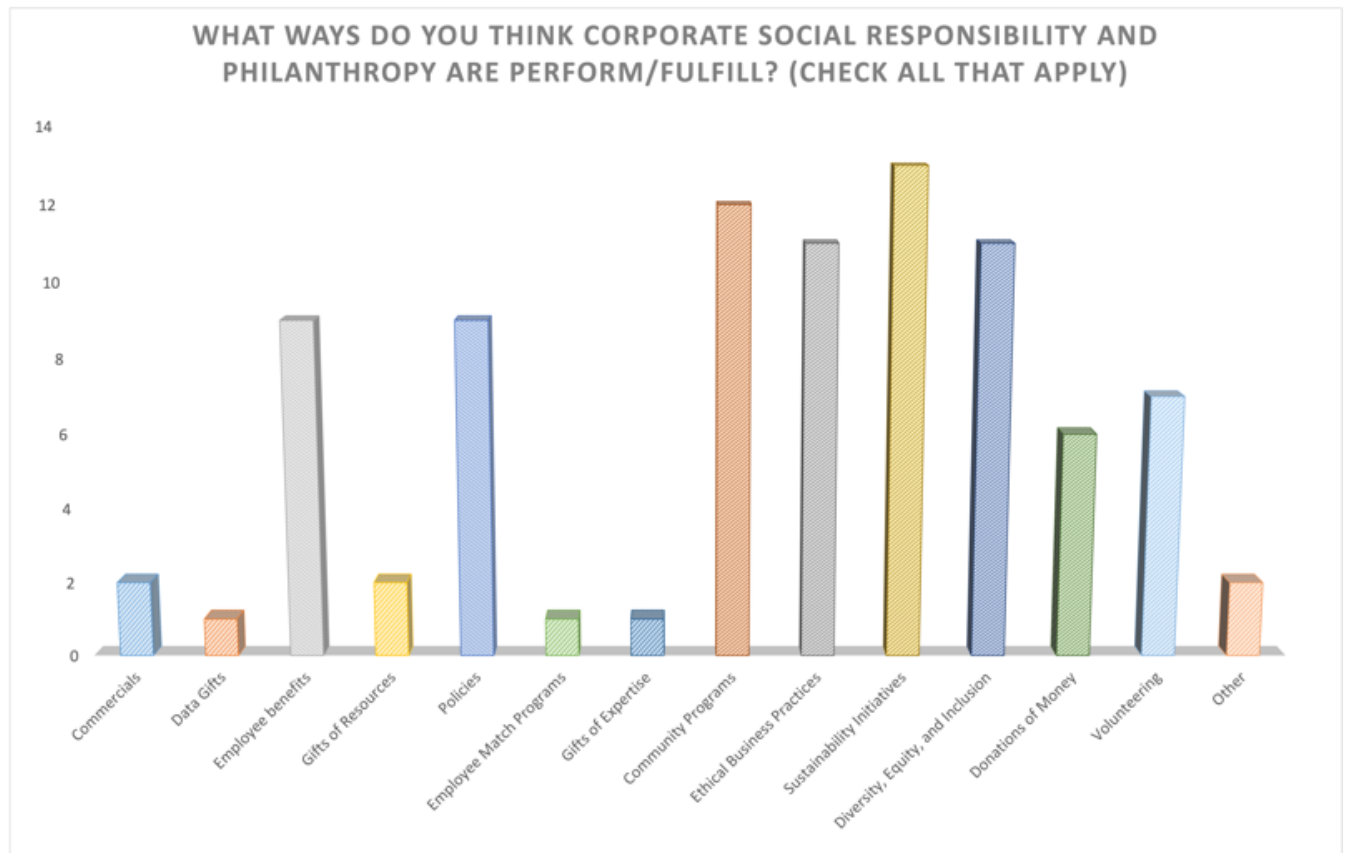
**Figure 1:** Frequency of Perceived CSR/P Methods

| Identified CSR/P Categories | Frequency |
|---|---|
| Environment | 9 |
| Diversity, Equity and Inclusion | 6 |
| Ethical Business Practices | 3 |
| Data Protection | 3 |
| Equal Pay | 3 |
| Sustainability | 3 |
| Employee Welfare | 2 |
| Privacy Protection | 2 |
| Other (volunteering, donations, education, community, social empowerment, and society protection) | ≤ 2 |

**TABLE 1:** Occurrences of identified CSR/P categories as a short answer response to the question 'Identify three social responsibilities you believe corporations have?'
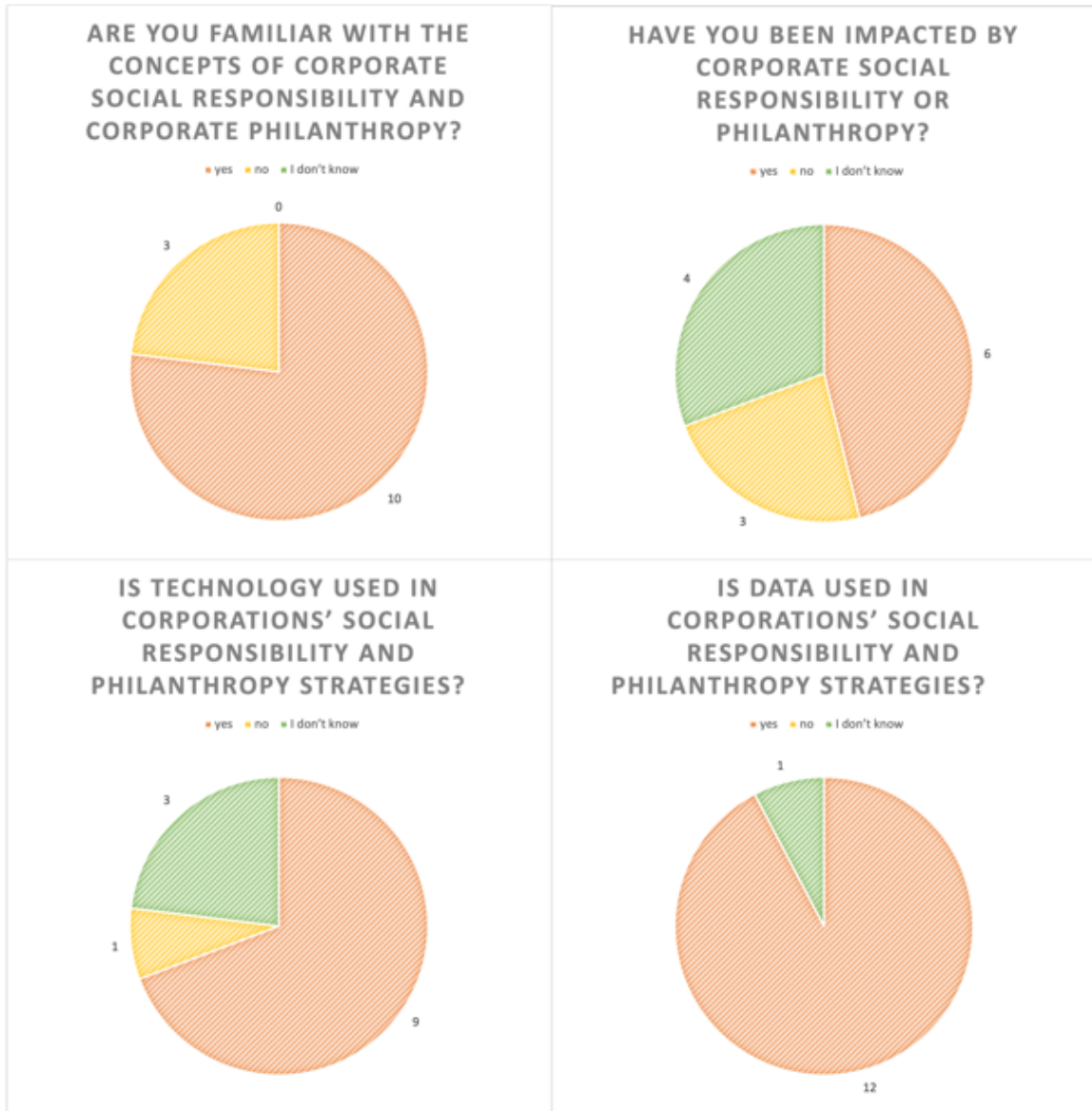
**Figure 2:** Baseline of CSR/P Perceptions. In all graphs orange represents 'Yes,' yellow is 'No,' and Green is 'I don't know.'

Despite participants being able to identify CSR/P categories and methods, several individuals indicated they were not familiar with CSR/P (see Figure 2). I assumed if participants could identify CSR/P categories and methods they would confidently acknowledge their familiarity with the topic, however this was not true. Therefore, I took another look at the demographic makeup of the workshop groups to better understand the differences in the outcomes of each

workshop. Coincidentally, I found that the three participants that indicated no familiarity with CSR/P all participated in workshop 3.

The demographic data further informed why workshop 3 had a concentration of participants who lacked familiarity with CSR/P concepts. The overall sample population spanned three generations, with birth years ranging from 1979 to 2000; this means that, that despite intending to recruit digital natives, some participants ended up being older than envisioned. While this unexpected age span added useful demographic variety to this project as a whole, workshop 3 (unintentionally) consisted only of participants born after 1995, so-called "digital natives". In this project, younger participants were less likely to be familiar with CSR/P. Though participants' professional experiences were not collected with the demographic data, the drawings and discussion revealed a correlation between professional experiences and age. As workshop 1 and 2 were made up of older participants, several of whom disclosed how their professional experiences informed their individual and thus, the groups, collective folk theories. This indicates a range in participants' familiarity with CSR/P based on their lived experiences, particularly age and work history (to learn more about the participant demographics and workshop difference's view Appendix A: Participant Demographics and Findings: Collective Drawings).

The variety of folk theories conceptualized through individual drawings reveals how participants' understandings of CSR/P were shaped. Participants cited CSR/P campaigns, initiatives, activities, and failures both in physical and digital formats throughout their drawings and discussions. Figures 3 and 4 illustrate how two participants understood CSR/P through their personal experiences with corporations' failures to aid their communities. The creator of Figure 3 explained how Shell (a large multinational corporation) failed to uphold their social responsibility to protect the environment they operate in. The participant spoke emotionally about how the corporation's activities destroyed their community's access to clean air and local



**Figure 3:** Drawing by NN03, workshop 3.

food sources. Similarly, the creator of Figure 4 discussed how Nike and Adidas did not consider their "social responsibility[ities]" when sponsoring the kits and footballs for the recent FIFA World Cup. The participant cited the corporations' inability to acknowledge the use of child labor within their home country to create the equipment needed for the World Cup as evidence.
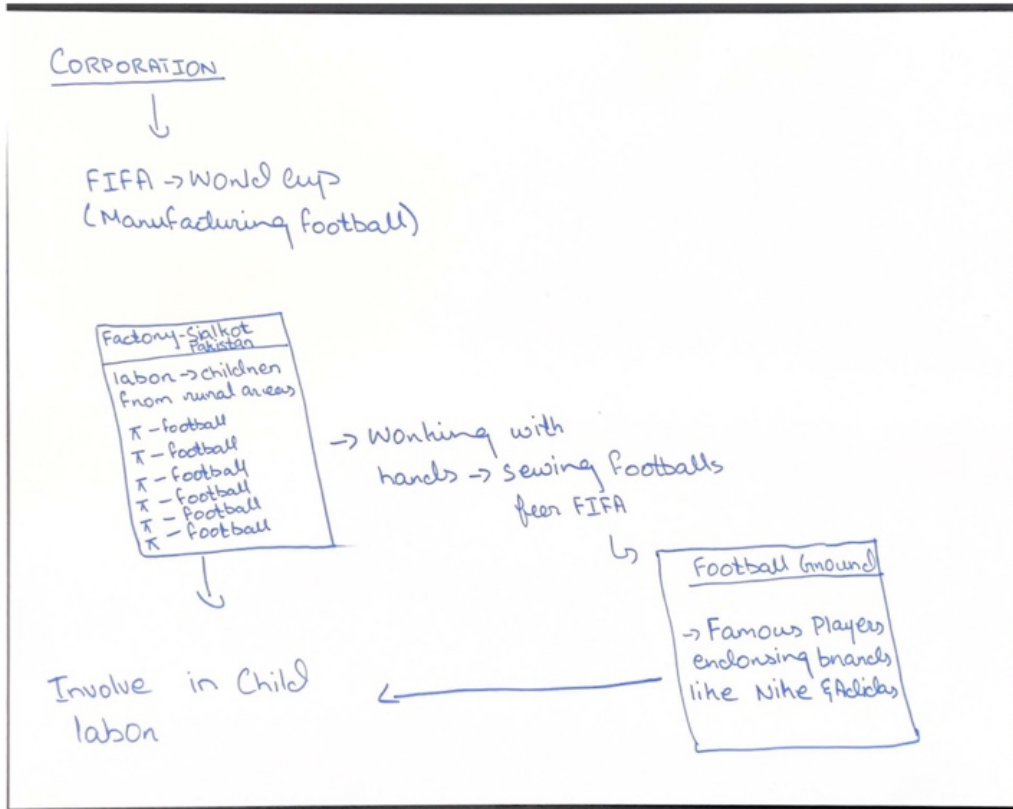


**Figure 4:** Drawing UZ02

Participants' personal experiences with corporations' failures to fulfill their social responsibilities encouraged me to reconsider my beliefs about CSR/P. Until this point in my research I did not realize the profound impact CSR/P can have globally especially when US based institutions are able to take advantage of international communities. For me this illustrated the value in having recruited a diverse group of graduate students that could provide a globalized perspective to this

research. Participants also identified specific components of CSR/P campaigns and activities; as Figures 5 and 6 shows, these are: advertisements and diversity, and equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts respectively. The campaigns that participants identified included a Google advertisement
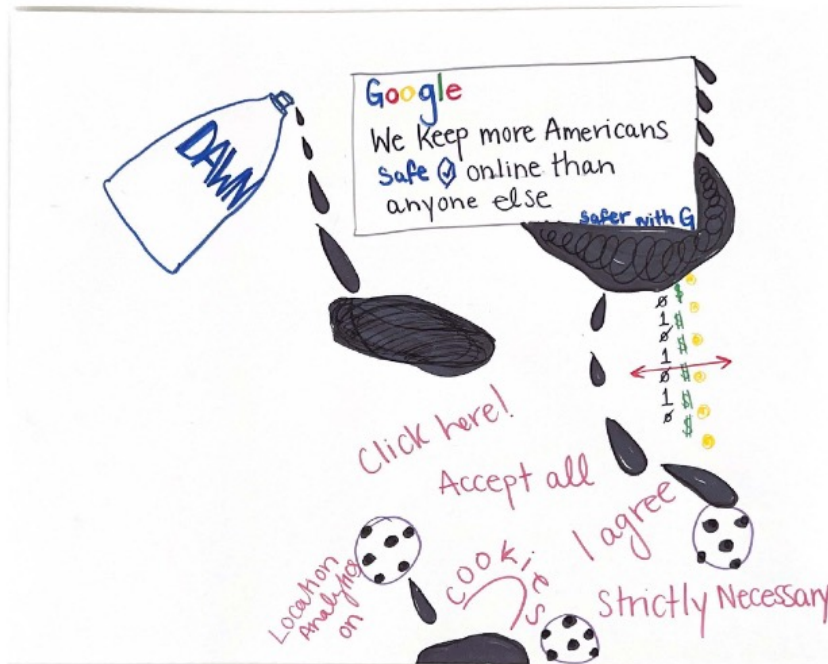


**Figure 5:** Drawing LO03



**Figure 6:** Drawing YJ03

(Figure 5), greenwashing and rainbow washing marketing strategies (Figure 6), digital incentive

programs (Figure 7), and in-person asks for charitable contributions. I found the range of CSR/P

campaigns identified by participants encouraging as they critically discussed how the campaigns

shaped their perceptions of the corporations (for specifics see Appendix A: CSR/P Campaigns).

