

“Why Should We Care about Marriage Equality?” - Political Advocacy as a Part of Corporate Responsibility?

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Abstract

More and more companies are publicly taking a stand on social and political issues such as gay marriage legislation. This paper argues that this type of engagement, which can be called “corporate political advocacy”, raises new *conceptual* and *normative* challenges especially for theories of corporate responsibility. Furthermore, it poses *practical* challenges for managers who are confronted with it. This paper addresses all three challenges: first, it defines and conceptualizes corporate political advocacy and distinguishes it from other forms of corporate political involvement. Second, it makes normative sense of corporate advocacy as an element of corporate responsibility. Third, it reflects on the practical implications for managers dealing with this issue.

Keywords: Corporate Political Advocacy, Corporate Responsibility, Political CSR, Lobbying, gay rights, corporate character

In the year 2009, the ice cream producer Ben & Jerry's temporarily changed the name of their best-selling Chubby Hubby ice cream flavor into Hubby Hubby in order to celebrate their home state Vermont's decision to issue marriage licences to same-sex couples. While Ben & Jerry's certainly were known for their outspoken social activism, it was rather unique for a company to take such an overt political stand for something as controversial as gay marriage at that time. Walt Freese, then CEO of Ben & Jerry's, commented on their decision as follows: "At the core of Ben & Jerry's values, we believe that social justice can and should be something that every human being is entitled to." Furthermore, "(f)rom the very beginning of our 30 year history, we have supported equal rights for all people. The legalisation of marriage for gay and lesbian couples in Vermont is certainly a step in the right direction and something worth celebrating with peace, love and plenty of ice cream."¹

While Ben & Jerry's way to express their support for gay rights was probably the most creative one, they were not the first company to engage on that matter. A year before, the battle over Proposition 8 in California which aimed to constitutionally restrict marriage to heterosexual couples had already provoked statements from corporations like Google and Apple who both explicitly argued against the proposition.

In the meantime, corporate engagement for gay marriage has become even more widespread.² Perhaps most prominently, the Seattle-based coffee chain Starbucks has publicly thrown its weight behind gay marriage legislation in Washington State. Confronted with fierce opposition in form of the "Dump Starbucks" campaign by gay marriage opponents, Starbucks' efforts were endorsed by the Human Rights Campaign, USA's largest lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender civil rights organization. In a statement printed in the Seattle Times, Kalen Holmes,

Starbucks' Executive Vice President commented on the company's pro-gay marriage campaign in Washington State: "Starbucks strives to create a company culture that puts our partners first, and our company has a lengthy history of leading and supporting policies that promote equality and inclusion. This important legislation is aligned with Starbucks business practices and upholds our belief in the equal treatment of partners. It is core to who we are and what we value as a company."³ In 2013 a total of 278 companies filed an amicus brief to the Supreme Court expressing their opposition to the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA).⁴ Beyond the US context, Google's gay marriage campaign "Legalize Love" is particularly remarkable by targeting not only legislation in its home country but also in host nations where such efforts have so far been unsuccessful or absent. Examples are Singapore or Poland.⁵

While the corporate movement to support gay rights is certainly the most visible and the most divisive one in regard to companies openly taking a political stand, it is by far not the only one. Similar trends can be observed, for example, in the environmental arena, where corporations are becoming increasingly proactive in promoting more effective regulation to fight climate change. Yet, as we will argue in this paper, there is something distinctive about the type of political engagement underlying the corporate support of gay rights, namely its proactive character, its focus on values and ideals and its reliance on public advocacy, rather than on conventional lobbying strategies that often occur behind closed doors. In this contribution we will analyze this specific form of corporate political involvement and label it *corporate political advocacy*.

Despite its rather momentous implications for both theory and practice, corporate political advocacy has so far not been singled out as a phenomenon that warrants scholarly scrutiny in its own right in the field of business ethics and related debates. We will argue that

corporations' engagement in political advocacy poses new *conceptual, normative* and *practical* challenges. In our article, we aim at addressing all three challenges. In a first step, we will define corporate political advocacy by distinguishing it from other, perhaps more familiar forms of corporate political involvement. We will then attempt to get a better conceptual grasp of this new corporate political advocacy by reflecting it in the context of the established discussions on Corporate Political Activity (CPA) and political CSR. In a third step, we will then try to make normative sense of it by reflecting on it through the lens of corporate responsibility. Lastly, we will conclude our paper with some remarks about the practical implications that derive from our elaborations for managers dealing with this issue in practice.

Defining Corporate Political Advocacy

In the following paragraphs, we will attempt to define corporate political advocacy as exemplified by the corporate engagement for gay marriage by distinguishing it from other, related forms of corporate political involvement.

Etymologically, advocacy derives from the past participle of the Latin verb *advocare*, which means to summon assistance. Also contained in the term is the Latin word for voice (*vox*). Thus, advocacy can be understood as the act of promoting and voicing support for an “individual or organization, or idea” by trying to persuade “targeted audiences to embrace this individual, organization or idea” (Edgett, 2002: p. 1). Against this background, we could define corporate political advocacy as voicing or showing explicit and public support for certain individuals, groups, or ideals and values with the aim of convincing and persuading others to do the same.

Three specifications seem important in this regard. First, with reference to the etymological root of *advocare* as “summoning assistance”, we could conclude that a company

engaging in political advocacy is promoting such issues, causes, or groups of people not primarily or exclusively in its own self-interest, but always also in support for their own sake. In other words, corporate political advocacy, as analyzed here, crucially denotes corporate political involvement *beyond* the company's immediate economic interests. Based on this insight, second, we believe that in its ultimate consequence advocacy manifests itself in the promotion and support of values and ideals that are disconnected from the core business of the company. Thus, they are promoted based on their own inherent and intrinsic merit, that is, the company understands those values and ideals as worth promoting independently of what its business is and it would do so even if it was engaged in an entirely different sector. We believe that a third aspect is characteristic for this new type of political engagement: while it is inherently political in nature, it always at least partially takes place outside formal political channels. That is, it is always also addressed to and made visible for a larger public, rather than exclusively to formal political institutions and agents.

Based on these three dimensions, we can differentiate advocacy from three other kinds of corporate political involvement. Before we do so, however, it is important to point out that the distinction between those four categories is ideal-typical. That is, in practice, the boundaries between them might often be blurred and corporate political advocacy is unlikely to be found empirically “in its conceptual purity” with which we present it (Weber, 1963: p. 398). In practice, as will become evident in our conclusions, corporate political advocacy must always be assessed in relation to the overall ‘political character’ of corporations in order to count as a consistent, plausible and authentic type of political engagement. However, defining the ideal-type of corporate political advocacy provides the ground for singling out the specific conceptual and normative challenges linked to it.