For example, the creator of Figure 5 found the Google advertisement "absolutely ridiculous",

which contradicts the aim of Googles philanthropic model to "manifest…perception[s] of the

company as innovative..." (Henriksen and Richey, 2022). The fact that this participant so

strongly contradicted existing literature stood out to me as it illustrated participants ability to not

only recognize CSR/P campaigns, but to question them. Participants' discussions revealed their

perceptions of CSR/P campaigns as more of a brand image strategy than tangible actions to

'benefit society.' Furthermore, shared themes emerged in participants' folk theories through their

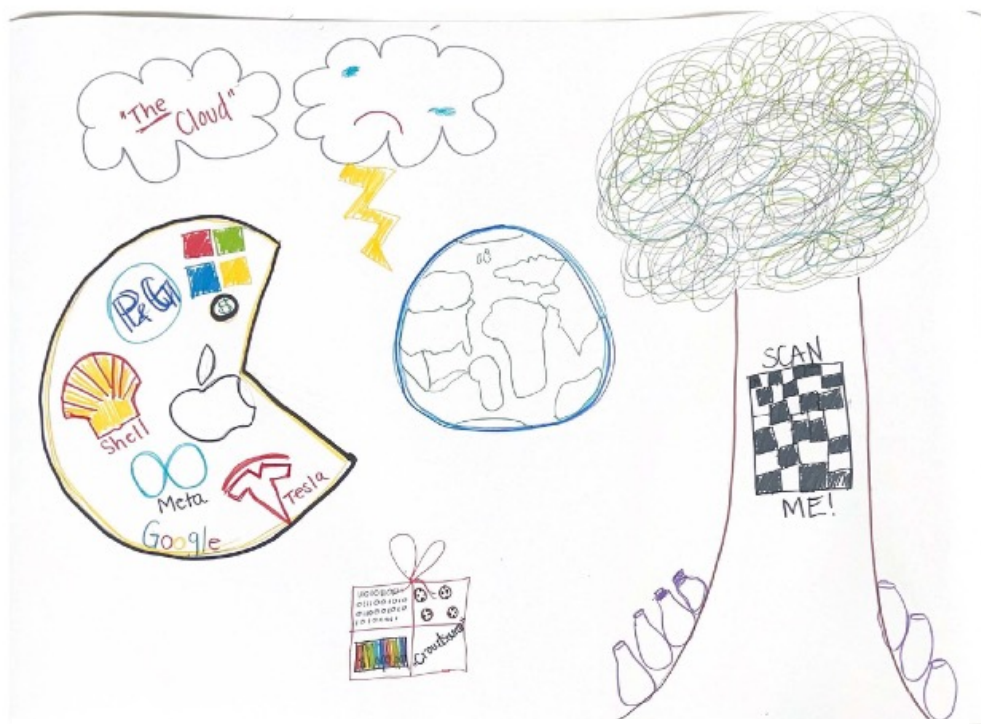conversations and drawings about different CSR/P performance strategies.



**Figure 7:** Drawing WK3C – Workshop 3's Collective Drawing

Regardless of participants' CSR/P folk theories being shaped by unique personal experiences and their perceptions of CSR/P campaigns, shared themes emerged in their individual drawings prior to group discussions. My analysis revealed participants' CSR/P folk theories recognized at least one of the following themes: digital technologies, for-profit mission, environmental responsibilities, or DEI practices. Each of these four themes appeared repeatedly in participants questionnaire responses and individual drawings demonstrating their centrality to participants' individual CSR/P folk theories. I was surprised to see participants' folk theories include various roles digital technologies play and the for-profit mission behind CSR/P. Prior to beginning this study I would not have been able to discuss digital technologies' role not the for-profit mission of CSR/P at any level, let alone with the critical and reflexive perspective many participants took. For example, the creator of Figure 8 correlated user data to gift giving through
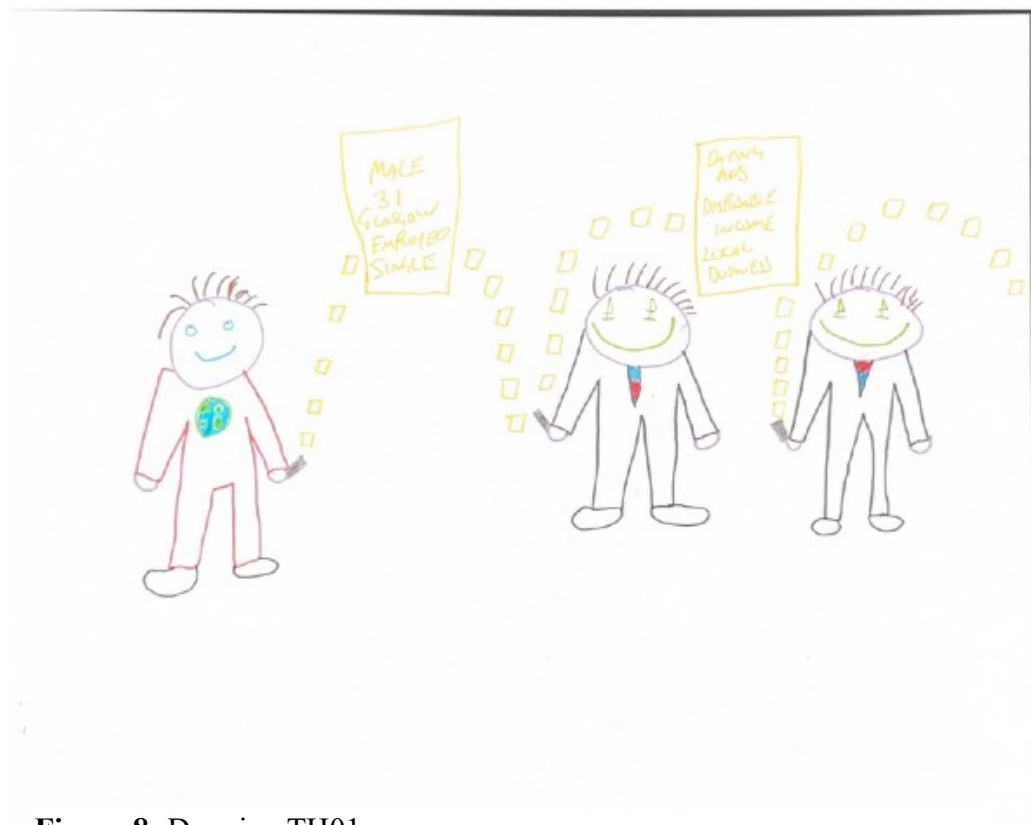


**Figure 8:** Drawing TH01

their explanation and illustration of a person holding a mobile phone and data going into the air in exchange for money. While, in Figure 9 the participant used a warship to represent corporations' continuous use of digital tools constantly communicates with them. These are just
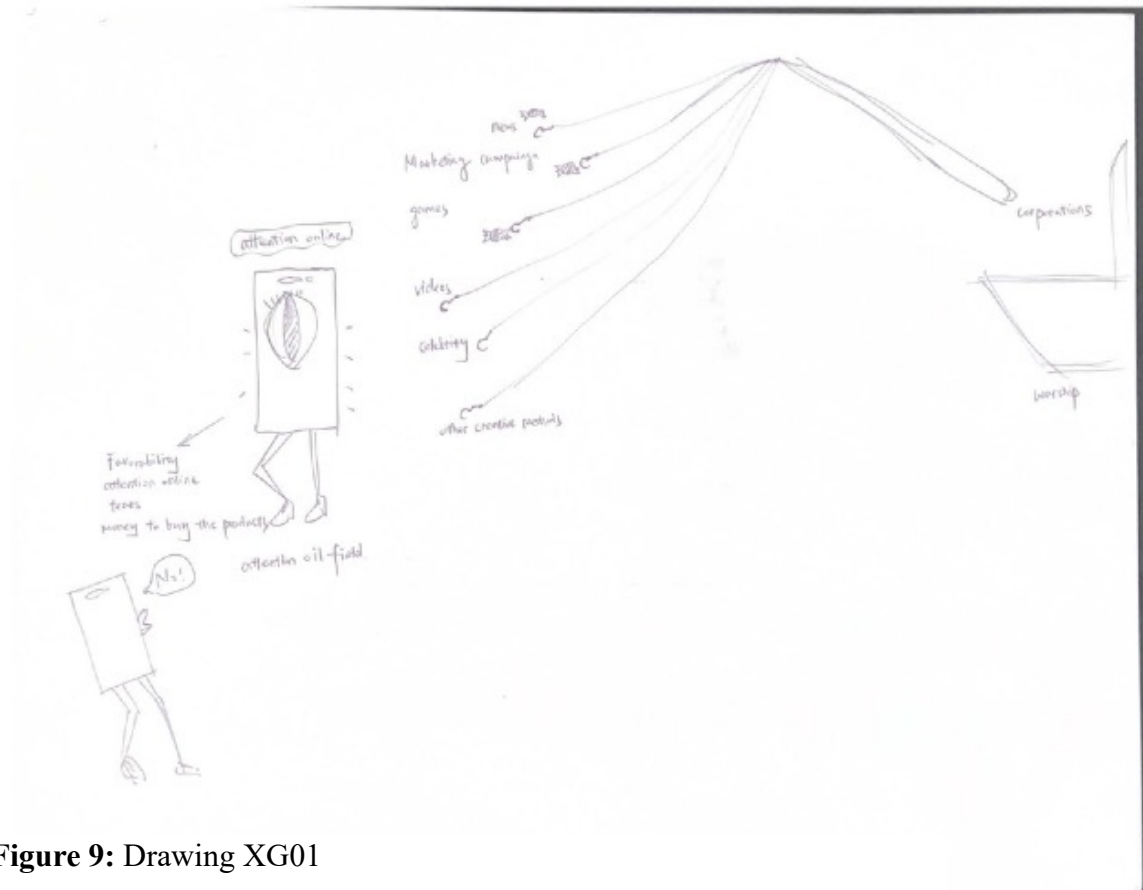


**Figure 9:** Drawing XG01

two examples of how participants conceptualized the roles digital technologies play in modern CSR/P practices. And these depiction of digital technologies in the individual drawings further supports what emerged from the questionnaire, where participants answered 'yes' to the questions of whether technology (9 participants out of 13) and data (12 out of 13) are used in CSR/P strategies. This illustrates that participants were clearly capable of recognizing the role of technology plays in modern CSR/P strategies without being influenced by the framing of the workshop. This finding gives me hope that the public is more aware of technologies role in

corporations' CSR/P campaigns than I initial imagined. This also suggests that what Elder-Vass's (2016; 2019) and Fourcade and Kluttz's (2020) find about digital capitalism and gift giving in our Digital Society can be understood by the public through their lived experiences. Furthermore, participants demonstrated their knowledge of CSR/Ps use of digital technologies by sharing their perceptions of data and digital resources (information, software, etc.) as forms of
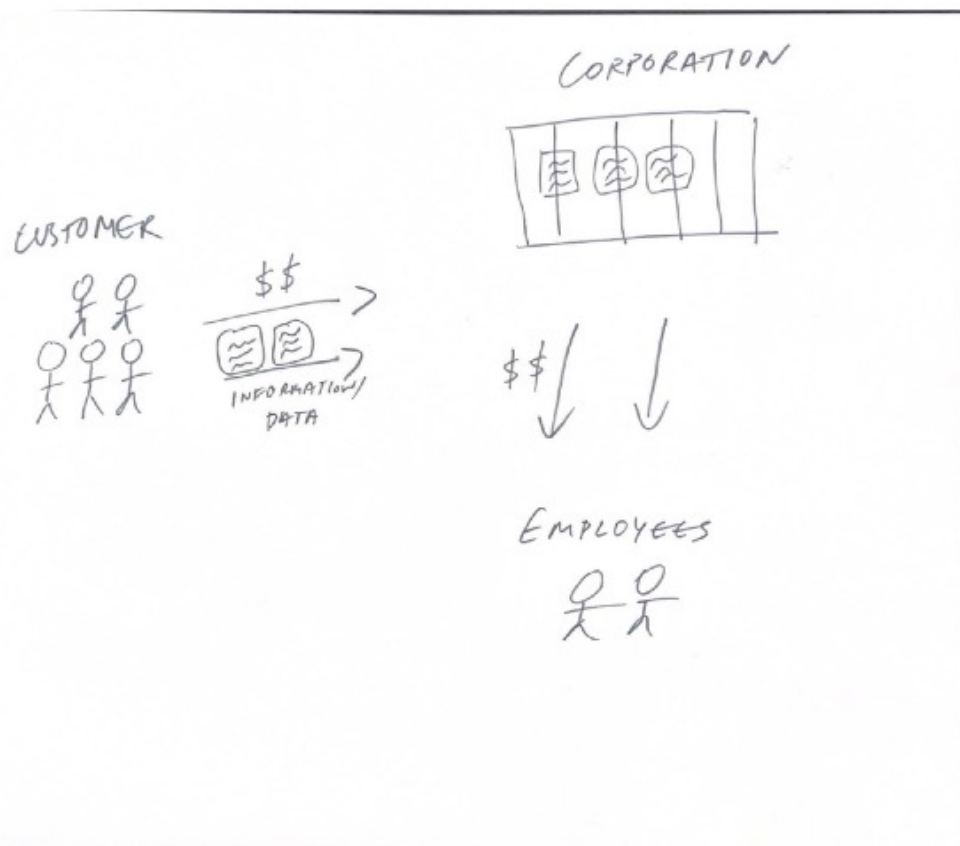


**Figure10:** Drawing AK02

currency for corporations. This can be seen in Figure 10 where the participant drew data, information, and money entering a corporation as profits. In addition to participants' depictions of corporations for profit mission they had the capacity to eloquently explain its influence over corporations' CSR/P practices. One participant stated:

> I personally don't think it does benefit society myself because they are corporations and I think even they would say that the ultimate goal for them is profit, whether even if they divide up a certain level that profit to social good, ultimately, it's still profit driven like

that's the first desirable outcome, then everything else is secondary. And for me personally, any sort of efforts to advertise themselves is for social good is to collect more profit first and foremost.

While another participant explained that the large dollar sign in the center of the drawing represented the capacity of CSR/P to be "distraction from the aim of for-profit companies" (see Figure 11). These participants' statements accurately encapsulate 'the for-profit mission behind corporations' CSR/P practices. In Gautier and Pache's (2015) evaluation of existing CP literature they found that "profit maximization may well be a primary motivation for" corporations to
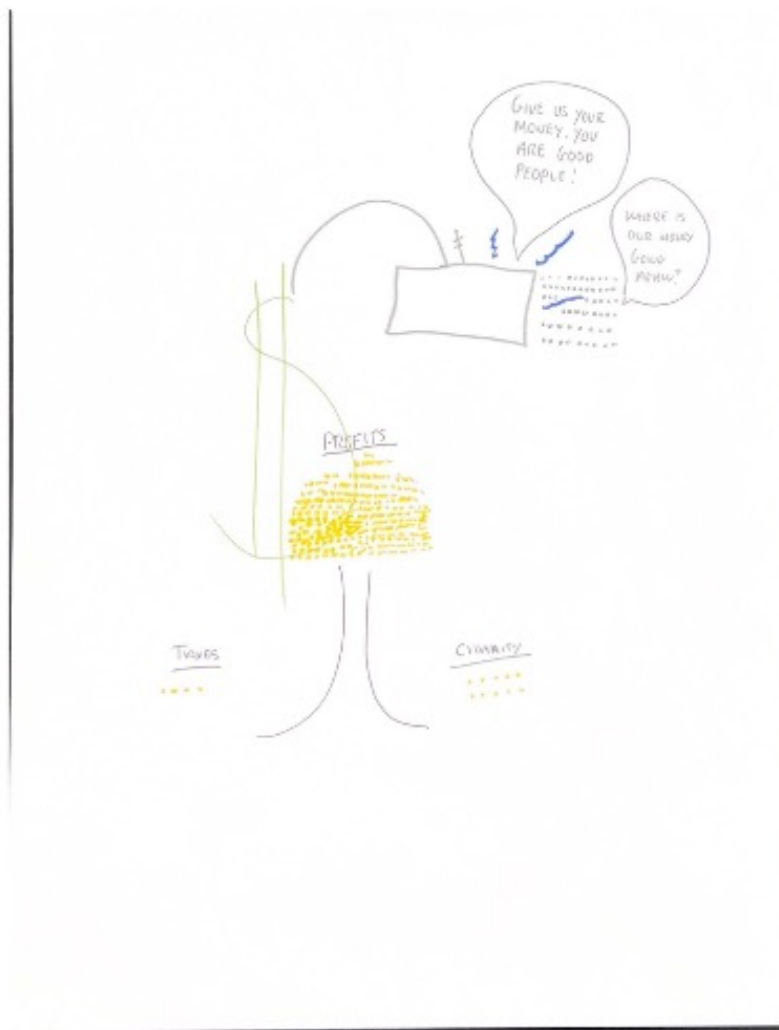


**Figure 11:** Drawing BC01

undertake CSR/P activities. My findings regarding participants' capacity to recognize the for-

profit drive behind corporations' CSR/P practices is a profound revelation for me, as it illustrates

how corporate sponsorship could impact the public's trust and perception of the receiving

cultural institution and thus any future research I would do on this topic. Unlike the digital

technologies and for-profit mission shared themes, I anticipated participants' CSR/P folk theories
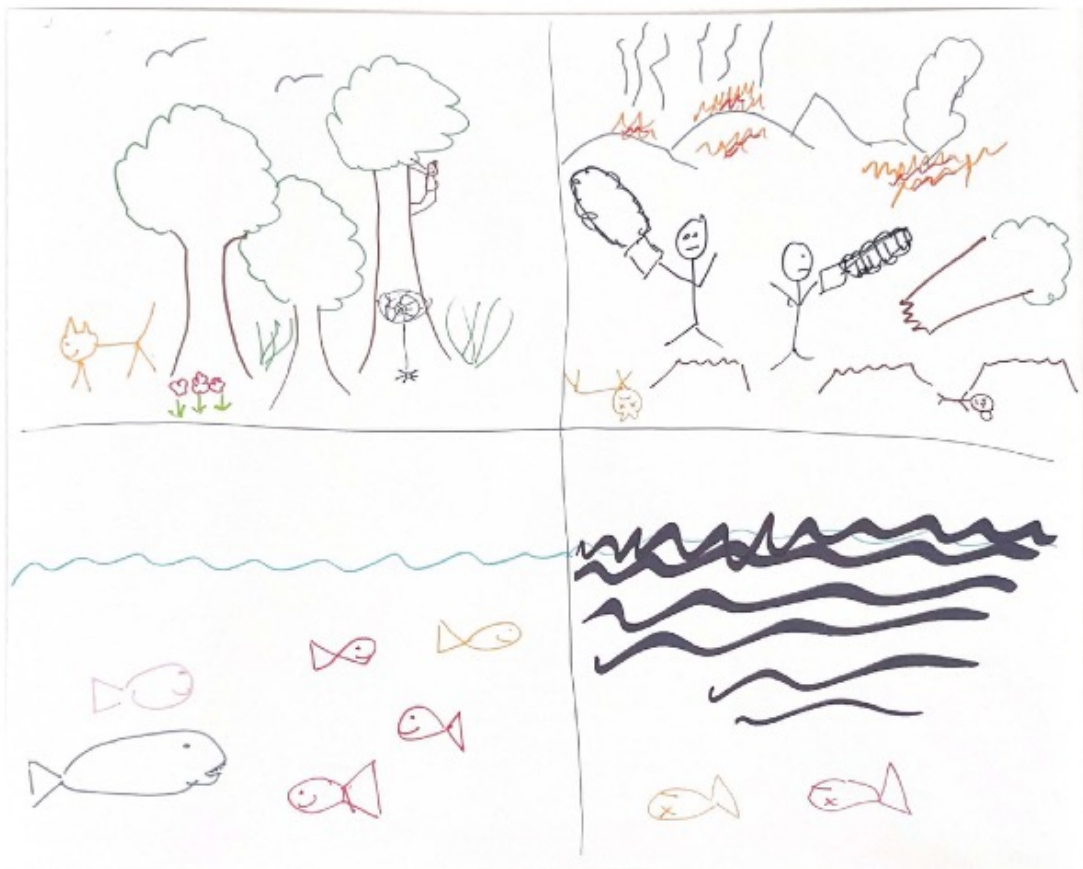


**Figure 12:** Drawing SL03

would include environmental and DEI activities. Corporations' environmental responsibilities

appeared in both questionnaire responses and individual drawings including: the personal

experience illustrated in Figure 3, Figure 5's statement on greenwashing, and in Figure 4, which

uses oil spills as metaphor for CSR/P failures across their drawing.

Additionally, Figure 12 depicts a graphic vision of the participants perception of corporation's role in the destruction of the environment and their failure to responsibly address their impact. DEI initiatives came through in participants' questionnaire responses and their reflections on corporations' internal CSR/P initiatives like equal pay, inclusive hiring, and employee programs. This can be seen in the frequency that DEI initiatives appear in Table 1 and Figure 1 (for more information see Appendix A: Key Theme: DEI). The environmental responsibilities and DEI initiatives that participants identified components of corporations' CSR/P practices are in line with popular and advertised debates over business operations in the Digital Society.

Several participants' individual drawings demonstrated their capacity to grasp the complexities of corporations' CSR/P practices through their inclusion of multiple shared themes. For example, in Figures 13, 14, and 17, each participant drew different diagrams that
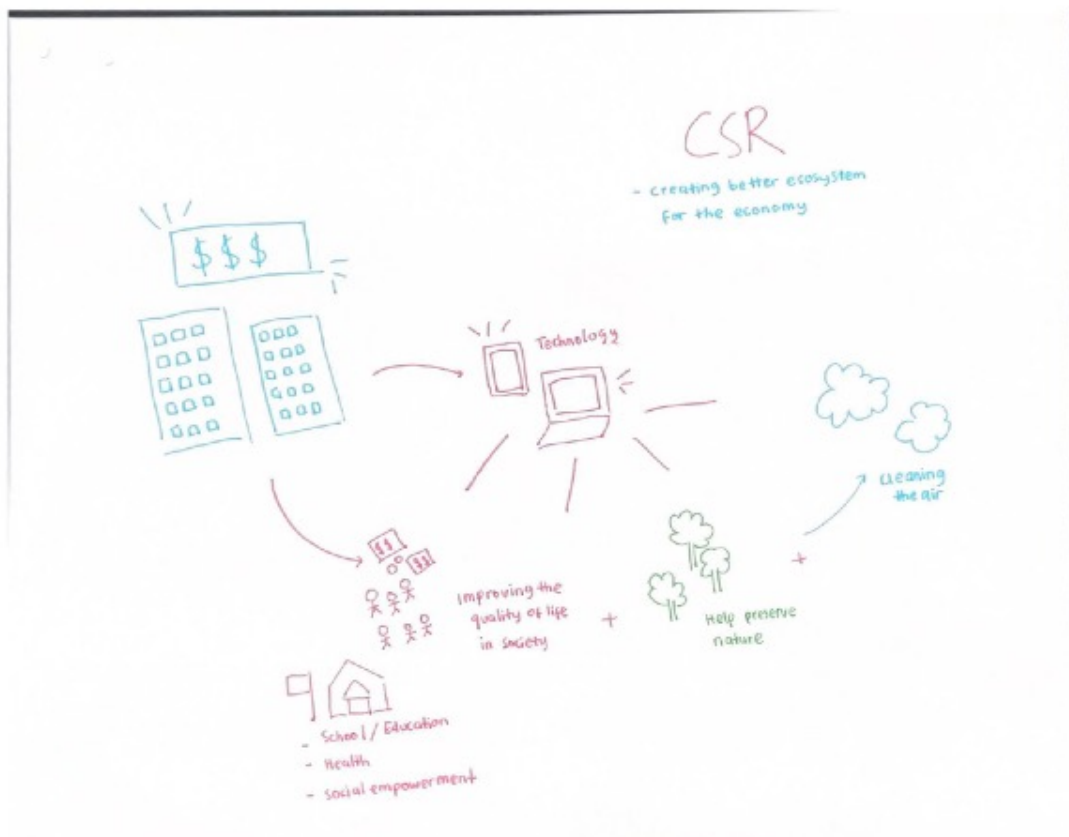


**Figure13:** Drawing AA02
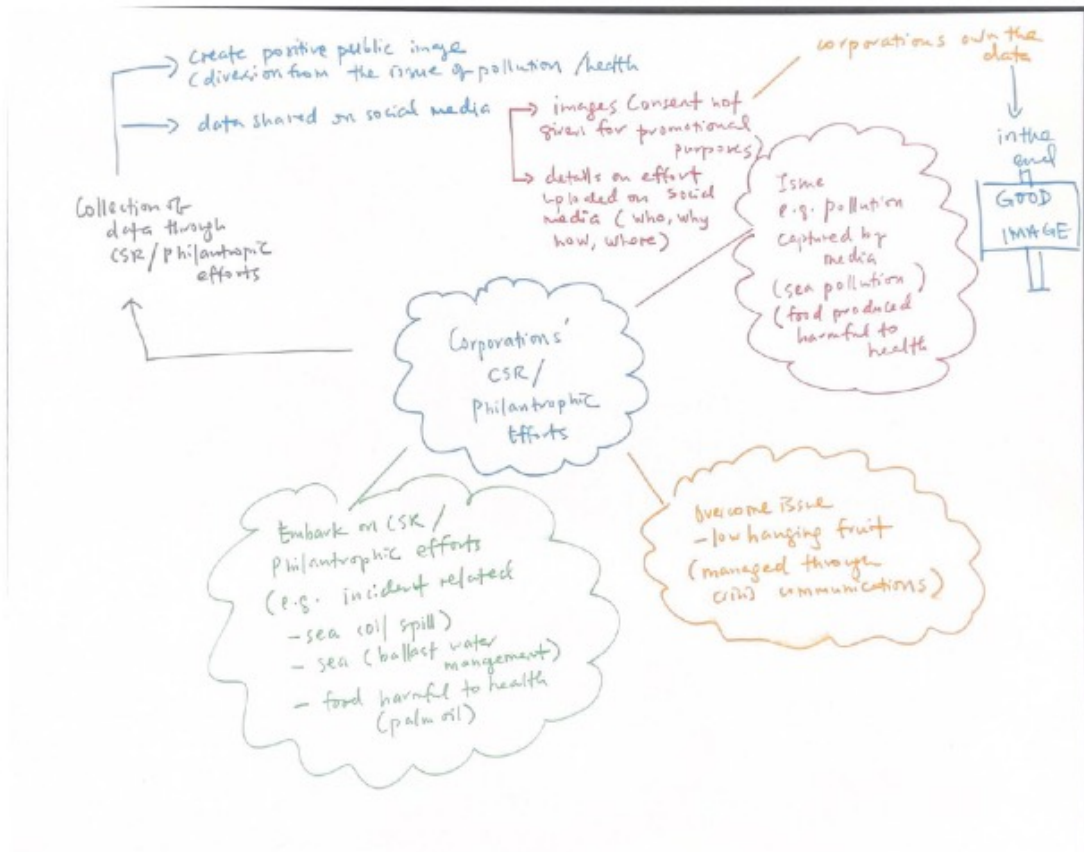
**Figure 14:** Drawing MN01

incorporated multiple components of CSR/P. Prompting me to ask why these participants

specifically were able to grasp the complexities of CSR/P at a different level to other

participants. I discovered that the creators of Figures 13, 14, and 17, each explained components

of their individual drawing by sharing their experience's working in a corporate environment.

The professional experience these participants had clearly shaped their ability to articulate the

nuances CSR/P. This might have to do with their age (as can be seen in the questionnaire

responses), but also indicates a need to further examine how professional experience directly

influences participants CSR/P folk theories. It makes me wonder if there is a consequential

knowledge gap between corporate employees and other members of the public when it comes to

CSR/P practices in the Digital Society. Furthermore, I identified difference between the

workshops' outcomes due to the first two group having members with professional experiences and the third workshop group not having any corporate work experiences (for additional insights see Appendix A: Participant, Findings: Collective Drawings, and Optics). This suggests to me that future research needs to explore and address the influence of professional experience on the public's CSR/P folk theories.