Most distinctively, corporate political advocacy is different from what we call “*classical lobbying*” which is mainly discussed in the literature on Corporate Political Activity (see below). In a nutshell lobbying is an activity, “by which corporations attempt to shape government policy in ways favorable to the firm” (Baysinger, 1984; quoted from Hillman et al., 2004: p. 838). Such private political strategies are commonly pursued at best irrespective of and at worst even counter to the public interest. For example, through its ties to the US Chamber of Commerce, a number of electronic companies have indirectly engaged in lobbying efforts to undermine the US Dodd Frank Act, as investigations by the NGO Global Witness show.⁶ Section 1502 of the Dodd Frank Act mandates supply chain due diligence for minerals sourced from conflict areas and to make this information publicly available. Thus, the driver for this kind of political engagement is clearly the economic self-interest of corporations which implies that the subject of lobbying are always matters that are closely related to a company’s core business. While lobbying certainly can generate win-win situations in which the self-interest of corporations coincides with the public interest, the primary driver of lobbying undoubtedly is the corporation’s endeavor to improve its competitive position in the market (Scherer, Baumann-Pauly, & Schneider, 2013). Moreover, lobbying typically happens behind closed doors and thus lacks the voice-element which is constitutive for advocacy.

Lobbying can be justified based on either the argument that corporations have a right to free speech, which has recently been reaffirmed in the Citizens United ruling by the US Supreme Court, or based on the argument that “corporations are citizens and as such are permitted— and perhaps not only permitted but also required—to be active participants in the political process because they can contribute to social welfare” (Alzola, 2013: p. 5). Yet, there is widespread suspicion that in many cases, lobbying more than anything represents an abuse of corporate

power (Den Hond, Rehbein, Bakker, & van Lankveld, 2013). It is feared that lobbying not only threatens political economic systems and undistorted markets but democracy in general (Barley, 2007). As a consequence, scholars in business ethics have frequently called for the introduction of ethical standards for corporate lobbying (Christensen, 1997; Oberman, 2004; Stark, 2010; Tian, Gao, & Cone, 2008). This leads to the second category of political involvement of companies, which can be called ethical or responsible lobbying.

Ethical lobbying subjects lobbying practices to certain standards of conduct. It does not question the legitimacy of lobbying as a means to advance the company's self-interest as such, but it subjects it to standards with regards to how such self-interested goals can be pursued. Thus, it shares the close connection to the company's business strategies with the definition of classical lobbying. In practice, the main drivers of ethical lobbying, thus understood, are professional associations of lobbyists, whose historical purpose it is to establish and advance lobbying as a profession and thus to lay down certain ideals and standards in codes of ethics that are specific for the profession. For example, the national professional association American League of Lobbyists requires its members to uphold their Code of Ethics for lobbyists.⁷ Professional lobbyists, as the Code reads, "have a strong obligation to act always in the highest ethical and moral manner in their dealings with all parties." The Code is aimed at the "highest ethical conduct" of lobbying professionals "in their lobbying endeavors", but always within the given context and premise of lobbying as a vehicle of advancing particular corporate interests. In fact, to "vigorously and diligently advance and advocate the client's or employer's interests" is one of the very principles laid down in the Code. Based on this premise, then, lobbyists are asked to "conduct lobbying activities with honesty and integrity ", which includes truthfulness in communication and the provision of "factually correct, current and accurate information"; they

ought to "comply fully with all laws, regulations and rules applicable to the lobbyist" and "conduct lobbying activities in a fair and professional manner"; they should "treat others - both allies and adversaries - with respect and civility" and never "act in any manner that will undermine public confidence and trust in the democratic governmental process".

The third category, which Peterson and Pfitzer (2009) labeled "lobbying for good", goes a step further than ethical lobbying (see also Keffer and Hill's communitarian approach to lobbying (1997)). It subjects not only the lobbying strategies, but also the underlying purpose and objectives of lobbying to ethical scrutiny; pure self-interest as the underlying normative driver of lobbying is rejected. Thus, *lobbying for good* denotes a company's adoption of common (ethical) lobbying strategies not primarily for the advancement of its own financial interests but for the promotion of social policy, public goods such as health or education (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007; Valente & Crane, 2010) and basic rights (Matten & Crane, 2005; Wettstein, 2009). It is based on the premise that businesses, with their connections and their proficiency in using their influence, are often better equipped and better positioned to advance social change than individuals or other institutions, including non-profits (Peterson & Pfitzer, 2009: p. 46). This is why various authors have called for a closer integration of companies' lobbying efforts into their CSR strategies (Peterson & Pfitzer, 2009; K. A. Rehbein & Schuler, 1999; Vogel, 2008b). "It is not enough for companies to engage in sophisticated private initiatives, however strategic," says David Vogel (2008b: p. 41), "they must also be willing to support public policy that makes it easier for them and other firms to do the right thing. Without government support, many socially beneficial corporate programs will have limited impact". Reasonable as this proposition sounds, the reality still looks different today. Even companies which have addressed the social and environmental impact of their business practices often support legislation that stands in sharp

contradiction to their CSR efforts (Peterson & Pfitzer, 2009). Their main focus, as Peterson and Pfitzer (2009: p. 48) point out, is still on avoiding irresponsible lobbying practices (i.e. on ethical lobbying) rather than on proactively lobbying for good policy.

Vogel (2008b) distinguishes two general motivations for why corporations may lobby governments for the promotion and adoption of “good social policy.” First, they might hope to achieve a first mover advantage over their competitors and thus benefit financially from it. Since this interpretation is instrumental it may be little more than a classical or an ethical lobbying strategy with a beneficial side-effect. Second, they might hope to protect their social engagements from competitive downward pressures exerted on them by less responsible competitors. Only this interpretation represents lobbying for good in its true sense, since the concern for social responsibility rather than the corporation's financial interest is identified as the *primary* motivation. Companies which integrate corporate social responsibility and lobbying assume a "political-regulatory responsibility" (Ulrich, 2008: p. 414). This means that instead of shrugging their shoulders at the impossibility of living up to their proclaimed responsibilities as corporate citizens under "given competitive conditions", they "initiate ethically justified reforms of the institutional framework" (Ulrich, 2008: p. 414). In other words, "(e)ntrepreneurs and top managers who are really interested in company policies with a high social and economic potential for the consideration of values consequently recognize their share of responsibility... for the ethical quality of the 'rules of the game' and the regulatory framework under which they wish to play the 'game of competition'" (Ulrich, 2008: p. 414).