The collective drawing task seamlessly integrated themes from individual folk theories into group understandings. As previously stated, workshops 1 and 2 worked their individual folk theories into a broader system of CSR/P speculating on the potential for CSR/P to better 'benefit society.' For example, in workshops 1 and 2's collective drawings, Figures 15 and 16,
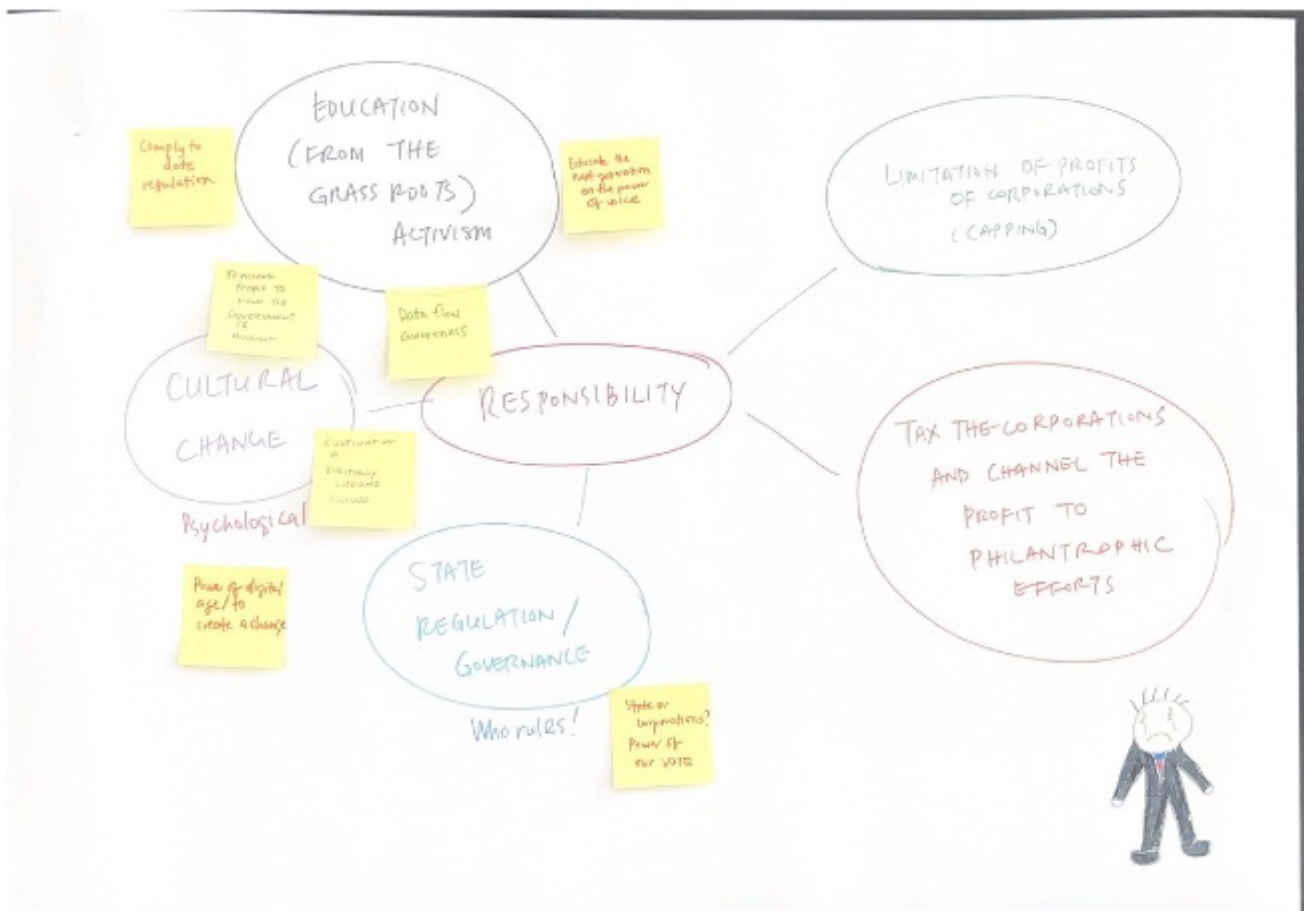


**Figure 15:** Drawing WK1C - Workshop 1's Collective Drawing
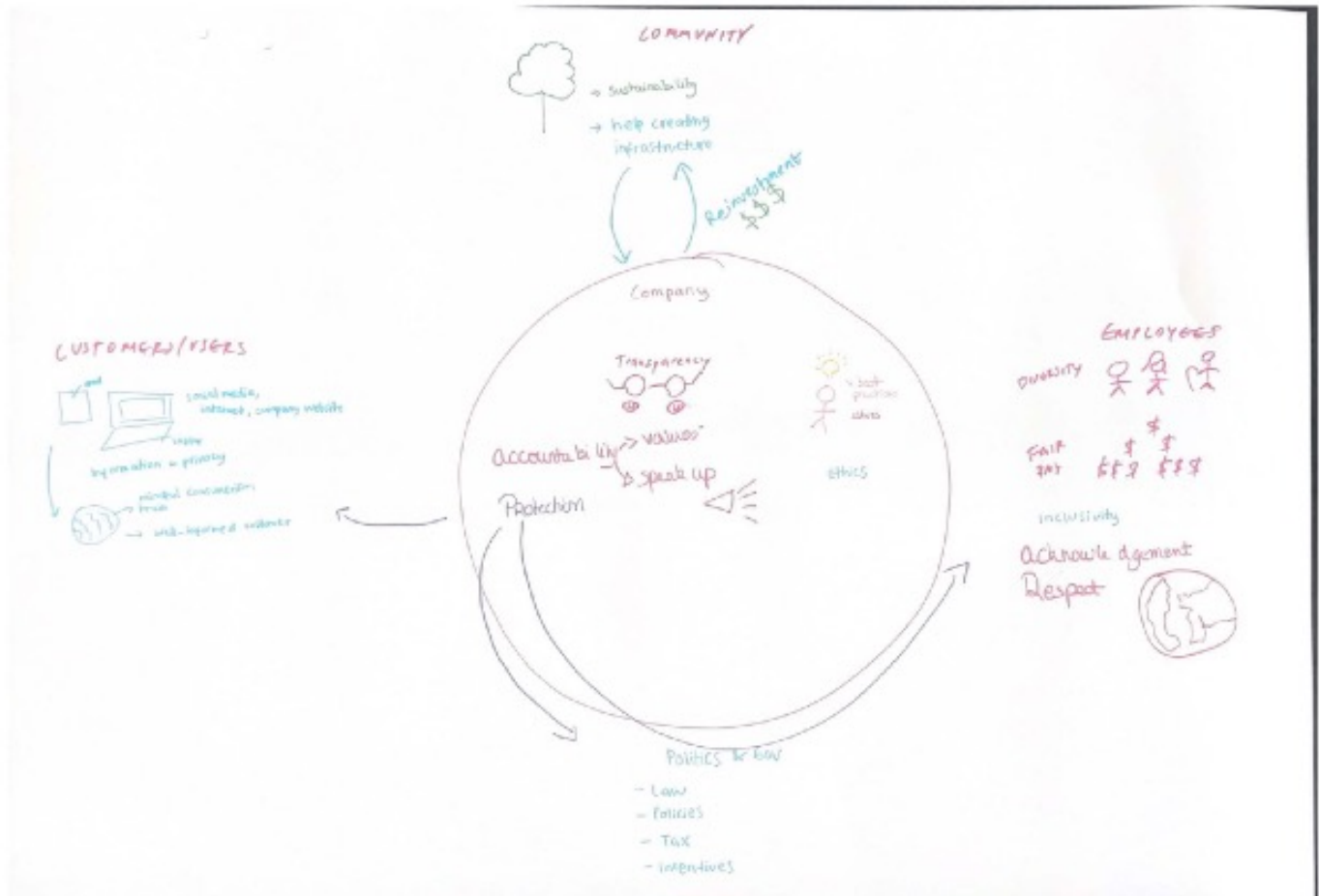
**Figure16:** Drawing WK2C - Workshop 2's Collective Drawing

respectively, the groups' grievances with CSR/P practices' misuse of digital technologies and the for-profit mission turned into a discussion of how to keep corporations' power in check and direct their 'do good' initiatives. Workshop 1 proposed five categories to improve the capacity for CSR/P to 'benefit society:' education, cultural change, state regulation and governance, limitation of profits, and taxation. In contrast, workshop 2 discussions focused improvements for corporations' internal business practices, customers and users, communities, employees, and politics and government. Although the naming of the categories is different between the collective drawings, the groups' discussions reveal key similarities. The groups' conversations on

the "education" and "customers/users" categories particularly resonated with me. The groups believed that "mindful consumerism" would enable the public to engage more consciously as users and consumers with corporations' CSR/P practices; thus, granting them more power and autonomy in how they participate in CSR/P initiatives. This notion that education may contribute to the public's perception and participation in corporations' 'do good' initiatives was a new idea to me and one I had not seen in existing literature. Even though workshops 1 and 2 presented their collective drawings as areas of improvement for CSR/P they remained skeptical of the possibility for any real change to occur. This concern is rooted in participants' recognition of the immense power corporations hold in our Digital Society. This was particularly clear in workshop 3's (Figure 7) drawing of a Pac Man (a round video game character that aims to eat everything in its path) donning corporation logos eating the globe. Participants' discussions revealed their underlying concerns about corporations' capacity to manipulate them through CSR/P campaigns and their desire for this to change moving forward.

Each collective drawing discussion came to similar conclusions about corporations' performances vs. actual practice of CSR/P. Participants used a variety of words to discuss corporations' CSR/P performance including "window dressing," "optics," "visibility," "for the photo," and "marketing assets." They discussed CSR/P as corporations' strategy to improve their "good image" but believed that "it's not practically happening." I was impressed by participants' ability to distinguish between their familiarity with CSR/P initiatives and the actual impact of CSR/P. As this revelation demonstrated participants ability to critically examine how the optics or performance of CSR/P influenced their perceptions and trust of the corporations. I was surprised by this finding as I had assumed participants familiarity with CSR/P would go hand and hand with their perception of impact – though this proved untrue and could be a point for

future research. Participants' discussion surrounding CSR/P performance can be exemplified

through a participant's chosen metaphor for their individual drawing. In Figure 17 the creator's
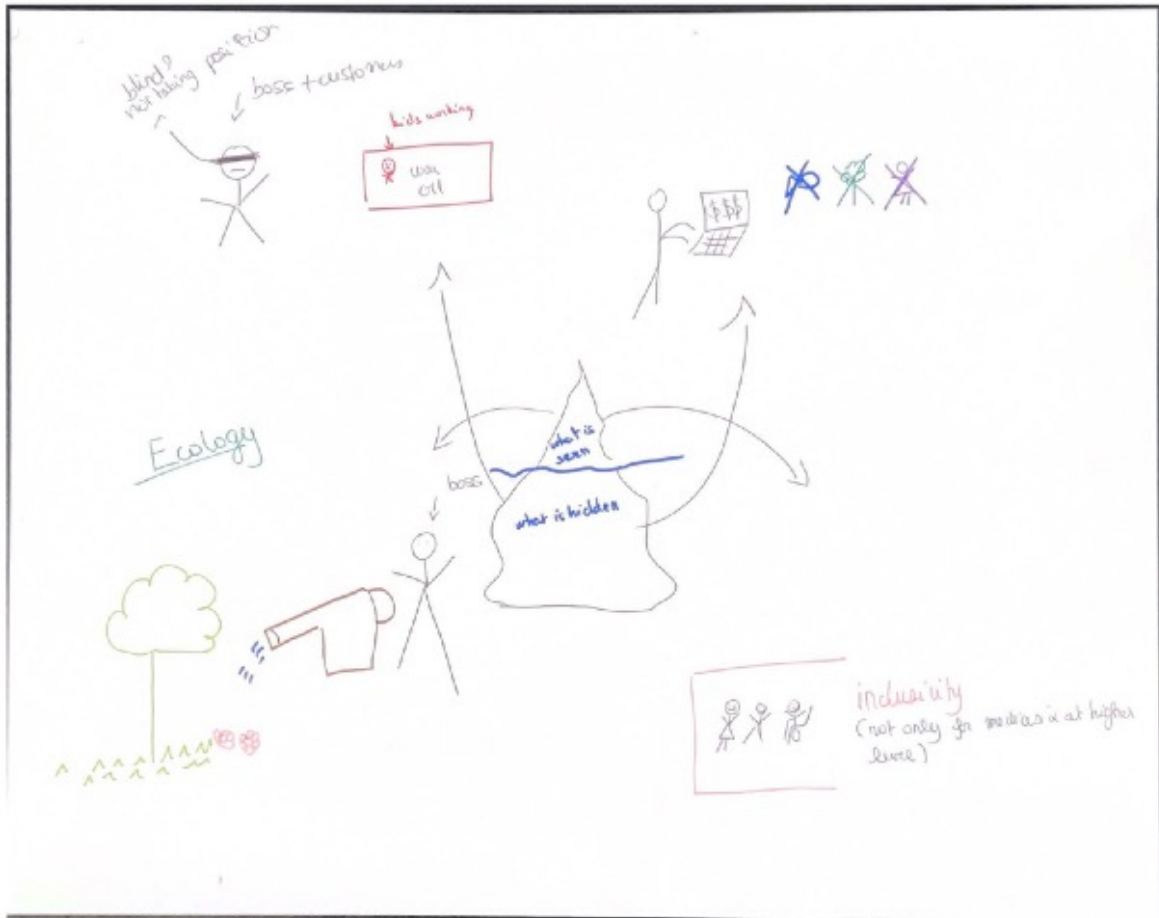


**Figure 17:** Drawing MP02

decision to depict CSR/P as an iceberg explaining that the ice above the water is what the public

sees, and everything below is the hidden activities and agendas of the corporations. In

participants' discussion of CSR/P 'optics,' corporations' use of digital elements was particularly

evident as they cited marketing advertisements like commercials and social media campaigns as

methods used by corporations to curate brand images. The depth of the workshops conversation

on CSR/P performance further supports the analysis of participants' skepticism and lack of trust in corporations to fulfill their social responsibilities.

## Reflection on the Method

This research project also investigated the use of VFGs for a topic other than activism (for which the VFG was originally developed, see Ferrari 2020); this required expanded reflection on the VFG workshops as a creative research method. Following the end of each section, participants were asked to provide feedback on the workshop and the method. As all participants are masters' students, they each have received some level of instruction in conducting academic research, methodology, and using various data collection methods making them uniquely qualified to provide feedback on VFG workshops capacity to collect data on complex topics. Participants stated they very much enjoyed the workshops citing the opportunity to share information through multiple mediums as a reason why. Participants said they thought it was "really useful to draw things out" and that "putting your thoughts on paper" helped them think through the complexities of CSR/P. The progression of the workshops from questionnaire to individual drawings to collective drawings worked very well as participants' individual folk theories took form and were shared prior to the collective drawing and discussion phase. The progress individual participants made including the knowledge and awareness participants gained, was revealed in the third phase discussions and presentations. The clearest example of participants growth is seen in workshop 3, where no participant had any corporate work experience; here participants struggled to fully grasp the concepts of CSR/P, even indicating in their feedback that it would have been helpful to have been given a definition of CSR/P prior to beginning. However, they believed they got there in the end. The growth in workshop 3's participants' understanding of CSR/P further shows the success of the method to educate and

spread awareness of a topic. For future research, I would recommend that participants are given a similar questionnaire at the end of the workshops that they received at the beginning. This would improve the capacity for the questionnaire to be a baseline for individuals' CSR/P folk theories, as researchers would gain a before and after metric. Additionally, participants indicated an interest in a more diverse group of people with differing beliefs, including, different professional careers. This could be addressed in improving both the recruitment strategy used and implementing a more intensive screening for interested participants prior to putting them into workshop groups. This would entail increasing the diversity in political leanings, education level, and work experience in the sample. I agree with the participants that the diversification of the sample would add great value to this research providing a more holistic picture of the public's CSR/P folk theories. In particular, the collection of a summary of participants' professional experience could clarify how individuals' folk theories have been shaped and informed; this might also help address the possibility of future groups facing similar challenges to workshop 3. Beyond the questionnaire, participants had little to no critical feedback on the timing or facilitation of the individual and collective drawing phases. However, in reflecting on the success of the drawing phases of the method I think a more intentional integration of research questions into drawing prompts would help focus participants and thus the research findings. It is possible that the lack of focus on the research questions could also be due to my error when conducting the workshops, as well as a consequence of the experimental nature of the method. Despite this lack of focus, the collected data did answer the research questions posed by this project with a good level of specificity; the workshops also educated participants on CSR/P in the Digital Society. Additionally, the method enabled participants to ask their own questions about the research topic, thus inspiring ideas for future research. Some ideas included: how the public

understands their role within the CSR/P use of data gifting, public perception of digital CSR/P ethics, and research unpacking the difference between public folk theories of CSR/P rooted in the *should be* vs *are* perspective. These ideas for future research build upon this project's establishment of existing folk theories of CSR/P in our digital society enabling countless paths of inquiry to be taken. Overall, the method's success in establishing insights to research questions, while working to educate participants achieved its intended purpose when I selected the VFG method for this research project.