Corporate efforts to have governments step up their engagement in fighting climate change fit this category of political involvement. For example, a communiqué by Levi, Pepsi and Coca-Cola, issued in the context of the 2012 Rio +20 summit, calls on government to adopt

specific policy proposals in order to achieve meaningful progress on water issues. For Andrew Cave, head of sustainability at Royal Bank of Scotland, “that kind of deliberate insertion into the policy realm speaks to the more engaged role business is taking on for itself.”⁸ It is also clear that companies, who have started to address the problem of climate change by taking serious measures to reduce their emissions, are increasingly facing the challenge of an uneven playing field in which less responsible companies may be in a competitive advantage over their more responsible peers. Along these lines, some 30 large US corporations have now joined the US Climate Action Partnership (USCAP), which calls itself “a group of businesses and leading environmental organizations that have come together to call on the federal government to quickly enact strong national legislation to require significant reductions of greenhouse gas emissions.”⁹ The group calls for policies that reward those who have taken serious steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and which encourage other companies to do the same.¹⁰ Thus, their lobbying efforts for more restrictive regulation can be interpreted in Ulrich’s (2008) sense as an attempt to bind the laggards in the industries to the same standards and thus to advance fair competition on more responsible grounds.

In sum, while this third category of political involvement still depends on a link between the issue in question and the core business operations of the company, it is, in contrast to classical and ethical lobbying not conducted exclusively based on a self-interested rationale, but always also aimed at the advancement of the common good. This dissolving link between lobbying efforts and corporate self-interest characterizes lobbying for good as a precursor to advocacy or as what we could call a weak form of advocacy.

Having introduced these three types of political engagement of corporations allows us to finally illustrate what we mean by *corporate political advocacy*. In advocacy the connection to

the corporate purpose and activity that characterizes the different types of lobbying described above dissolves further. Thus, corporations which engage in advocacy expose themselves politically on issues without any direct and overt relation to their core business operations. We believe that Ben & Jerry's activism for gay rights fits this category of political involvement. Ben & Jerry's engagement may not have been entirely void of business considerations. Yet, the primary reason and driver of their activism, as they framed it, was their belief in and their commitment to equal rights and treatment of all human beings. Furthermore, their engagement does not entail any direct and overt link to their core business activities and operations: any company, regardless of the industry to which it belongs, could have undertaken a similar step in order to make their support for gay marriage public. The driving force behind Ben & Jerry's engagement seems to be the vision and the core values that define the role that the company aspires to assume within the broader society. The same seems to hold true for Google's statement against Proposition 8 in California in 2008:

„While we respect the strongly-held beliefs that people have on both sides of this argument, we see this fundamentally as an issue of equality. We hope that California voters will vote no on Proposition 8 -- we should not eliminate anyone's fundamental rights, whatever their sexuality, to marry the person they love.“¹¹

With its explicit 'value-based' language, Google's statement represents a case of corporate political advocacy as we define it. Google seems to have a similar take on it, perceiving its engagement as taking a public position on a social issue, which is placed outside of its core business field:

„As an Internet company, Google is an active participant in policy debates surrounding information access, technology and energy. Because our company has a great diversity of people and opinions -- Democrats and Republicans, conservatives and liberals, all religions and no religion, straight and gay -- we do not generally take a position on *issues outside of our field*, especially not *social issues*. So when Proposition 8 appeared on the California ballot, it was an unlikely question for Google to take an official company position on. However, while there are many objections to this proposition -- further government encroachment on personal lives, ambiguously written text -- it is the chilling and discriminatory effect of the proposition on many of our employees that brings Google *to publicly oppose* Proposition 8.“¹² (emphasis added)

This is not to say that there is no such thing as a (legitimate) ‘business case for gay marriage’. In fact, many companies prefer to defend their advocacy for marriage equality based on economic rationales. For, example, in a discussion on *Minnesota Public Radio* on the question “should businesses take a stand on marriage amendment”,¹³ John G. Taft, CEO of RBC Wealth Management, argued that the marriage amendment has negative effects on the climate for business and on the long-term competitiveness of the state of Minnesota. According to Taft, businesses have a direct interest in marriage equality simply because they depend on inclusive and diverse environments both for the recruitment of the best talent as well as for understanding the ever-increasing diversity of the markets they serve with their products and services.¹⁴

We have now outlined and distinguished four kinds of corporate political involvement and identified the characteristics that are defining of corporate political advocacy. In the

following section, we will attempt to make conceptual sense of corporate political advocacy, by reflecting on its ties to some closely related fields.

Conceptual Challenges: Embedding Corporate Political Advocacy Conceptually

Conceptually, corporate political advocacy is most closely related to the fields of Corporate Political Activity (CPA) (see, e.g. Bonardi & Keim, 2005; Getz, 1997; Hillman, Keim, & Schuler, 2004; Keim & Zeithaml, 1986; Schuler, 1996; Windsor, 2007) and “political CSR” (see, e.g., Scherer & Palazzo, 2011). However, neither of these two trains of thought seems to be able to embed political advocacy adequately. As we will show, corporate political advocacy is located both beyond the explanatory scope of CPA and beyond the concepts of legitimacy underlying political CSR. Thus, in the following paragraphs, we attempt to develop a better conceptual understanding of corporate political advocacy by delineating it in more detail from these two related fields.¹⁵

Corporate Political Activity (CPA): The term "Corporate Political Activity" emerged in the 1980ies in management research and focused on corporate strategies to shape and influence government policy (see, e.g., Hillman et al., 2004: p. 838).¹⁶ In contrast to corporate political advocacy as defined above, CPA focuses on companies becoming politically engaged only for the purpose of advancing their own interests. Corporate political action, from that point of view, is seen as the advancement of private interests through engagement and involvement in collective decision-making processes (see Moon et al., 2005: p. 436).

In an early paper, Keim and Zeithaml distinguish between different strategies which CPA encompasses, such as constituency building, campaign contributions through a political action committee, advocacy advertising, lobbying and coalition building (Keim & Zeithaml, 1986). For

obvious reasons, lobbying and advocacy advertising are of particular interest to this paper. We have addressed the distinction between corporate political advocacy and “classical” lobbying as a part of our (negative) definition of the concept above. Advocacy advertising, on the other hand, is “concerned with the propagation of ideas and the elucidation of controversial social issues of public importance” (Sethi, 1979: p. 70). If the primary interest and motivation behind such advocacy advertising was actually to promote the public good, it would be closely aligned with our definition of corporate political advocacy. However, not surprisingly, CPA assumes that corporations engage in such advocacy advertising merely for their own sake, that is, in order not to create public, but private value for the firm.

Thus, traditional CPA research has hardly engaged with implications of their field relating to ethics and responsibility. However, one of the leading CPA scholars, Douglas A. Schuler, has acknowledged mounting criticism about this one-dimensional focus of CPA. He has diagnosed a “preponderance of ‘contemporary’ scholarship on corporate political activity” that focuses on “how corporate political activities can create private value for the companies that use them” (Schuler, 2008: p. 164). Schuler has admitted that as a consequence of this instrumental rationale informing CPA, “other effects” like those relating “to the economy, democracy, or justice, are ignored” (Schuler, 2008: p. 164). Similarly, Oberman (2004: p. 248-49) has argued that “(t)he objective of recent CPA research has been to describe and conceptualize business political activity as a strategic response to the environment, not to question or seek to limit that response.” As a result, Oberman (2004: p. 248-49) proposed that “it would seem that this research stream has reached a sufficient level of maturity that normative considerations can be entered into the mix.” Yet, despite such aspirations, so far there is no coherent theory for the specific context we are interested in.