## Conclusion

Over the course of this research project – from the brainstorming stage, through the ethical approval process, data collection, and analyses there have been many key takeaways and learning experiences. I derived the 'Folk Theories of CSR/P' research from both a personal interest in corporations' capacity to help cultural institutions with digitalization and from my graduate research into the existing CSR/P literature. The choice of focusing on the public's CSR/P folk theories was to increase my understanding of their perceptions of corporations' capacity to 'do good.' And if so, whether participants could identify categories of CSR/P and the practices, specifically the digital tools, used by corporations to perform their social responsibilities. The research findings revealed many answers to the questions I posed about perception, trust, power, digital technologies, personal autonomy, and impact of corporations' CSR/P practices demonstrating the success of the project. However, as a researcher I am still left wondering if CSR/P is truly enough to 'do good' in the Digital Society, even in small ways like contributing digital resources and expertise to museums. A big part of this is because of the skepticism participants shared when discussing their ability to have a say in corporations CSR/P

activities. Regardless of lasting questions, I gained experience in conducting hands-on graduate level research in an in-person setting. In adapting the VFG, creative research method, for this project I learned much about what goes into the development, facilitation, and management of data collection workshops. Furthermore, I utilized reflexive and critical thinking to understand how the data collection workshops could be improved for future research. The analysis of the collected data was the most challenging part of this research project for me. In working with multiple types of data, I needed to consider the representation of themes in a graphic form from the drawings, a textual form from the transcribed audio recordings, and in a quantitative form from the questionnaire responses. This required me to carefully interpret shared themes by identifying similarities and differences in the meanings behind participants expressions, regardless of medium. I overcame this challenge by looking at the data side by side from various perspectives throughout the analysis process. Furthermore, the creation of a website where the components of the research process and the collected data needed to be broken up and summarized as individual components was exceptionally helpful in developing my collective research findings. The completion of the project website and the interactive gallery provides a vehicle for people to explore the project in its entirety. In hindsight I realize there may be more effective design decisions I could have made to make the research findings more accessible based on individuals' interests, like color coding or adding separate sections. However, based on the time constraints and size of this project, I am very proud of the website I built from the ground up and its capacity to share the project with others. Overall, this Independent Student Portfolio has further developed my existing skills in written and verbal communication, facilitation, and HTML/CSS coding while building skills in developing and conducting research and multi-modal data analysis.

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# Appendix A: Website Text

## Page Heading

Title: Folk Theories of CSR

Intro Caption: Welcome to 'Folk Theories of Corporate Social Responsibility and Philanthropy' website!

Intro Blurb: This website provides access to research details, data, and reflections from 'Folk Theories: Corporate Social Responsibility and Philanthropy in our Digital Society' project. This research project investigates how the public perceives corporations' performance of their social responsibilities and philanthropic activities in our Digital Society. This research project was completed as an Independent Student Portfolio (ISP) project for my master's degree from University of Glasgow. This website is designed to educate visitors on public folk theories of corporate social responsibility and philanthropy (CSR/P) in our Digital Society, the academic research process, visual focus groups as a creative research method, and my personal reflections on completing this ISP.

## Gallery

Gallery Intro Title: Explore the Project Now!

Gallery intro Blurb: To learn more about the project explore the gallery below by clicking on tiles that interest you. The gallery is designed to be explored at your own pace and what your interests are. For a more guided route follow one of these options:

Academic Research Path: Ethic Approval > Key Questions > Background > Methodology > Visual Focus Groups > Data Collection Workshops > Data Analysis > Findings tiles (3) > Key Research Findings > Key Method Findings > Project Takeaways

Reflections: Why this research > significance & relevance > aims & objectives > data collection workshops > word cloud > where do participants folk theories come from > Personal Experiences > CSR/P Campaigns > Key Research Findings > Takeaways tiles (3)

Key Points: Key Questions > Significance & Relevance > Visual Focus Groups > Where do participants folk theories come from > Findings: Individual Drawings > Key Research Findings > Key Method Findings > Project Takeaways

Before you begin exploring a couple things you should know. For this project I used the following definitions for corporate social responsibility (CSR) and corporate philanthropy (CP).

    i.      \<b> Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):\</b> The "context-specific organizational actions and policies that take into account stakeholders' expectations and the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental performance" (Aguinis, 2011, as cited in Aguinis and Glavas, 2012).

    ii.      \<b>Corporate Philanthropy (CP):\</b> The "voluntary and unconditional transfers of cash or other assets by private firms for public purposes" (Gautier and Pache, 2015, p.343)

Though existing literature makes a clear argument for the differences between CSR and CP (von Schnurbein, Seele, and Lock, 2016). This project looks at CSR and CP together using the acronym CSR/P (corporate social responsibility and philanthropy). I made this decision to minimize the complexities of CSR and CP for participants and to increase the likelihood of participants folk theories included CSR/P activities in our Digital Society

## Column One:

### Explore the Project:

Overlay: Directions on exploring the gallery

Heading: How Should you Explore this Project Gallery?

Info:  As you begin to explore this site you will see that project details, data, outcomes, and reflections are dispersed throughout a gallery. There is no right way for you to engage with this project. I encourage you to follow your curiosity and click away! The gallery is organized in a way that follows a traditional research or design process – meaning it begins with introductory and background information, followed by the research process, and finally research outcomes and project takeaways. As you hover over each item in the gallery a brief summary will appear of what that tile is about, click the 'learn more' button for an in-depth explanation of the gallery item you are looking at. In the footer of each popup, you will see recommendations for tiles with similar information to help you follow your interests. If you want to explore the site following a specific path, see the guides listed at the top of the gallery.

Footer: For project highlights see "Visual Focus Groups," "Significance & Relevance," and "Overall Findings."

### Background:

Overlay: An overview of existing CSR/P literature

Heading: What Does the Existing CSR/P Literature Say?

Info: Corporate Social Responsibility and Philanthropy (CSR/P) is a highly complex and debated topic across academic disciplines. This research project takes a digital sociological approach investigating the intersection between our digital and social worlds with corporations' 'do good' activities. Existing literature on CSR/P "remains deeply scattered between academic disciplines" (Gautier and Pache, 2015) and rarely includes interdisciplinary conclusions. The number of ongoing scholarly debates reflects the "complexity of the practice and the difficulties for both practitioners and observers to get a solid grasp of" CSR/P (Gautier and Pache, 2015). To minimize the complexities of CSR/P from a researcher and research participants perspective this project uses a big picture understanding of CSR/P in our Digital Society.

CSR/P existed before mass digitalization, dating back to business practices of the late-nineteenth century. The history of CSR/P prior to the rise of the internet is important because it demonstrates the role and potential for individuals to drive corporations' CSR/P activities. Following the social and cultural change brought on by the industrial revolution, early forms of CSR/P began to take hold. CSR/P eventually became what some regard as a "building block of American civilization" (Gautier and Pache, 2015, p.344). Rooted in the social, cultural, and religious practices of benevolence dominating elite circles in the late 19th century (Agudelo, Jóhannsdóttir and Davídsdóttir, 2019) it is unsurprising that businesses integrated charitable initiatives into their business models. These early forms of CSR/P included welfare schemes in the form of creating community and employee programs, donation of monetary gifts, and the development of policies (Agudelo, Jóhannsdóttir and Davídsdóttir, 2019). However, the standardization of CSR/P practices occurred between the 1950s and 2000s partially overlapping with the changes brought on by the development of the internet, the launching of the World Wide Web (WWW), and the rise of the digital economy. CSR/P practices of our Digital Society are influenced by pre and post digitalization. Therefore, requiring the acknowledgment of historic CSR/P giving traditions and business practices as they have the capacity to shape individuals and research participants interpretations of modern CSR/P activities.

To conceptualize individuals' modern folk theories of CSR/P, CSR/P must first be framed within the context of our Digital Society. Within the field of digital sociology, our Digital Society can be understood as "our present society… society affected by digitally networked communication tools and platforms, such as the internet and social media" (Lindgren 2022, pg. 2). Born out of the "rather unlikely intersection of big science, military research, and libertarian culture" (Castells, 2002, p.17; Lindgren, 2020, p.15) the development of the internet and the launch of the WWW rang in a new digitally driven era. The "digitally networked social reality" created by the internet and the WWW brought with it a "new economic system where everyone could take part" (Lindgren 2022, p.15) – one known as the digital economy. Collectively the internet, WWW, and rise of the digital economy paved a way for new forms of digital gift giving to arise including donations of user data, digital resources, and digital expertise (Elder-Vass, 2016; 2022) transforming corporations CSR/P models. The drastic changes brought on by the transition to a Digital Society positioned CSR/P at the intersection of businesses and our social world. However, within academia little is known about what today's digital CSR/P models are giving and the public's perception of these 'gifts.'

Footer: Learn more from existing literature see "Methodology" and "References" tiles.

Significance & Relevance:

Overlay: The significance and relevance of this project to you

Heading: Why is this Project Significant and Relevant?

Info: The significance of this project is twofold – the first lies in what was researched (i.e. the research questions), and the second is in how the research was conducted (i.e. the methodology and methods).

- <b>The Research Question: </b>Understanding how public perceives corporations' CSR/P efforts is often absent in academic research. Therefore, this practical project is driven by two guiding questions: How do existing folk theories influence public perception and trust of organizations CSR/P initiatives in the digital society and how does the public conceptualize their role within corporations giving strategies? The first questions seek to uncover internalized thoughts, emotions, and beliefs people have about company's social responsibilities to 'benefit society' and their actual capacity to 'do good.' While the second question works to reveal and investigate the changing power structures within the digital gift economy between users and corporations, specifically users' dual roles as recipients and givers. In attempting to answer these questions the hope is that this project will fill a whole within existing literature while also providing a way to educate a broader public on the implication of CSR/P on their everyday experiences.

- <b>Methodology and Methods: <b/>Most research conducted on perceived CSR/P is done through quantitative research and traditional methods (see methodology). However, this research project investigates perceived CSR/P using a qualitative research approach and creative methods. The qualitative approach to this project lets me, as the researcher, view each participant as experts on the topic of study and use their words as evidence of their lived

experiences. In choosing a creative research method as my investigation tool, I am "not bound by" (Kara, 2020, p.8) my knowledge of existing methods, instead I am given leeway to ethically use creativity to "manipulate and develop theories and methods" (Kara, 2020, p.8). Therefore, this research project utilizes a new form of an innovative method call Visual Focus Groups to collect project data. The use of a qualitative methodology and a new creative research method adds to the significance of this project as not only is the topic being studied, but so is the data collection method.

Footer: Learn more about the research questions see "Key Questions" and "Key Takeaways." For more on the method see "Methodology" and "Visual Focus Groups."

## Participants:

Overlay: Information about research participants

Heading: Who Participated in this Research?

Info: The research participants for this project were recruited and selected as a representative sample group of a portion of the public. I selected students from the University of Glasgow as my representative sample because of accessibility to them, their diverse demographic, and their position as future, current, or past professionals. As a University of Glasgow master student, myself, I could use my existing relationships and network with peers to recruit and select participants using purposive and snowball sampling. I used various recruitment techniques including reaching out to existing contacts via email, WhatsApp messaging, and social media to identify and recruit potential participants. I provided interested individuals with a brief synopsis of research project, a plain language statement, and a description of how their data would be used included the publication of drawings and quotes to the project website, prior to them agreeing to participate.

I successfully recruited 13 graduate students from the University of Glasgow. Participants were divided into three groups based on their preferred availability and assigned to a workshop session located on the University of Glasgow campus.

Footer: More information regarding participants is spread throughout the site. To see a specific reflection on participant demographics, view the "Participant Demographic" tile.

## Methodology:

Overlay: Learn about this project's methodological approach

Heading: What Methodology did this Research Use?

Info: This project utilizes a qualitative methodological approach to guide the research process from design to data collection and analysis. Qualitative research relies on "qualitative data [which is] expressed as text" (Grønmo, 2019, p.11) and according to some scholars "only words are capable of describing complexity" (Loseke, 2017, p.30). Qualitative research is grounded in an ontological approach called constructivism where "reality – both physical and social – exits independently of humans" (Loseke, 2017, p.28). Meaning multiple realities exist because "the social world is constantly being constructed through group interactions in meaning making activities" (Hesse-Biber, 2017, p.6). As this project seeks to find meaning through research participants individual experiences and their group interactions, discussions, questionnaire responses, and creative drawings a qualitative approach grounded in a constructivist ontology is a suitable and appropriate philosophical approach for this research.

The philosophical approach of constructivism and qualitative research supports this projects use of creative research methods. Creative research methods are essentially "creative solutions to research problems" meaning researchers are "not bound by" (Kara, 2020, p.8) their existing knowledge of research methods. Instead, researchers are encouraged to use creativity to "manipulate and develop theories and methods," (Kara, 2020, p.8). The flexibility allowed by creative research methods enabled the adaption and use of Visual Focus Groups (VFG) as this project's data collection method. Additionally, creative research methods support the data analysis process enabling the creative use of multimodal and embodied analysis to study the various types of collected data.

Footer: To learn more about data collection and analysis see the "Visual Focus Groups," "Data Collection Workshops," and "Data Analysis" tiles.

Bar Graph:

Overlay: Perceptions of CSR/P performance strategies

Heading: How do Participants Believe CSR/P is Performed?

Info: The questionnaire asked participants how they believed CSR/P is performed in our Digital Society. Participants selected from a list of different CSR/P strategies that I provided them. Looking at the graph you can see that most participants recognized community programs, ethical business practices, sustainability initiatives, and diversity, equity, and inclusion CSR/P initiatives. While a less than 3 participants marked commercials, data gifts, gifts of resources, and gifts of expertise. This is important because the CSR/P performance methods that only a few participants identified are those most prevalent in our Digital Society. Large technology corporations like Google, Meta, and Microsoft often give user data, digital resources (i.e., devices, software, code), and technological expertise (i.e. training or consultants) as gifts.

I was not surprised that only a few participants identified the predominate CSR/P strategies in our Digital Society. As until I completed extensive review of existing literature, I did not know that user data, digital resources, and technological expertise are key areas of modern CSR/P performance. However, participants who did not check these digital CSR/P initiatives in the questionnaire later acknowledged CSR/P's use of digital technologies in drawings and discussions. Participants increased understanding of how CSR/P is performed in our digital society over the course of their workshop illustrates the effectiveness of using a creative research method to educate participants.

Footer: To learn more about questionnaire findings see the other graphs or "Findings: Questionnaire"

Participant Demographics: Reflection:

Overlay: Reflections on participant demographics

Heading: What Participant Demographics Stand Out?

Info:   At the beginning of each workshop participants answered demographic questions as part of the questionnaire. I collected demographic data to inform where participants folk theories came from and provide insights to group dynamics. Three demographic areas stood out to me and helped inform research findings.

Age: When looking for research participants my aim was to recruit 'digital natives.' However, as I recruited within my personal network, not all participants ended up meeting the established criteria. As I did not ask interested participants demographic information prior to assigning them to workshops. Consequently, I ended up recruiting participants with birth years ranging from 1979–2000 meaning that not all participants are technically 'digital natives,' though all do fit the participant criteria as masters' students. This was a happy consequence as the diverse age range added great value to my workshop findings.