In sum, corporate political advocacy shares with CPA the interest in the influence that corporations exert on politics and thus a focus on power- or pressure-based political activity. Yet, advocacy obviously runs counter to CPA's assumption that such political activity ought to directly and immediately promote the corporation's own economic interests. Unlike a typical CPA scenario in which corporations lobby behind closed doors for their own interests, advocacy exposes corporations publicly and on issues which are of no direct relevance to their economic interests. Granted that reputational considerations can never be entirely ruled out (e. g. we do not claim that Ben and Jerry's decision to get engaged was entirely free from business considerations)¹⁷, but our notion of advocacy applies to activities where it is safe to assume that the 'business case' has not been their primary or even the sole driving factor.

Political CSR: In contrast to the predominantly strategic debate on CPA, recent developments in the field of CSR aim at providing normative justifications instead of mere explanations of political activities by corporations. In particular, a relatively new stream of research on "political CSR" has conceptualized corporations as political actors and, based on it, tried link CSR with political theory. The term "political CSR" is well-established by now, even though not all scholars who contribute to the debate have explicitly or uniformly endorsed it (e.g. Matten & Crane, 2005; Moon et al., 2005; Matten & Moon, 2008; Néron, 2010; Néron & Norman, 2008a; 2008b).

Political CSR gains relevance "against the background of emerging governance institutions and procedures beyond the nation-state" (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007: 1108). It focuses on the role and responsibility of corporations within such 'new forms of governance' such as public-policy networks or multi-stakeholder initiatives. Thus, in contrast to CPA, this debate highlights the political role of corporations predominantly in the 'extraconstitutional' sphere

(Baur, 2011). As such, the focus of political CSR tends to be narrower than that on corporate political advocacy, which takes place both within (lobbying for the good) and outside (advocacy in a weak sense) of the constitutional sphere. Concordantly, it seems that political CSR cannot fully integrate corporate political advocacy, which raises questions about the compatibility of the conceptual assumptions underlying the two concepts. In particular we need to assess whether corporate political advocacy can be reconciled with political CSR's concept of legitimacy.

The key concern of political CSR is the legitimacy of corporate political activity rather than merely its instrumental utility, which clearly sets it apart from CPA. For that purpose, some scholars in the field, such as Andreas Scherer and Guido Palazzo (2007), have combined the political model of deliberative democracy with (normative) stakeholder theory. Within deliberative democracy, legitimacy is understood to result from undistorted communicative processes involving all relevant stakeholders. Thus, corporations as legitimate political actors are asked in such models to openly participate in such public processes of political will formation (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007: p. 1108/9). This evidently runs counter to the inherent opaqueness of corporate lobbying as portrayed by CPA as well as its aim of advancing the corporation's own interest over that of the public.

Like political CSR, also corporate political advocacy must be conceptualized as an activity beyond the promotion of narrow economic interests. Furthermore, like political CSR, also corporate political advocacy rests on the assumption of overt, rather than hidden political engagement of corporations. Yet, the specific notion of legitimacy underlying political CSR seems to clash with the aim and purpose of corporate political advocacy. Rather than subjecting their CSR to scrutiny within critical multi-stakeholder dialogues, corporate political advocacy seems to require the company to abandon its deliberative attitude in favor of a forceful and

public stance for particular values or ideals. Thus, while political CSR tends to call for embedding the corporation in inclusive and holistic deliberation processes and for the balancing of stakeholder interests therein, political advocacy aims at the exposure of the corporation beyond such processes and at the partial and at times confrontational promotion of certain ideals and causes over others. Stakeholder dialogues, which are seen to be the prime mechanism for the consideration and balancing of competing stakeholder claims and which, therefore, are constitutive for the understanding of legitimacy in political CSR, may play a rather subordinate, if any, role for corporate political advocacy. To the contrary, corporate political advocates may be willing even to override this legitimacy requirement and promote specific ideal causes without their prior legitimization in broad stakeholder deliberations.¹⁸ Thus, at the heart of corporate political advocacy is a form of public favoritism and a reliance on the use of power, which political CSR is precisely concerned with rooting out.

Thus, corporate political advocacy seems to require a notion of legitimacy beyond stakeholder theory. While stakeholder theory did not start out necessarily as a normative approach (Walsh, 2005; Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar, & De Colle, 2010; Donaldson & Preston, 1995), it is one of the predominant theories on which CSR scholars rely for the justification of “moral or philosophical guidelines for the operation and management of corporations” (Donaldson & Preston, 1995: p. 71). Yet, obviously, as stated above: corporate political advocacy may not rest on the impartial consideration and balancing of stakeholder interests. Instead it implies the pursuit of normative convictions potentially in favor of some stakeholders over others. A necessary normative condition for the advocacy pursuit of causes and ideals outside any stakeholder processes seems to be that those causes represent “valid claims regardless of whether or not they affect the stakeholders of the corporation” (Baur &

Palazzo, 2011: p. 582). Such claims are based on norms whose violation can be considered wrong “for reasons prior to any stakeholder obligation” (Phillips, 2003: 30). Granted that such a conceptualization may provide some guidelines in regard to the circumstances of legitimacy of corporate political advocacy, but it does so only in a negative sense. That is, it points out under what conditions corporate political advocacy can be permissible but it does not yet contain much reflection about corporate political advocacy as a desirable activity, that is, as a political *responsibility* of the corporation. This specific normative challenge will be addressed in the following section.

Normative Challenges: Corporate Political Advocacy as a Part of Corporate Responsibility?

Drawing a link between corporate political activity in general and corporate responsibility is nothing new. It has been done, for example, in connection with the above described idea of lobbying for good and more recently a number of articles have addressed the relation between classical lobbying and corporate responsibility (Den Hond et al., 2013; Peterson & Pfitzer, 2009; K. Rehbein & Schuler, 2013; see also Vogel, 2005: p. 171-2; Vogel, 2008a). Recent years have also heralded the emergence of a new strand of research known by the term “political CSR” (see Scherer & Palazzo, 2011, for a comprehensive review of the respective literature) which conceptualizes CSR as a political matter at the outset by addressing it from a governance perspective. However, neither the literature on lobbying for good nor that on political CSR specifically addresses the distinctive phenomenon of corporate political advocacy as it is expressed, for example, by recent corporate engagement for marriage equality. This may be due to the fact that most of the existing literature on CSR and on lobbying for the good focuses on

activities rather than values. After all, it is, by now, broadly endorsed and well established that CSR is not primarily about charity and philanthropy, but about “improving what companies’ *core activities* do to people and planet *throughout their operations*”¹⁹ (our emphasis). Thus, the tension between the main thrust of research on corporate responsibility and the idea of corporate political advocacy occurs precisely in how advocacy relates to a company’s core business activities: while CSR focuses squarely on the core business, corporate political advocacy, as defined above, is characterized precisely by its dissolving link to it.