Political Affiliation: I asked participants to rank their political affiliation on a scale from 1 (extreme right) to 7 (extreme left) to gain a better understanding of the range of beliefs in the workshop groups. I felt that political affiliation was a good way to understand where participants are coming from when discussing CSR/P as the research topic is inherently political. I do think that asking participants political affiliation served its purpose as participants feedback included a desire to complete the workshop with people of differing beliefs. Which is supported by participants political affiliation responses all being between 4 and 6. This means that there was little diversity in political beliefs in my sample population.

Nationality: I did not specifically recruit participants with certain nationalities nor seek a sample population that had a diverse range of nationalities. However, due to the international makeup of the University of Glasgow's graduate students my sample population included people from around the world. This was a happy coincidence, one I would encourage for future research, as participants with diverse nationalities provided a globalized perspective on CSR/P folk Theories. I did not ask participants their nationalities on the questionnaire (though you could), however many self-disclosed this information in workshop discussions and presentations. Many participants cited the diversity in participants experiences as a positive and insightful component of the workshops.

Footer: For more information on the impact of age see "Complex Folk Theories." For further evidence of a need for diverse beliefs see the Linkert-style graph. For examples of the value of a diverse nationality demographics look for the "Personal Experiences" tile and connected drawings.

Linkert-Style Graph:
        Overlay: A baseline of participants CSR/P beliefs
        Heading: Participants Linkert-style Questionnaire Responses

Info: I designed the Linkert-style questions in the questionnaire to establish a baseline of participants CSR/P beliefs at the beginning of the workshop. Individually and collectively the responses to these five questions successfully created a baseline of participants CSR/P folk theories prior to discussing their beliefs and hearing others during the workshop.

One of the key takeaways from these responses is the similarity in participants beliefs. At the end of the workshops several participants indicated an interest in participating in the workshop with people of differing beliefs. In theory a participant group with a diverse range of beliefs would have a broader range of answers to this question.

Footer: For more findings from the questionnaire view the other graphs and the "Findings: Questionnaire" tile.

## Personal Experience: NN03:

Overlay: A personal story about CSR/P failure

Heading: CSR/P's Environmental & Community Failure in Nigeria

Info: The creator of drawing NN03 explained their individual drawing as Shell's (a large multinational corporation) failure to uphold their social responsibility to protect the environment they operated in. The participant spoke emotionally about how the corporation's destruction of their community has impacted them. Stating that the corporation's failure to protect their community and environment has impacted the air quality, water quality, and local food sources particularly fish destroying their livelihoods.

Footer: For more information on personal experiences look for "Personal Experiences: Reflection" tile and the associated drawings.

## CSR/P Campaigns: Reflection:

Overlay: Discover identified CSR/P campaigns

Heading: What CSR/P Campaigns did Participants Recognize?

Info: Through my review of existing literature, I learned a lot about the different types of digital and in-person campaigns corporations use to perform CSR/P today. Therefore, I was surprised by participants capacity to include different kinds of CSR/P campaigns in their individual drawing. Across the workshops participants conception of CSR/P campaigns included printed advertisements, commercials, in-person donation schemes, diversity, equity, and inclusion marketing strategies, and digital incentive programs. I was surprised not only by the quantity of CSR/P campaigns participants recognized but their ability to discuss them in a reflexive and critical manner. Participants recognized how CSR/P campaigns can manipulate users and consumers to serve corporations' goals.

Footer: To learn more about CSR/P campaigns see the associated images.

## Key Theme: DEI

Overlay: An overview on DEI

Heading: Key Theme: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Info: Corporations Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives was a recurring theme across data collection workshops. It is not surprising that DEI was a predominate component of participants CSR/P folk theories as it has been an increasingly publicized component of the business world. CSR/P's DEI initiatives can include anything from greenwashing, rainbow-washing, to equal pay initiatives, and inclusive hiring activities. Participants referenced many of the different DEI initiatives relevant to corporations internal and external activities. Participants spoke of these DEI initiatives with a desire to see improvement. In drawing YJ03 the participant specifically spoke about DEI from a marketing perspective. While the collective drawings in from workshops 1 and 2 talked about DEI in terms of employees.

Footer: For an overview and more information on key themes see "Findings: Individual Drawings," "Key Research Findings," or the associated images.

Summary: WK1C:

Overlay: An overview of workshop 1

Heading: Workshop 1's Collective Findings

Info:

Workshop 1 depicted their collective folk theories using a mind map. Through participants discussion they identified categories to represent areas of CSR/P they believed could be improved to 'benefit society.' At the center of workshop 1's diagram participants wrote the word 'Responsibility' which they defined as "giving back, giving back after you [the corporation] take[s] from the environment or from your community." This workshop participants believed CSR/P initiatives are inherently apart of corporations' business practices and as such they need to protect and give back to the communities and environments, they operate in. Workshop 1 identified five categories they believed the social responsibilities of corporations extended to, including: education, cultural change, state regulation and governance, limitation of profits, and taxation.

Workshop 1's identification and discussion of their five categories shows participants capacity to grasp complex components of CSR/P. This group had an extensive conversation about their education and cultural change categories. They discussed how education and cultural change could be a solution to their grievances over corporation's misuse of digital technologies and the for-profit mission driving CSR/P activities. They believed consumer and user education and digital and financial literacy might enable members of the public to be more conscious about how CSR/P activities attempt to manipulate them. Additionally, workshop 1 explored the idea that increase in education and a cultural change could act as a check on corporations' unregulated power. They hoped this would also give users and consumers more autonomy over how corporations work to 'benefit society.'

I found workshop 1's conclusions very interesting as they illustrated a complex understanding of CSR/P. Workshop 1's findings incorporated themes of power, digital capitalism, and the absence of governance providing insights to many of my research questions including whether participants folk theories would account for the role of digital technologies. Participants in workshop 1 demonstrated their ability to think reflexively and critically about digital technology's role in CSR/P through their discussions and drawings. Workshop 1 was extremely successful as participants engagement with the research topic produced high level insights. In workshop 1's feedback session they shared how they liked how the creative tasks helped them think through their beliefs, and gain a deeper understanding of CSR/P.

Footer: To learn more about the outcomes of collective drawings see "Findings: Collective Drawings" or the associated images.

## Collective Drawings:

Overlay: Learn more about phase 3

Heading: Phase Three: Collective Drawings

Info: Consisting of a collective drawing task and a group discussion, the third and final stage of data collection seeks to establish the groups collective folk theories and critiques of CSR/P in our digital society. Participants are specifically asked to consider how they believe digital technologies play a role in CSR/P today and how they perceive their autonomy in shaping or engaging in CSR/P initiatives. During the collective drawing task, the researcher takes on a moderator role monitoring group members participation and contribution levels. Following the completion of their collective drawing participants presented their poster and are asked follow-up questions.

Footer: To learn more about the outcomes of individual workshops see the associated images. For findings and a reflection on the outcomes of all workshops see "Findings: Collective Drawings."

## Summary wk3c:

Overlay: An overview of workshop 3

Heading: Workshop 3's Collective Findings

Info: Workshop 3's collective drawing is an abstract depiction of the group's perceptions of CSR/P today. Participants in workshop 3 drew a Pac Man donning corporations logos eating the world to illustrate the unchecked power they believe corporations have today. They believed that corporation's power is why they have social responsibilities, however, the group remained pessimistic about CSR/P actives potential to do actual 'good.' To depict their grievances with corporations' CSR/P activities today they drew tree with a QR code and shampoo bottles and a gift box with various data forms. Both depictions represent the way corporations use digital technologies to advertise their 'do good' initiatives while simultaneously aiming to manipulate or buy consumer loyalty.

Footer: To learn more about the outcomes of collective drawings see "Collective Drawings," "Findings: Collective Drawings" or the associated images.

Key Method Findings:

Overlay: Reflections on the data collection method

Heading: Summary and Reflection of VFGs as a data collection method

Info:

This research project investigated the use VFGs for a topic other than activism. Therefore, additional reflection is needed on the expanded use of VFGs as a creative research method. Following the end of each section participants are asked to provide feedback on the workshop and the method. As all participants are masters' students, they each have received some level of instruction in doing academic research, methodology, and using various data collection methods making them uniquely qualified to provide feedback on the use of this form of VFGs as a data collection method. Participants stated they enjoyed how the workshop gave them the opportunity to share information through multiple methods. Participants said they thought it was "really useful to draw things out" and that "putting your thoughts on paper" aided them in thinking through the complexities of CSR/P. The progression of the workshop from questionnaire to individual drawings to collective drawings worked very well as participants individual folk theories were established prior to the group conversations.

Based on the research findings and participant feedback there are some recommendations for future research.

1: I recommend participants are given similar questionnaire at the end of the data collection workshops that they receive at the beginning. This would improve the capacity for the questionnaire to be a baseline for individuals' folk theories of CSR/P as it would provide researchers with a before and after metric.

2: Participants indicated an interest in a more diverse group of people with differing beliefs and professional experiences. This could be addressed in improving both the recruitment strategy used and implementing a more intensive screening for interested participants prior to putting them into workshop groups. This would entail increasing the diversity in political leanings, education level, and work experience.

3: The collection of a brief summary of professional experience could increase researchers' understanding of how individuals' folk theories are shaped and informed. Additionally, the collection of professional experience could address the possibility of groups facing similar challenges to workshop 3.

4: I recommend a more intentional integration of research questions into the drawing phases of data collection. I believe this would help focus participants creative outputs and thus the research findings. As this research project has broader aims, objectives, and research question a more focused approach to the creative drawing task is important for future research.

5: Lastly, the method enabled participants to ask their own question about the research topic inspiring ideas for future research. Some ideas include how public understands their role within the CSR/P use of data gifting, public perception of digital CSR/P ethics, and research unpacking the difference between public folk theories of CSR/P rooted in the *should be* vs *are* perspective.

These recommendations for future research build upon this project's establishment of existing folk theories of CSR/P in our digital society enabling countless paths of inquiry to be taken. Overall, the methods success in establishing insights to research questions, while working to educate participants achieved its intended purpose when I selected VFGs for this research project.

Footer:
Method Takeaways:
Overlay: Personal reflections on the VFG method
Heading: My Experience Using the VFG Method

Info:
When I choose to work with creative research methods and the Visual Focus Group Method I did so because I was challenged to do something different. When I began designing my data collection method, I realized VFGs would help me further develop my facilitation, presentation, and diplomacy skills. To uphold project ethics, I had to ask participant for consent multiple times, and make sure the participants, despite many of them being my friends, were comfortable sharing their data with me and allowing me to put it up on a website. Though I did not find this particularly challenging I did find it uncomfortable because of my closer relationship with some of the participants. Additionally, I noticed throughout the workshops that my facilitation time management skills and waiting for participants to speak before chiming in has improved.

Outside of the conducting of the workshops, I found the method very intriguing. Not only were participants engaged in what they were doing the whole time, but so was I as the researcher. The conversations participants had illustrated their own learning processes while also enabling me to learn from new perspectives. Additionally, I am curious to see if this type of method could be fruitful for less formal research studies like in organizations looking for feedback or new product brainstorming.

Overall, the skills I developed and learned while using this method are ones that will be invaluable to future projects. And I hope I will be given opportunity to use this type of method in the future.

Footer: For other reflections see tiles with the subtitle "reflection."

## Column Two:

Why this Research: Reflection:
Overlay: Reflections on why this research
Heading: Why I choose this project?

Info: 'Folk Theories of CSR/P in our Digital Society' is the culmination of two years of academic inquiry investigating how United States cultural institutions could improve visitor engagement through the implementation of immersive technology. Like most research projects, questions often lead to more questions prompting the research to take on new approaches, take steps back, change directions, and so on. This project is the outcome of just that – a question that turned into a project, leading to a master's program, where learning informed a change of direction, uncovering an unknown interest, and thus resulting in a Independent Student Portfolio (ISP) project on corporate social responsibility and corporate philanthropy (CSR/P). I began researching CSR/P this past fall. I was driven by the desire to find a solution to US cultural institutions need for digital resources, specialized expertise, and funding to bring technology to their visitor experiences. However, I discovered CSR/P was a complex academic topic, that simultaneously offered vast amounts of information, but was limited in the specific answers I was looking for. Additionally, it quickly became clear I knew very little about CSR/P and how it operated in our Digital Society. So, following personal challenge and curiosity I followed a new line of inquiry in hopes of understanding the complexities of CSR/P and what the public believed CSR/P to be in our Digital Society.

Footer: For similar blog like posts look for other squares with the "a reflection" sub-title

Visual Focus Groups:

Overlay: This project's data collection method

Heading: What are Visual Focus Groups?

Info:   Developed by Dr. Elisabetta Ferrari (project supervisor) VFGs build upon graphic elicitation techniques methodology and the traditional focus group method to uncover unspoken assumptions about research topics. To do this VFGs situate a "creative task within a group setting" to foster a space for "collective conversation" and participants reflexive thinking through discussion and drawing (Ferrari, 2022, p.2). Including a creative task within the data collection method helps participants in expressing their underlying folk theories through the mediums (i. e. drawing, writing, words, etc.) most natural to them. Ferrari designed two distinct VFG methods: the diagnostic VFG and the speculative VFG. Diagnostic VFGs' "help researchers understand how activist [participants] conceptualize their relationship" (Ferrari, 2022) to the research topic. Whereas speculative VFGs are "intended to stimulate participants… critique" (Ferrari, 2022) of the research topic. As public folk theories include participants conceptualization of their "relationship" to and "critique" of CSR/P I chose to combine Ferrari's diagnostic and speculative VFGs for the purpose of this project. Following the philosophical approach and guidance from creative and qualitative research methods I develop an experimental three-part VFGs workshop for data collection.

Footer: To learn more about data collection see "Methodology" and "Data Collection Workshops" tiles.

Key Questions:

Overlay: The research questions asked

Heading: What research questions does this project ask?

Info:  This research project is guided by two primary questions with related sub-questions. With the hope that the project outcomes would provide insights to each research question.

1. How do existing folk theories influence members of the public (university student's) perception and trust of corporations CSR and CP (CSR/P) initiatives in our Digital Society?
   a. Do participant folk theories account for the inherent power structures at play?
   b. Do participant folk theories recognize the role of technology (digitalization, datafication, mediatization) in influencing CSR/P?
2. How do members of the public (university students) conceptualize their role within corporations giving strategies? Do they see themselves as a stakeholder?
   a. Do participants perceive any personal autonomy in shaping CSR/P initiatives?
   b. Do participants believe CSR/P initiatives are impactful?

Footer: To learn more about why these questions are important see the "Significance and Relevance" tile. If you are interested in why I picked these questions, see the "Why this research: a reflection" tile. If you want to know what answers I found see the "Key Research Findings" tile.

Word Cloud:

Overlay: Discover perceived social responsibilities

Heading: What do you Think Corporations' Social Responsibilities are?

Info: Before you learn more about the word cloud above take a second to explore your perceptions of corporations' social responsibilities. Close your eyes and ask yourself 'what are three ways corporations perform or fulfill their social responsibilities to society?' Write down your thoughts or make a mental note of the social responsibilities that crossed your mind. Now look at the word cloud above – are there any similarities or differences to what you came up with? All answers are the right answers here!

The words you may have thought of or those represented in the word cloud represent the ways everyday people perceive the social responsibilities of corporations. The responsibilities of environmental protection, ethical business practices, diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, and data protection all became reoccurring themes throughout the VFG workshops.

Footer: To learn more about the key themes see the "Findings: Individual Drawings" tile or the associated images.

Questionnaire:

Overlay: Learn more about phase one

Heading: Phase One: Questionnaire

Info: The questionnaire is designed to establish a preliminary baseline of participants knowledge of CSR/P in our Digital Society. The questionnaire does so by asking participants a series of short-answer and multiple-choice questions. Upon participants completion of the questionnaire, they were asked to share anything that stood out to them or any questions they had. The intent behind the first phase was to encourage participants to begin thinking about how they have experienced CSR/P in their daily lives.

Footer: To learn more about the outcomes of the questionnaire see the associated images, "Findings: Questionnaire" tile, or "Participant Demographics" tile.

View the pdf of the questionnaire used for this ISP project.

Where do participants Folk Theories come from?

Overlay: Influences on participants folk theories

Heading: What Influences Participants Folk Theories?

- Info: As participants discussed the questionnaire and presented their individual drawings it became clear to me that their CSR/P Folk Theories came from a range of influences.

  Many participants were influenced by their own personal experiences of corporations' failure to fulfill their social responsibilities. Look for the following drawings in the gallery to learn more!
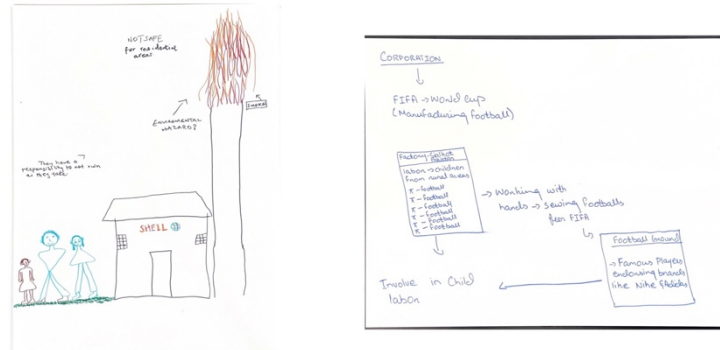


Other participants recognized digital and in person CSR/P campaigns including advertisements and incentive programs. Their perceptions of these campaigns influenced their views of CSR/P. Look for the following drawings in the gallery.



Footer: For more information see any of the associated images and look for the "Personal Experiences" and "CSR/P Campaigns" tiles.

CSR/Campaigns Evidence: LO03:

Overlay: CSR/P campaigns evidence

Heading: What Kind of CSR/P Campaigns Influence Participants?

Info: Drawing LO03 referenced multiple CSR/P campaign examples in their individual drawing. Starting with a google advertisement seen by the participant while traveling through a US airport. The participant explained their viewpoint of the printed add as "absolutely ridiculous." Due to the participants belief that Google's collection and use of user data contradicts with their social responsibilities and CSR/P activities. The participant went on to reference the Dawn Soap commercials that aired after the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, as a metaphor for corporations' CSR/P campaigns miss representation of their actual actions to 'do good.'

Footer: For more on CSR/P campaigns see the "CSR/P Campaigns" tile.

Key Themes: Digital Technologies:

Overlay: An overview on digital technologies

Heading: Key Theme: Digital Technologies

Info: One of the primary questions this project asked was if participants folk theories accounted for the role digital technologies play in modern CSR/P activities. Across the individual and collective drawings many participants identified various ways that CSR/P initiatives. In drawing XG01 the participant explained their use of a warship to represent corporations continuous use of digital tools to be in constant communication with them. The participant went as far as saying that corporations' CSR/P efforts "just use the weakness of me as a human being so maybe I offer them my tears or all my time… I'm just so tired." The words this participant used to explain their drawing convey the extensive involvement of digital technologies in distributing CSR/P messages to the public.

Participants also illustrated the role that data plays in CSR/P activities. For example, drawing TH01 connected user data to gift giving by explaining their illustration of person holding a mobile phone and data going into the air in exchange for money. The capacity for participants to connect the exchange of user and consumer data with corporations' for-profit aims is impressive as this is something corporations attempt to mask with their CSR/P campaigns.

Participants depiction of digital technologies in their individual drawings is further supported by the questionnaire responses. In the questionnaire 9 participants said 'yes' technology is used and 12 participants said 'yes' data is used in CSR/P strategies. Participants who referenced data gifting and technologies involvement in CSR/P activities are spot on. Their folk theories align with the findings of Elder-Vass (2016; 2019) and Fourcade and Kluttz (2020) on digital capitalism and gift giving in our Digital Society. This can be seen in the participants description data as a currency corporations wield to attain their for-profit objectives stating:

I personally don't think it does benefit society myself because they are corporations and I think even they would say that the ultimate goal for them is profit, whether even if they divide up a certain level that profit to social good, ultimately, it's still profit driven like that's the first desirable outcome, then everything else is secondary. And for me personally, any sort of efforts to advertise themselves is for social good is to collect more profit first and foremost.

Footer: Digital Technologies key theme overlaps with for-profits – see "Findings: Individual Drawings" and associated image tiles

## Key Themes: Environmental Responsibilities & Sustainability:

Overlay: An overview on environmental responsibilities

Heading: Key Theme: Environmental Responsibilities & Sustainability

Info: Throughout the three phases of the data collection workshops, corporations' environmental responsibilities were front of mind for many participants. Most of the individual drawings included some indicator corporations are socially responsible for environmental and sustainable initiatives. Drawing SL03 is a very clear and graphic representation of the way many participants viewed corporations' ability to be responsible for the environments they operate in. This participant drew before and after illustrations of the environment that corporations ended up utilizing. Another participant gave a personal example of a corporation's failure to protect and give back to the environment they worked in (see drawing NN03).

The emergence of environmental responsibilities as a key theme in participants CSR/P folk theories is not surprising. As the current environmental issues are largely broadcasted around the world, including corporations' role in doing harm. Additionally, few participants acknowledged ESG (Environment, Sustainable, Governance) as a key acronym associated with CSR/P's environmental activities. ESG can be understood in simple terms as an evolved form of CSR/P. Participants capacity to bring it up unprompted could indicate that the mediatization around ESG practices as being an improvement to CSR/P – though this cannot be known for sure.

Footer: For more information on key themes see the associated images or the "Findings: Individual Drawings" and "Key Research Findings" tiles.

## Findings: Individual Drawings: Key Themes

Overlay: A summary of individual drawing findings

Heading: What Themes Did Participants' Individual Drawings Reveal?

Info: Some participants looked closely at specific CSR/P activities including their for-profit mission, digital technologies, environmental responsibilities, or diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Drawings that focused on specific components of CSR/P highlighted the key themes that emerged throughout the research process. Additionally, many of the themes also appeared in participants' questionnaire responses, collective drawings, and workshop discussions.

To learn more about key themes (CSR/P components) look for the following drawings. I encourage you look at multiple themes, regardless of your interests, as many of them are interconnected. The themes follow the images from left to right, respectively (for-profit mission, digital technologies, environmental responsibilities, or diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives).
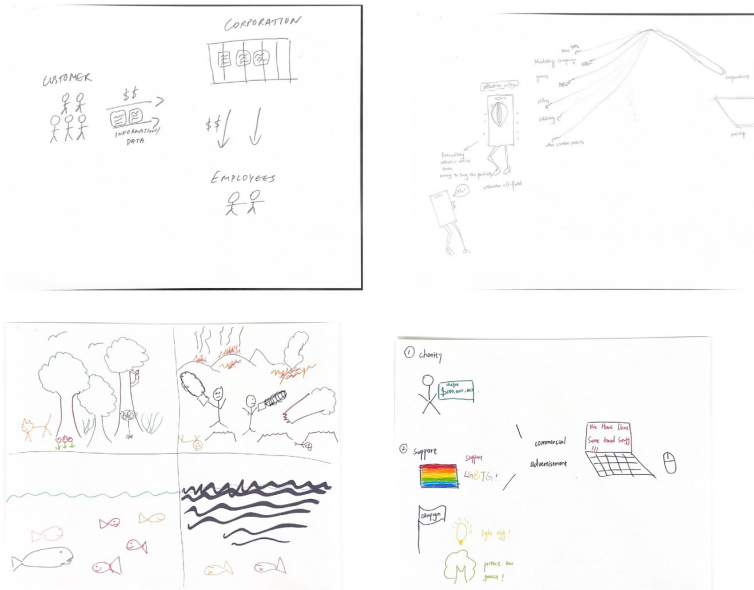


Footer: For more information on each theme see the associated images.

Summary Wk2c:

Overlay: An overview of workshop 2

Heading: Workshop 2's Collective Findings

Info: Workshop 2's collective findings are similar to workshop 1. This group of participants identified several areas where CSR/P can improve. Workshop 2 identified the categories of internal business practices, customers and users, communities, employees, and politics and government. Their discussion centered around how education could span the categories driving "mindful consumerism" and their ability to engage with corporations, digital technologies, government policies and more. Additionally, workshop 2 had a lengthy discussion about corporations' responsibility to be transparent about their CSR/P practices and policies. They believed that consumers and users have the right to know how their CSR/P activities drive their brand image and for-profit mission.

Footer: For more information on the collective findings of workshops see the associated images and "Findings: Collective Drawings."  Additionally, to learn more about participants views on transparency see drawing MP02.

Optics Conclusions: MP02:

Overlay: Participants views of CSR/P optics

Heading: How do participants perceive CSR/P activities?

Info: Participants perceptions of CSR/P activities revealed differences between what they believe corporations say they do and their actual impact. Workshop discussions each came to similar conclusions about corporations' performance verses actual practice of CSR/P. Participants used a variety of words to discuss CSR/P performance including "window dressing," "optics," "visibility," "for the photo," and "marketing assets." They discussed CSR/P as strategy for developing corporations "good image." But believed that despite CSR/P being "on paper, it's not practically happening." This revelation about CSR/P optics in the workshops is profound as it indicates participants ability to distinguish between their familiarity with CSR/P initiatives and the actual impact of CSR/P. I was surprised by this finding as I had assumed participants familiarity with CSR/P would go hand and hand with their perception of impact – though this proved untrue and could be a point for future research. Participants discussion surrounding CSR/P performance can be seen through a participant's chosen metaphor for their individual drawing. In drawing MP02 the creator depicts CSR/P as an iceberg explaining that the ice above the water is what the public sees, and everything below is corporations' hidden activities and agendas.

Footer: For more collective findings see the "Findings: Collective Drawings" and "Key Research Findings" tiles

Key Research Findings:

Overlay: An overview of research findings

Heading: What did the research reveal?

Info: Below are the key findings for each research question:

1: How do existing folk theories influence members of the public (university student's) perception and trust of corporations CSR and CP (CSR/P) initiatives in our digital society?

Participants CSR/P folk theories are shaped and reshaped by their perceptions and trust of corporations. Meaning participants views of corporations are as much shaped by preconceived beliefs as by the organization's actions. Participants indicated that they believed corporations CSR/P initiatives are more about building brand image than doing good. They shared how these CSR/P initiatives may shape their views of corporations,' but not necessarily shape their consumer habits.

Don't include:
As for folk theories capacity to influence participants trust of corporations. I concluded that participants acknowledgement of their folk theories actual makes them more skeptical of corporations. The research questions and method made participants think about their beliefs and perceptions and in turn they began to question corporations and if their CSR/P campaigns actually 'benefited society.'

    c. Do participant folk theories account for the inherent power structures at play?

       Participants discussions and drawings addressed the power structures between corporations, the government, and the public. The best representation of the way participants conceptualized corporations unregulated power is in Workshop 3's depiction of a Pac Man donning corporate logos eating the world. This sentiment was further developed by workshops 1 and 2 in their conversations around the lack of CSR/P governance and regulation. They spoke about the need for there to be more government oversight over corporations' performance and fulfillment of their CSR/P initiatives. Lastly, and this leads into the second primary questions, throughout the workshops' participants remained unsure about their ability to attain any power in shaping the CSR/P space.

    d. Do participant folk theories recognize the role of technology (digitalization, datafication, mediatization) in influencing CSR/P?

In short – yes! Participants were able to identify many ways technology plays a role in CSR/P activities. Participants discussed the role of technology in shaping participants views, manipulating their consumer and user habits, and collecting and using of personal data. Participants questionnaire responses, drawings, and discussion covered the role of digital technologies in CSR/P in an in-depth and extensive manner.

3. How do members of the public (university students) conceptualize their role within corporations giving strategies? Do they see themselves as a stakeholder?

Participants discussion of their role in CSR/P activities was relatively minimum. When it did come up most participants spoke about how CSR/P attempted to manipulate them or that they had no choice in when they engaged with initiatives. In all, participants did not perceive their role in CSR/P activities to be one with control, power, or consent. In discussing how to shape CSR/P many participants mentioned how their only choice was to abstain from purchasing or using corporations' products.

a. Do participants perceive any personal autonomy in shaping CSR/P initiatives?

When participants were asked point blank about their perceived autonomy in CSR/P initiatives they did not view any opportunities to shape or influence how corporations choose to 'benefit society.' Even after explaining a brief history on CSR/P they perceived very little any opportunity to shape corporations' societal contributions. Many participants cited corporations' for-profit mission as the reason behind their lack of power.

b. Do participants believe CSR/P initiatives are impactful?

The short answer is NO – participants did not discuss CSR/P initiatives from the lens of positive impact. In discussing CSR/Ps impact most participants referenced the CSR/P as a marketing or optics strategies to improve brand image. Indicating they believed CSR/P to be mostly talk and very little action. In addition, workshops had several discussions about CSR/P initiatives failures and their capacity to manipulate users and consumers.

Read a full report of findings below.

Footer: To read about my personal takeaways from the research see "Research Takeaways" tile.

Research Takeaways:

Overlay: Reflections on research findings

Heading: What are my views on the research findings?

Info: When I decided to study folk theories of CSR/P I hoped to gain a better understanding of how people viewed corporations' capacity to 'do good.' I wanted to see if participants perceptions of corporations' CSR/P initiatives would potentially interfere with their perceptions of organizations that received charitable donations from corporations. Though this research didn't seek to answer this question directly, I gained invaluable insights that I can use for future research projects aimed at answering this question. Learning about CSR/P in our Digital Society has taught me the importance of spreading awareness about technologies role in corporations giving strategies. Thus, I created this website as part of my ISP to share my findings from literature, participants understandings, and my reflections on CSR/P activities in our Digital Society. I hope that visitors to this site have an opportunity to learn about CSR/P folk theories and to uncover some of their own. Additionally, for researchers I hope this website provides insights to my approach and outcomes so they too can learn about Folk Theories of CSR/P and using the VFG workshop method for research.

Footer: For more of my personal takeaways on this project look for tiles including the "reflection" subtitle or see the "Method Takeaways" and "Project Takeaways" tiles.

## Column Three

Ethical Approval:

Overlay: The ethical approval process

Heading: What is the UoG's Ethical Approval Process?

Info: This Independent Student Portfolio (ISP) project fulfills the master's dissertation requirement for University of Glasgow's (UoG) MSc. Digital Society program. The research project has been approved by the UoG's College of Social Sciences ethics review board. The project conducted in accordance with the attained ethical approval and under the supervision of Dr. Elisabetta Ferrari (project advisor). In accordance with the approved ethics application all data published to the project site has been anonymized for the protection of participants identities. The primary and lead researcher for this project is Lena Weisman.

Footer: To learn more about the ethical approval process from the University of Glasgow visit https://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/students/ethics/

View the plain language statement and informed consent letter for this project below.

Definitions:

Overlay: Definitions for key terms

Heading: What Terms do you Need-to-Know?

Info: The following definitions are broken up into two categories - terms important to this project and those used in academic research.