We believe that a conceptualization of corporate political advocacy as an integral part of a company’s CSR is possible nevertheless. However, doing so requires us to adopt a different starting point for our reflections on corporate responsibility; we must shift our perspective away from a company’s core business *activities* and processes to a company’s *core values*, that is, we must replace the dominant activity-based view of CSR with a more holistic value-driven view. Based on it, we must understand CSR as embedded in and expressed through corporate character (Love & Kraatz, 2009) and culture (see e.g. Goodpaster, 2007).

Such a shift in perspective corresponds to Basu and Palazzo’s (2008) insight that not the assessment of the content of more or less isolated activities along the value-chain ought to be at the center of CSR research, but a deeper examination of corporate character. Corporate character, then, is examined in terms of its fundamental *integrity*, that is, in terms of the consistency between what a company thinks (fundamental values), what it says (communication of values), and what it does (concrete, value-driven behavior) (see e.g. Basu & Palazzo, 2008: p. 125; see also Ciulla, 2005). Similarly, in her seminal article “Managing for Organizational Integrity”, Lynn Paine (Paine, 1994: p. 107) has argued that integrity approaches “strive to define companies’ guiding values, aspirations, and patterns of thought and conduct”. Thus, integrity

approaches give life to the organization's values in a proactive manner (Paine, 1994).

Consequently, ethics and responsibility are not seen merely as constraints to corporate action, but as the governing ethos of the organization. This sets them apart from mere compliance approaches which are preoccupied with setting boundaries for action and thus with the avoidance of sanctions. Former CEO and president of Seventh Generation, Jeffrey Hollender, has argued along similar lines:

“I am continually asked what key issues a company must address to become [a] socially responsible. I think it all starts with values...Developing a culture that both understands and is committed to those values is essential. Articulating the behaviors that are consistent with those values and creating benchmarks to monitor your behavior against your values is a discipline we are just learning to master.” (Hollender, 2004: p. 115-116)

A focus on organizational integrity helps at least explain why and how certain business decisions and behaviors such as political advocacy may be linked to and indeed derive from the character of a company and thus fit with its overall CSR approach (Basu & Palazzo, 2008). Integrity, that is, the consistency between stated and lived values, denotes what the company *stands for*. Standing for one's foundational values, however, literally means to *take a stand* for those values, especially when they are threatened. This holds not only toward the inside, but also toward the outside of the company, which brings the 'public' aspect of corporate political advocacy into play. A company of integrity, that is, a company that vows to stand for certain foundational values on the inside, cannot express indifference when those values are systematically violated in its immediate surroundings, especially so, if the threat to such values in the immediate environment of the company threatens the viability of those very values also within the organization. For example, a company which values racial equality and indeed makes

this particular value a part of its very character, i.e. its corporate culture, surely cannot remain silent in the face of blatant and systematic racism against its employees within its immediate environment without compromising its commitment to these values and thus its very integrity as an organization. Despite being concerned predominantly about the economic implications of DOMA, this argument was advanced explicitly also by the signatory companies of the above-mentioned amicus brief to the Supreme Court:

“The injury runs far deeper than mere litigation risk; deeper even than the morale of the work force. For many employers, DOMA does violence to the morale of the institution itself. Like other persons, legal and natural, amici [i.e. the signatories] are motivated by core principles.”²⁰

Thus, according to such reasoning, there are circumstances under which their sense of integrity and thus responsibility should prompt companies to advocate for certain values when they are acutely endangered. This was the line of argumentation also of John G. Taft, CEO of RBC Wealth Management:

“Now, every corporation is going to make a decision about what their values are and whether their values will lead them to take certain actions or not. There is nothing innately wrong with a corporation like Starbucks concluding that their respect for diversity, their respect for the innate equality of all human beings is so central to whom they are that they have to take a position in political instances where that basic principle is threatened.”²¹

In order to conclude our elaborations on the connection between corporate political advocacy and corporate responsibility, two distinctions need to be made. First, aiming at the proactive promotion and furtherance of social change, corporate political advocacy reaches decisively beyond the mere avoidance of corporate involvement or potential corporate complicity in wrongdoing. At the same time, second, it is not to be confused with a merely philanthropic outlook on CSR. Let us elaborate on both of these distinctions in all brevity.

The importance of not harming others both directly or indirectly by being complicit in the wrongdoing of third parties has been established as an essential and crucial part of corporate responsibility at the latest since John Ruggie's work as the UN special representative for business and human rights (see, e.g., United Nations, 2008a; 2008b, 2011). Thus, if we equaled corporate political advocacy with "do no harm", no additional paper on its relation to corporate responsibility would be needed.

To illustrate the distinction between engaging in advocacy and merely avoiding complicity (i.e. merely refraining from contributing to harm), let us have a look at the recent case of the Danish chemical firm Lundbeck. Lundbeck started to put strict restrictions on the distribution of pentobarbital, in order to prevent it from being used for the execution of the death penalty by American states.²² Many US states had switched to using Lundbeck's product named Nembutal as the middle drug of the triple lethal injections after the US firm Hospira suspended supply of the anaesthetic sodium thiopental in protest of it being used for executions. Lundbeck put its restrictions in place after directly protesting to the governor of Florida, Rick Scott, against the use of its drug for executions and after calling on the Danish government for support. For the president of Lundbeck, Staffan Schuberg, the use of his company's drugs in executions in Florida

"contradicts everything Lundbeck is in business to do – provide therapies that improve people's lives".²³

Lundbeck's opposition against the use of its drug in executions contains certain elements of advocacy. Nevertheless, the company's engagement did not aim at the abolishment of the death penalty as such, but "merely" at not becoming personally involved in its execution through the provision of the necessary drugs. In other words, the company is concerned predominantly with the avoidance of becoming complicit in the execution of inmates, rather than with advocacy against the perceived larger injustice behind the institution of the death penalty as such. Therefore, its supply restrictions first of all serve the purpose of doing no harm through their business operations, rather than of advocating for broader social change.²⁴ In order to count as advocacy in the sense of this article, the company would need to expose itself publicly by taking a stand against the death penalty in general.²⁵

Despite the dissolving link between advocacy and a corporation's core business, as well as its focus beyond the "mere" avoidance of harm, corporate political advocacy is *not* to be confused with corporate philanthropy. There certainly are instances where the lines between these two concepts may blur. For example, both philanthropy and advocacy can be understood to represent "the most voluntary and discretionary dimension of corporate responsibility" (McAlister & Ferrell, 2002: p. 692) and philanthropy, just like advocacy, is equally conceivable without any positive correlation with the corporation's financial interest. Moreover, depending on the specific cause that is supported, philanthropy can certainly be considered an activity of political relevance, just like advocacy. Nevertheless, there are crucial differences between the two concepts. Most importantly, philanthropy lacks the "voice" element that is characteristic for advocacy. By definition, advocacy is based on the vocal promotion of values and ideals rather

than merely on their support through financial means. Thus, in order to amount to actual advocacy, philanthropic contributions by corporations would have to be complemented with vocal and targeted attempts by the company to publicly promote the respective causes.

To depict corporate political advocacy as a part of corporate responsibility is not uncontroversial and it almost certainly raises objections and concerns. In the following we will briefly address what we believe may be the most common ones among them.

Common Objections to Corporate Political Advocacy

We are aware that the issues we raise are rather controversial. We have collected some reactions and questions from discussions among ourselves and with colleagues in order to address them in this paper. Doing so should clarify further both the conceptual nature of advocacy as a political activity as well as its ties to corporate responsibility. We will address four objections to the idea of corporate political advocacy: the first one deals with the alleged intrusion of ideology in the economic realm; the second one addresses the problem of alienation among stakeholders; the third one raises doubts about the underlying motivation of companies; the fourth and perhaps most difficult one raises the question whether companies should be allowed to throw their weight behind anything they prefer, that is, whether any value can be a basis for legitimate corporate advocacy.

Intrusion of ideology: As a response to Ben & Jerry's 2009 announcement to change the name of its Chubby Hubby ice cream, *The Guardian* blogger Oliver Thring contemplated that "It seems you can't fill a shopping basket these days without also buying into some sort of ideology."²⁶ His reaction seems representative for what a lot of people may think about corporate political advocacy. Ideology, values, and morality still seem not to be appropriate avenues for

corporations to take a position on. Implicitly, Thring's message is that businesses should keep going about their business and keep their hands off anything else. However, one may justifiably ask whether this view indeed represents today's corporate reality. The idea that the market itself is free of ideology and that, by following its dictates, corporations are somehow operating in a value-free zone is about as removed from the ordinary as Thring thinks of corporate political advocacy (see e.g. Ulrich, 2008; Werner, 2012). Robert Cox (1985: p. 207) rightly claimed that "(t)heory is always for someone and for some purpose"; it always has a perspective and cannot be divorced from "a standpoint in time and space." Thus, economic theory itself is based on distinct values; the call for free markets, for example, is itself based on ideology, and very often, it is endorsed also by companies. Thus, we have never had a shopping basket which was free of ideology. What is new, perhaps, is that today we are seeing businesses embracing other types of ideologies and values and that they are promoting them overtly and in novel channels rather than exclusively behind the closed (revolving) doors of KStreet. The difference for us as consumers, investors, or employees, however, is not as big as Thring makes it seem. To the contrary, it seems that knowing what companies actually stand for provides us with a conscious choice to buy from, work for, or invest in those companies whose values align most closely with our own. Therefore, rather than holding on to the illusion of value-neutrality in business, we should make use of this choice. This leads to the next point.

Stakeholder alienation: not all employees, shareholders, suppliers or customers, might agree with the values or ideologies promoted and advocated for by the company. Therefore, a common objection is that the company risks alienating a part of its constituencies by explicitly taking positions against the values they may be holding dear. For example, a company which takes a favorable position on gay marriage risks alienating those customers who believe in

marriage as a sacred institution between man and woman only. The case of the US retailer JC Penney and its spokeswoman Ellen de Generes is illustrative for this. De Generes, who is openly homosexual, was chosen by JC Penney despite repeated calls for boycott by a conservative group named “One Million Moms”.²⁷ While the alienation of stakeholders certainly is a valid point, our response to the last objection also applies to this point. That is, the alienation of certain stakeholders based on the values of corporations is nothing new, but has always been a part of business. For example, a commitment to productivity and efficiency as has been found to be included in a notable amount of corporate mission statements (Kaptein, 2004) is likely to favour the discrimination of people with disabilities. The same goes for the systemic preference given, for example, to young over old, male over female, childless over family and so on.

Moreover, it is nothing new that companies follow specific missions and visions and also the adoption of corporate value statements is by now nothing out of the ordinary anymore. By definition, any company who claims to be on a mission is espousing a specific value set. A mission cannot be value-neutral – it is inherently normative. Thus, any mission statement bears in it the potential of alienation. In many cases, stakeholders who disagree with a company’s values are free to either ‘exit’ their relationship to the company or to ‘voice’ their disagreement, or to do both (Hill & Jones, 1992), as happened in the case of JC Penney. What is striking, however, is that we have come to uncritically accept the pursuit of market shares as a set ideal, rather than asking companies to come up with more meaningful statements of their ambition. However, anyone who talks to people working for such organizations on a regular basis knows that while some employees support the one-dimensional pursuit of profits, others do not (Jarzabkowski & Fenton, 2006). Literally every company faces value pluralism among its stakeholders. There are people on all levels of the organization who are opposing the

stereotypical corporate mindset. Thus, companies which explicitly espouse other values in addition to the purely monetary ones are providing us with a valuable choice. Beyond our dependence on some kind of employment and consumption for the satisfaction of existential needs, it is up to us to choose the companies with whose mission and values we identify – as employees, customers, and investors; and companies in return often deliberately rely on values in order to attract certain customers, employees or shareholders (Maignan, Ferrell, & Ferrell, 2005). Thus, companies cannot and do not even strive to be liked by everyone, because they are inherently value-driven institutions and, as such, they always appeal to some, but not to others. This last point connects to the third objection, which addresses the motivation behind corporate political advocacy.

It is all about the business case: this objection raises doubts about whether there is in fact such a thing as corporate political advocacy as defined in this paper. Anything the corporation does, such is the argument, is based on its impact on the bottom line. Corporate advocacy is not an exception. Thus, any company which advocates for certain values or ideals only does so if it expects this to be beneficial financially. Our response is as follows: As we have argued above, it is true that many companies which promote the legalization of gay marriage, are doing so not exclusively based on a concern for equal rights, but also based on, financial motives. However, to claim that advocacy conducted by companies, can be boiled down to the *exclusive* concern for the bottom line simplifies the matter about as much as claiming that financial interest never plays any role. As so often, the truth of the matter may be found in between the two extremes. Similar to their engagement for CSR in general, most companies engaging in political advocacy may do so based on mixed motives (Aguilera, Rupp, Williams, & Ganapathi, 2007; Brenn & Vidaver-Cohen, 2009; Brown, Vetterlein, & Roemer-Mahler, 2010; Graafland & van de Ven, 2006).