2. Important terms for this project:
   a. This project understands Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Philanthropy as follows:
      i. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):</b> CSR is the "context-specific organizational actions and policies that take into account stakeholders' expectations and the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental performance" (Aguinis, 2011, as cited in Aguinis and Glavas, 2012).
      ii. <b>Corporate Philanthropy (CP):</b> CP is the "voluntary and unconditional transfers of cash or other assets by private firms for public purposes" (Gautier and Pache, 2015, p.343)
      iii. Note: CSR and CP can and should be understood as separate entities (von Schnurbein, Seele, and Lock, 2016). However, distinctions between CSR and CP vary among corporations and within academic literature challenging experts and everyday individuals' ability to recognize them as exclusive entities. As such, this project will refer to Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Philanthropy (CSR/P) as a collective concept.
   b. <b>Digital Society</b> is defined as "our present society… society affected by digitally networked communication tools and platforms, such as the internet and social media" (Lindgren 2022, pg. 2).
3. Technical Research Terminology:
   a. Ontology
   b. Constructivism Philosophy:
   c. Methodology:
   d. Methods:
   e. Quantitative Research:
   f. Purposive and Snowball Sampling:
   g.

   Footer: If you come across words or acronyms you are unfamiliar with throughout the gallery return to this tile.

Aims & Objectives:

Overlay: This project's aims and objectives

Heading: What are the Research Aims & Objectives?

Info:    Research projects are often directed by aims and objectives. Aims provide an overall direction for the research. While objectives provide specific goals to be achieved so the project can accomplish its aims. Collectively, the aims and objectives of a research project support the researcher throughout the process.

The aims of this ISP are to:

1. Understand how a certain population of the public (university students) imagines the social responsibilities of corporations to 'benefit society.'
2. Determine if participants consider digital transformations (digitalization, datafication, and mediatization) as influential factors in modern CSR/P initiatives.
3. Develop awareness of the role user data is plays in corporations' CSR/P strategies.

The objectives of this project are to:

4. Gain insights into how members of the public (university students) think about the social responsibilities and philanthropy efforts of corporations in our Digital Society.
5. Apply the use of creative methods, in the form of VFG workshops, to digital sociology research on CSR/P.
6. Understand how participants see their position in corporations' efforts to 'benefit society.'

Footer: To see what questions these aims and objects support see the "Key Questions" tile. If you are interested in a summary of findings see the "Key Research Findings" tile.

## Data Collection Workshops:

Overlay: Data collection workshops explained

Heading: What Happened During the VFG Workshops?

Info: The data collection workshops have three phases. Following the completion of informed consent procedures, the first phase distributes a questionnaire to participants asking for demographic information and preliminary thoughts on CSR/P. The second phase is an individual drawing task followed by a presentation and discussion. Participants are each given a piece of paper, scratch paper, and markers to use. The third phase requires participants to work together to collectively draw their agreed upon CSR/P folk theories. During this phase participants are given one poster paper, markers, and ample time to discuss and draw. Throughout the three phases of the workshop, the primary researcher acts as the facilitator, moderator, and collects field notes. The three-phase design for the VFG workshop seeks to encourage participants reflexive and critical thinking starting from an individual level and expanding to collective and collaborative work. The hope is through the three-phase progression the complexities underlying the research topic will be unpacked and explored in drawings and discussions.

Footer: For information on each phase look for the "Questionnaire," "Individual Drawings," and "Collective Drawings" tiles. For conclusions on the methods success see the "Method Findings" and "Method Takeaways" tiles
See the data collection workshop guide below for specifics.

Data Analysis:

Overlay: Learn about data analysis

Heading: How did this Project Approach Data Analysis?

Info: For this project the data collected during the VFG workshops was analyzed following qualitative and creative research methodologies. The evaluation and interpretation of the data used coding and embodied data analysis strategies. Coding is an analysis process of "assigning meaning to chucks of text" (Hesse-Biber, 2017) using descriptive, categorical, and analytical codes to reveal patterns and themes within the data. NVivo software was used as the coding platform for evaluation and interpretation. Coding was used as a primary analysis technique for the audio recording transcripts and field notes, while I used a secondary method for the drawings. I used embodied data analysis techniques, an exploratory approach to the analytical work in data analysis (Kara, 2020, p.142), to analyze the drawings. For this project embodied analysis entailed reviewing, evaluating, and interpreting the individual and collective drawings in a physical manner. This included spreading them out and adding color coordinated sticky notes and memos to the drawings. This projects' use of qualitative coding and embodied data analysis techniques enabled the development of reliable and viable research findings. The outcomes of this research project are twofold: first are empirically based conclusions to the research questions and the second are observational findings regarding the suitability of VFG workshops for this type of research.

Footer: To learn more about technical research terms see "Definitions." To learn more about the specific method used see the "Visual Focus Groups" or "Data Collection Workshops" tiles.

Pie Charts:

Overlay: Participants views on CSR/P

Heading: Participants Short Answer Questionnaire Responses

Info: These pie charts represent participants answers ("yes," "no," or "I don't know") to four short answer questions. When looking at the diagram it is important to note that not all participants gave the same answer for each question. Meaning that participants who said "no" they are not familiar with the concepts of CSR/P are not necessarily the same participants who said "no" they have not been impacted by CSR/P. I find the differences in participants responses very interesting. As I assumed participants familiarity with CSR/P would go hand and hand with their perception of impact, however, I was wrong. There are many reasons that could exist behind participants differentiation between familiarity and impact of CSR/P. A topic that could be investigated further in future research projects.

Footer: To learn more about the questionnaire findings see the "Findings: Questionnaire" tile or the other graphs.

Findings: Questionnaire: Reflection & Recommendations:

Overlay: A summary of questionnaire findings

Heading: Reflections and Recommendations for Phase One

Info: The questionnaire successfully served its purpose in establishing a baseline of participants CSR/P folk theories. However, based on my observations and findings there are a few things I would recommend for future research. Starting with the demographic information collected from participants I would encourage researchers to ask for nationality and professional experience in the questionnaire. Both nationality and professional experience are demographic information that many of the participants self-disclosed during the workshops. However, no all participants did leaving discrepancies in the collected demographic information and the potential for findings to be skewed. As such adding fields for nationality and professional experience on the questionnaire would provide more inclusive insights.

Secondly, as the questionnaire was only given out at the beginning of the workshop there is no quantitative evidence illustrating if participants folk theories changed. As VFG workshops were used as a tool to spread awareness and educate participants gaining a more empirical understanding of folk theories at the end of the workshops would be helpful. I was able to infer participants education through their responses in the feedback session and how participants beliefs changed throughout the workshop. However, I recommend providing the same or similar questionnaire at the end of the workshop to support researcher inferences with concrete evidence.

Footer: For additional information on questionnaire findings see the associated graphs and the "Participant demographics" tile.

Individual Drawings:

Overlay: Learn about phase two

Heading: Phase Two: Individual Drawings

Info: For the individual drawing phase participants were asked to reflect on what they believed CSR/P is in our Digital Society. The second phase drawings and discussions are designed to further establish participants preexisting folk theories of CSR/P for themselves, the group, and researcher prior to beginning collective discussions.

Footer: To learn about the findings from phase two see the "where do participants folk theories come from?" or "Findings: Individual Drawings" tile.

Personal Experiences: UZ02

Overlay: A personal story about CSR/P failure

Heading: CSR/P Community and Ethical Labor Failure in Pakistan

Info: The creator of drawing UZ02 discussed how "there has been no social responsibility" considerations on behalf of the large corporations (Nike, Adidas, etc.) who sponsored the kits and footballs for the FIFA world cup. The participant spoke extensively about the corporations' inability to acknowledge the use of child labor within their home country to create the equipment needed for the World Cup.

Footer: For other personal experience stories see the "Personal Experiences" tile.

## Personal Experiences: Reflections:

Overlay: Reflection on personal experiences

Heading: Reflection: How Personal Experiences Shaped Participants CSR/P Folk Theories

Info: The personal experiences behind CSR/P failures that participants shared impacted me. I was really shocked to hear how participants own communities suffered at the hands of corporations' failures to fulfill their social responsibilities to the communities and environments they operate in. As a US citizen I am often sheltered from hearing how large corporations impact communities around the world. And hearing how Shell, Nike, and Adidas had impacted participants communities in Nigeria and Pakistan was very striking. For me this showed me the significance of this research as it revealed the global impact CSR/P has.

Footer: For examples of personal experiences see the associated drawings. For other reflections look for the "reflection" subtitles.

## Key Themes: For-Profit Mission:

Overlay: An overview on the for-profit mission

Heading: Key Theme: The For-Profit Mission

Info: A key theme across existing literature, participants drawings, and discussions is how corporations for-profit mission drives their CSR/P strategies. Participants discussed at length the notion that CSR/P is essentially a vehicle for corporations to increase their profits. The creator of drawing BC01 explained how the large dollar sign in the center of their drawing represented the capacity of CSR/P to be a "distraction from the aim of for-profit companies." Participants also accounted for corporations' for-profit mission in their discussion of digital technologies by expressing data and digital resources as a form of currency. In drawing AK02 the creator expresses data and information as a currency by illustrating money, information, and data entering the corporation as forms of profits. Furthermore, participants discussed how CSR/P activities masked the for-profit mission of corporations (a discussion that can be seen in the 'optics' tile, see associated image).

Footer: For further discussion on key themes see the "Findings: Individual Drawings" tile and the associated images. For more on the for-profit mission see the "Background," "References" or "Optics (associated image)" tiles.

## Complex Folk Theories

Overlay: A look at participants complex CSR/P folk theories

Heading: An overview of Complex CSR/P Folk Theories
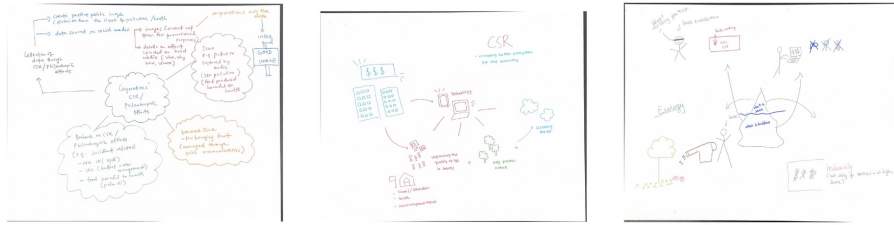


Info:

A couple participants individual drawings depicted their complex CSR/P folk theories. Coincidentally, each of these participants self-disclosed at least 1 year of experience working in a corporate setting. This indicated that having professional experience directly impacts participants ability to grasp the complexities of CSR/P.

These participants folk theories included many of the key themes that emerged separately in other individual drawings. These participants depicted digital technology, for-profit drive, and environmental responsibilities among other components as CSR/P systems all in their individual drawings. For example, in the drawings above each participant drew diagrams representing various components they believed were apart of CSR/P in our Digital Society.

The capacity for these participants to grasp the complex nature of CSR/P is profound as it illustrates the public understanding varies based on individuals work experiences. Particularly those exposed to the internal operations of large multinational corporations.

Footer: For more big picture findings from participants see the "Key Research Findings" and "Optics (associated image)" tiles.

Findings: Collective Drawings: Workshop Differences:

Overlay: Differences in workshop outcomes

Heading: Were there Differences Between Workshop Outcomes?

Info: The workshops were each successful, however, there are clear differences in the outcomes from workshops 1 and 2 verses workshop 3. In looking at the collective drawings created by workshops 1 and 2 you can they mimic a system or diagram like representation of CSR/P. Whereas the collective drawing from workshop 3 is an abstract and simple representation of the groups CSR/P folk theories. Additionally, the discussion each workshop had mirror the distinctions made between their collective drawings. Both workshops 1 and 2 had speculative discussions exploring how CSR/P practices could be improved in out Digital Society based on their established folk theories. Whereas workshop 3 did not discuss improvements for CSR/P but continued to talk about their views of the modern practices. Furthermore, in workshop 3's feedback session participants agreed the workshop would have been easier if they were given a definition or more information on CSR/P before they began, but believed they got there in the end. I intentionally designed the workshops for participants to explore their CSR/P folk theories without a definition to uncover their ability to grasp the complexities of the practice. So, despite the challenges workshop 3 faced they brought insights to project findings and learned more about CSR/P. This shows the capacity for the VFG workshops to be successful regardless of participant preexisting knowledge of the research topic. but it does encourage me to pause and ask why this group was challenged more by the creative tasks then the other workshops.

However, I did examine why workshop 3 was more challenged by the creative tasks than the other workshops. The demographic makeup of the workshops provides some context to the differences between workshop 1 and 2's and workshop 3's collective drawings. Age and professional experience are two key differences between workshop 3 and the first two workshops. Coincidentally, workshop three was made up of participants with birth years ranging from 1996 to 2000, making all 'digital natives.' Additionally, no participants in this group self-disclosed over one year of work experience in a corporate environment. Where workshops 1 and 2 both included participants born prior to 1995 and at least 1 participant expressed over one year working for a large multinational corporation. Each workshops demographic makeup are reasons behind the differences in the outcomes but does not negate each workshop success.

Footer: For more on collective drawings see associated images.

Project Takeaways:

Overlay: An overview of my takeaways

Heading: What this Independent Student Portfolio Project has Taught me

Info:

When I began my master's dissertation process back in January of 2023, I did not anticipate that 'Folk Theories of CSR/P' would be the outcome. I knew that I wanted to explore public perceptions of CSR/P in a creative way, but not exactly sure what I was going to do. Through discussions with faculty members, I decided a traditional dissertation was not the best route for what I wanted to accomplish. So, I switched paths and began developing this Independent Student Portfolio (ISP) project. I made the decision to switch to an ISP because I wanted to use an exploratory method to collect data and my desire to an interactive website to educate others and spread awareness on CSR/P. This was a fantastic choice as the ISP has enabled me to conduct masters level research, while also further developing my website design, conducting research, and project management skills.

There were several challenges and success to the completion. The development of the VFG workshop method for data collection was both a challenge and a success. Prior to beginning this project, I was unaware of all the information and details needed to develop a data collection procedure for a research project. Putting together the questionnaire, VFG workshop guide, and the materials for informed consent required me to have intimate knowledge of my topic, research questions, and aims and objectives. Creating the content for these documents gave me experiences in developing research studies and building them from the ground up. The capacity for the VFG workshop to deliver research findings and educate participants was very rewarding. One, challenge I faced was analyzing the data collected from the VFG workshops. Data analysis was challenging as it required me to learn a new software and that I was interpreting findings from multiple mediums. I overcame this challenge by also using embodied data analysis techniques which helped me to better engage with the collected data. Additionally, I worked on research findings, writing my reflective paper, and building my website at the same time to better understand the outcomes of the research. I choose to build a website from scratch using HTML and CSS languages so I could further develop the skills I gained during my undergraduate studies. And I challenged myself to learn more about coding and website design. Overall, the completion of this ISP project has helped me to further develop existing skills while learning new ones.

Like many design and research projects the work is never done! I know there is more that I could uncover from the data I collected and new research questions to ask. Additionally, there are improvements I could make to the VFG workshop method and the website design. My hope is that I will be able to apply what I have learned from this project to future academic research and professional experiences.

Footer: For similar personal takeaways see the "Research Takeaways" or "Method Takeaways" tiles.

References: *pull from research paper
       Overlay: Referenced CSR/P literature
       Heading: References
       Info:
       Footer:

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