They may see the general benefit of fundamental values like equality, respect and dignity of all people for a strong and thriving market place, but they may just as much believe in the ethical merit of those values alone. So, if one believes that human rights and basic human equality positively affect economic development, then building a business case for anything that relates to such fundamental values seems trivial. However, if we look at corporate political advocacy in a more isolated context, the business case argumentation often appears too simple. For example, when Google announced its “Love Campaign” for the support of gay marriage, they specifically sought out Poland and Singapore as the main targets to push the agenda. The reason for the focus on Poland is “its Roman Catholic makeup and strong opposition of gay marriage.” According to a 2010 study of the Polish newspaper Rzeczpospolita, 79% of Poles are in opposition to gay marriage.”²⁸ Pushing the agenda of gay marriage in an area in which a vast majority of people are opposed to it seems at least to put a question mark behind the financial benefit expected from it. Google’s intentions are even bolder: “Google stated that it intends to eventually expand the initiative to every country where the company has an office, and will focus on places with homophobic cultures, where anti-gay laws exist.”²⁹ It is reasonable to believe that Google expects long-term financial benefits from more openness in such societies. However, advocating for it may well come with initial reputational damage. Otherwise, one would wonder why not all major companies take active steps in pushing the issue. Thus, it comes as no surprise that Google’s rationale behind its Love Campaign reflects precisely the kind of mixed financial and ethical motives that we pointed out above:

“We want our employees who are gay or lesbian or transgender to have the same experience outside the office as they do in the office. It is obviously a very ambitious

piece of work. We operate in many countries and have a very globally mobile workforce. We have had a number of instances where we have been trying to hire people into countries where there are these issues and have been unable to put the best person into a job in that country.”³⁰

The question of motivation also ties to the last objection we are going to address. It is the point of bias of those who support corporate political advocacy as a legitimate business activity and perhaps even as an expression of corporate responsibility. In other words, what if companies advocated for values they fundamentally disagree with? Would they still be supporting the idea of companies taking a stand in the public debate on those issues?

What values are appropriate? Perhaps the most challenging question we asked ourselves while writing this paper was whether we would embrace corporate political advocacy also if companies took a stand against gay marriage rather than in favor of it. In fact, while companies exposing themselves in favor of gay rights at least in the US have faced relatively little backlash as a result, the coming out of the fast food chain Chick-Fil-A against gay marriage has caused quite some opposition. The before-mentioned blogger of the *The Guardian*, Oliver Thring, has raised exactly this point in his discussion of Ben & Jerry’s engagement:

“That gay people should be able to get married seems to me a basic human right, and I admit that in a completely partisan way I was tempted to justify B&J’s action as part of the ongoing struggle against ignorance and fear. But what would I be thinking if a contrary point of view was being aired? I’d be first in line to denounce them as squalid influence peddlers, shamelessly meddlesome, shiveringly undemocratic tricksters.”³¹

Thring makes a fair point about the danger of hypocrisy when it comes to corporate advocacy either in favor of or against one's own values. However, the benchmark for the legitimacy of a company's advocacy must indeed be the most basic ethical principles of equal human dignity and moral worth of all human beings. In order for advocacy to be a part of corporate responsibility, it cannot espouse discriminatory and exclusionary ideals, it cannot take a stand in favor of bigotry and intolerance and it cannot diminish the equal fundamental dignity of all human beings. The problem that we face is that as a benchmark, these principles are rather broad and fuzzy and they leave much room for interpretation.

A relatively recent paper on ethical consumerism by Hussain (2012) may provide some more conclusive insights on this question. Hussain argues that for consumers to legitimately use their bargaining power in the market as a mechanism of social change, they must adopt a view on their activism as a legislative endeavor and thus as a part of the wider political process. He calls this the proto-legislative approach to ethical consumerism. As a consequence such ethical consumerism for the advancement of social change is permissible only if it is consistent with the broader justifying aims of our liberal democratic order (Hussain, 2012). More specifically, it is legitimate if the exercise of bargaining power does not, among others, deprive other human beings of their fundamental freedoms, if it advances an agenda framed in terms of a reasonable conception of the common good, if the process that guides the exercise of bargaining power generates standards and arguments that can be the basis of future legislation, and if the overall aim of the effort is to raise awareness for the issue and to put it on the formal legislative agenda (Hussain, 2012). It is beyond the scope of this paper to spell out similar criteria for corporate political advocacy. However, we believe that a similar argument can and must be made for corporate political advocacy as Hussain advances for his proto-legislative account of ethical

consumerism. If corporate political advocacy is to be considered permissible or even worthwhile in a liberal democracy, it cannot aim at values and ideals which contradict the very foundations of such a liberal democracy, else it would pull the rug from under its own feet.

Conclusion: Practical Challenges of Corporate Political Advocacy

Our time has been described as one of shifting and blurring lines between private and public, economic and political (see e.g. Kobrin, 2009; Mathews, 1997; Scherer & Palazzo, 2007). Under such circumstances, our perceptions regarding what activities are appropriate or inappropriate for business companies are changing as well. The debate around corporate advocacy for gay marriage reflects these shifts. The surge of companies which have publicly taken a stand on the issue in the run-up of respective referendums in a number of American states show that the corporate actors are in the midst of a process of reinterpretation of their own role in society as well.

Managers who are confronted with questions of political advocacy arguably face a thorny issue with potentially significant implications for the company as a whole. How should they decide whether to publicly take a stand on a specific issue of concern? We suggest that there are three basic conditions to a legitimate advocacy campaign, which managers should assess thoroughly and sincerely before making a decision to throw the weight of the company behind a specific cause. They are consistency, plausibility, and authenticity; all of them are cornerstones of a company's integrity.

Consistency: The legitimacy of a public advocacy campaign derives from its consistency with the foundational values of the company. Thus, managers must assess whether such advocacy is reconcilable with or perhaps even warranted by the values, which guard the integrity

of the company. This presupposes that the company is aware of its values and that they are laid down in a formal value statement. As Hollender (2004: p. 118) rightly points out: “You have to become really clear about what your values are and also about what it means to live by them. On the road to social responsibility, a company is not going anywhere without this necessary map.” This is confirmed by Waddock and Rasche (2012: p. 83) who assert that “companies that wish to operate with integrity must articulate positive and constructive values to guide their behavior.”

Plausibility: A company’s advocacy for a specific cause becomes plausible only, if it is part of and embedded in a long-term strategy to promote specific values or causes. Google’s “love campaign” is a fitting example for this point. Rather than “merely” taking a stand on a specific referendum in a specific state, Google has made the promotion of gay rights a focal point of its international corporate responsibility. Any specific activity on the promotion of gay rights can thus be placed within this campaign and thus gains plausibility as a constitutive part of their overall corporate responsibility.

Authenticity: This point is closely connected with the first two. A company’s advocacy for a specific cause must be embedded in a concerted set of actions to promote the respective cause. In other words, the company needs to show that it supports the causes it is advocating for not only through words but through targeted action also in its own operations. The legitimacy of a company’s advocacy can never be assessed in isolation of the rest of its activities and indeed of the very culture and character of the company.

Hence, the question at the core of this new trend to corporate political advocacy is not so much whether it is an appropriate corporate activity in general. Rather, the question is whether companies have earned what Sethi and Williams (2000: p. 197) call their “right to advocate”, that is, whether their advocacy efforts appear as credible in light of their stated philosophy and

their lived culture and thus can legitimately be pursued as a part of their corporate responsibility. In the context of corporation's role in apartheid South Africa and the respective stipulations advanced by the Sullivan Principles, Sethi and Williams stated the following:

"The large corporation must become an active agent for social change if it is to make the world safe for democracy, and indeed, for capitalism... As a dominant institution in society, the corporation must assume its rightful place and contribute to the articulation of the public agenda and [not] simply react to policy choices advocated by others. The right of advocacy, however, cannot be taken for granted but must be earned through public trust in corporate intent and faith in corporate promises made in the name of "public interest." (Sethi & Williams, 2000: p. 197)

Trust in corporate intent and faith in corporate promises can build only over time and only if a company lives and promotes its values authentically and consistently. Thus, the right to advocate can be earned only through integrity.

Notes

1. <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/howaboutthat/6125277/Ben-and-Jerrys-renames-ice-cream-Hubby-Hubby-in-celebration-of-gay-marriage.html>>, last accessed July 15, 2014.
2. <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/22/starbucks-gay-marriage-support-hrc-nom-protest_n_1372500.html>, last accessed July 15, 2014.
3. <http://seattletimes.com/html/politicsnorthwest/2017323520_starbucks_supports_gay_marriag.html>, last accessed July 15, 2014.

4. <<http://www.npr.org/2013/03/26/175350841/its-bad-for-business-employers-side-with-doma-opponents>>, last accessed July 15, 2014.
5. <<http://www.examiner.com/article/google-announces-legalize-love-campaign-support-of-gay-marriage-1>>, last accessed July 15, 2014.
6. <<http://www.business-humanrights.org/Documents/GlobalWitnessDoddFrank>>, last accessed July 15, 2014.
7. <http://grprofessionals.org/join-all/code-of-ethics/>, last accessed July 15, 2014.
8. <<http://www.ethicalcorp.com/environment/rio20-blog-business-initiatives-set-summit-scene>>, last accessed July 15, 2014.
9. See <<http://www.us-cap.org>>.
10. <<http://us-cap.org/USCAPCallForAction.pdf>>, last accessed July 15, 2014.
11. <<http://googleblog.blogspot.ch/2008/09/our-position-on-californias-no-on-8.html>>, last accessed July 15, 2014.
12. <<http://googleblog.blogspot.ch/2008/09/our-position-on-californias-no-on-8.html>>, last accessed July 15, 2014.
13. <<http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2012/06/06/daily-circuit-businesses-gay-marriage/>>, last accessed July 15, 2014.
14. Similarly, the above mentioned amicus brief of 278 companies to the Supreme Court largely, but not exclusively, stresses the burdens and expenses which DOMA imposes upon employers.
15. For more detailed elaborations on the relation between advocacy, political CSR, and CPA see Baur & Wettstein (forthcoming).

16. Another term for essentially the same strand of research is Corporate Political Strategy (CPS) (see e.g. Hillman & Hitt, 1999).
17. See <http://www.dailyfinance.com/2009/09/01/ben-and-jerrys-hubby-hubby-ice-cream-celebrates-same-sex-marriage/> for the opinion of a brand expert on this issue.
18. However, stakeholder dialogues do not have to be entirely irrelevant to advocacy. After all, advocacy can either occur as a standalone activity, for example, if a corporation expresses support for a cause through advertising as in Ben and Jerry's case (so called issue or advocacy advertising (see Stark, 2010) or as collective action, that is in form of coalitions with other corporations or non-profit organizations. Thus, MSIs can play a role in advocacy, namely if they act as a unitary political actor towards the outside. However, it has to be noted that the degree of political exposure of corporations as part of an MSI is of course always less distinctive than if they do so on a stand-alone basis.
19. Apple Sweatshops & Twitter Censorship: A Defining Moment for CSR. <<http://www.csrwire.com/blog/posts/294-apple-s-supplier-woes-a-defining-moment-for-csr>>, last accessed July 15, 2014.
20. Brief of 278 Employers and Organizations Representing Employers as *Amici Curiae* in Support of Respondent Edith Schlain Windsor (Merits Brief), p. 35, The United States of America v. Edith Schlain Windsor and Bipartisan Legal Advisory Group of the United States House of Representatives, No. 12-307.
21. <<http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2012/06/06/daily-circuit-businesses-gay-marriage/>>, last accessed July 15, 2014.
22. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/feb/14/texas-executions-threatened-stocks-run-low>>, last accessed July 15, 2014.

23. <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2042738/Manuel-Valle-execution-Drug-maker-Staffan-Schuberg-urges-Florida-NOT-use-product.html>>, last accessed July 15, 2014.
24. Hussain (2012: 113) advances a similar distinction in regard to ethical consumerism. He distinguishes what he calls “social change ethical consumerism” from “clean hands ethical consumerism”. Consumers engage in the latter if they want to avoid being implicated as a participant in the immoral practices through which it was produced. Thus, their aim is not to change those practices, but merely not to become personally linked to them. The aim of social change ethical consumerism, on the other hand, is to force and catalyze changes in production practices.
25. Independently of Lundbeck’s measures the European Commission put in place such new restrictions on the export of anaesthetics used to execute people in the US in December 2011. As a result, many states, such as Texas, are currently running out of the drug. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/dec/20/death-penalty-drugs-european-commission>>, last accessed July 15, 2014.
26. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/wordofmouth/2009/sep/03/ben-jerrys-gay-marriage-hubby>>, last accessed July 15, 2014.
27. <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/03/us-jcpenney-ellendegeneres-idUSTRE8121VK20120203>>, last accessed July 15, 2014.
28. <<http://www.examiner.com/article/google-announces-legalize-love-campaign-support-of-gay-marriage-1>>, last accessed July 15, 2014.
29. <<http://www.examiner.com/article/google-announces-legalize-love-campaign-support-of-gay-marriage-1>>, last accessed July 15, 2014.

30. <<http://www.examiner.com/article/google-announces-legalize-love-campaign-support-of-gay-marriage-1>>, last accessed July 15, 2014.
31. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/wordofmouth/2009/sep/03/ben-jerrys-gay-marriage-hubby>>, last accessed July 15, 2014.

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