Collective Action and the Institutionalization of Corporate Social Responsibility in the United States, 1980-2010

DISSERTATION

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Abstract

In recent decades, an expanded notion of corporate responsibility has developed. Still grounded in the primary goal of generating profits, there is now a widespread expectation that businesses should benefit society in ways that transcend their economic contribution. This study explores the relationship between civil society and the private sector in shaping this change in expectations of corporate social responsibility.

Using an original dataset of 803 articles from thirteen major U.S. daily newspapers, I examine patterns in public discourse about business-targeted collective action spanning from 1980 to 2010. I conduct pooled time series analyses of the relationships between business-targeted collective action, the establishment and growth of corporate responsibility reporting, and the socioeconomic conditions in which these activities are embedded. My findings suggest business-targeted collective action rises in response to increasing corporate power and declines in response to the institutionalization of corporate social responsibility. These results contribute unique perspective to the social movements and business ethics scholarship by focusing on the social processes that underlie corporate social responsibility politics and policies.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

_Corporations, as powerful entities that reach into every sphere of society, arguably have an obligation to be socially responsible and to conduct their business activities with society’s interests at heart._ (Gan 2006:217)

It is October, 2011, and in the midst of my dissertation analysis I am following news of the weeks-long “Occupy Wall Street” protests. The movement took root in New York City, then spread to cities across the United States, and on to Toronto, London, Rome, Tokyo, and other cities around the globe (PBS 2011). Public opinion about the movement appears divided. For many, the “We are the 99%” slogan resonates; others complain the protesters’ message is unclear, their proposed solutions unworkable, and their target misdirected at economic institutions rather than the state. Admittedly the public discourse surrounding this movement is messy, but a single message shines through to those who are listening: Many citizens are frustrated and angry about economic conditions, and they view corporate leaders as a source of society’s economic woes.

Implicit in the protesters’ decision to target economic institutions is the recognition that corporations are powerful—perhaps more powerful than the state. The protesters’ claims about economic inequality and corruption symbolize an underlying
belief that corporate elites have a moral duty to not abuse their power. On the contrary, that the protesters have turned to the business community in desperate economic times suggests they expect their power to be used as a force for good.

How did we get to this point? In 1970, Milton Friedman convincingly argued the only social responsibility of business is to make a profit. Many continue to defend this perspective today. In the meantime there has been an explosion of interest in corporate social responsibility among scholars and business practitioners alike (Cotte and Trudel 2009, Moon and Vogel 2008, Reeves 2007). The social responsibility discourse has now begun to reflect a shift toward Porter and Kramer’s (2011) advocacy of “shared value”, a business strategy which focuses on the interdependence between social and economic progress.

In discussing the relationship between markets and morality, Fourcade and Healy (2007) raise the question: How and why do markets come to match moral ideals? My thesis is that today both civil society and corporate leaders expect the private sector to benefit society in ways that transcend their economic contributions, and this expectation has been influenced by interactions between civil society and the private sector. This dissertation is rooted in the nexus of economic and political sociology, drawing on institutional theory and the social movement literature. I use the case of corporate social responsibility (CSR) to explore the negotiation of power and morality that business and civil society organizations engage in to bring about social change. At the center of these processes is the question of legitimacy: How have civil groups, via the news media, shaped the agreement of business leaders that social contributions are part of a valid
business strategy? Business scholarship suggests one mechanism for this agreement is the
demonstration that CSR activities and profits are not mutually exclusive as previously
believed (e.g. Porter and Kramer 2011, Trudel and Cotte 2009, Waddock and Graves
1997). This study provides empirical evidence that civil society has also played an
important role in the process.

Specifically, I examine the relationship between business-targeted collective
action and CSR using national-level socio-economic data, CSR policy records databased
by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), and an original dataset of 803 articles
published between 1980 and 2010 in thirteen major U.S. daily newspapers. The analyses
are structured around two objectives.

The first objective (Chapter 2) is to describe the scope and nature of the public
discourse regarding the social responsibilities of business: What is the pattern of
business-targeted collective action news reports over time? What types of business-
targeted claims made by collective actors are reported? And, how are these reports
framed by the media? Opponents of CSR argue business managers are not adequately
suited to identifying the most meaningful social issues to address. Indeed, there is a
documented gap between what business leaders identify as top CSR issues and what the
public identifies as top CSR issues (Zollo et al. 2007). This may be seen as a sign of
Durkheim’s anomie—the moral role of the private sector is ambiguous. I suggest media
reports of business-targeted collective action are a means through which civil society
There is substantive value to studying business-targeted claims as a means of identifying
meaningful social issues to help align the private sector’s understanding of the social responsibility of business with society’s expectations. When business managers have the same understanding of their social responsibilities as their stakeholders, there is a greater likelihood that positive outcomes for society will be achieved (Zollo et al. 2007).

The second objective (Chapters 3 and 4) of this dissertation is to examine the processes through which civil society and the private sector negotiate the social responsibility of business. To explain the over-time pattern of business-targeted collective action reports, I statistically model relationships between news reports, annual corporate profits, and reporting of social responsibility policies, controlling for socioeconomic conditions. Overall, my results support the hypothesis that the institutionalization of a broadened concept of the social responsibility of business is the outcome of a dynamic process of interactions between civil society and the private sector. These models demonstrate that, despite the immense rise in the economic resources of corporations in recent decades, civil society has the ability to influence corporate behavior through collective action and public discourse. In turn, as the private sector signals its acceptance of a broader social role through their adoption of formalized social responsibility policies, news reports of business-targeted collective action decline. Evidence from the literature and case studies from my sample suggest civil society organizations may be shifting from public, contentious interactions with the private sector, to private, collaborative partnerships.

I begin by grounding this argument in a discussion of the sociological treatment of power and morality in market relations. I then elaborate on the processes that link
market power and morality, focusing on the role of discourse in the legitimation of CSR and the central role of the news media in this process. Following the conceptual discussion, I address the business-targeted public discourse in detail, beginning with a description of the collection and coding of news article data, followed by a discussion of the descriptive results of the news article analysis. I then report the multivariate analyses that examine the interactions between civil society and the private sector regarding the social responsibility of business over the last thirty years. I build on the multivariate findings with a special focus on the role of strategic partnerships between civil groups and the private sector, and then conclude by examining the implications of this research for future studies of the legitimacy of CSR and for power relations between business and society more broadly.

This dissertation adds perspective to the emerging social movement literature on non-state targets of collective action. It makes a unique contribution by considering the impact of collective action on the private sector at the institutional field level, supplementing our knowledge of how action impacts primary targets.

In addition, this research provides an explanation for the institutionalization of CSR that centers on interactions between civil society, the news media, and the private sector, establishing a foundation for future consideration of the role of public opinion in the process. Questions regarding factors and processes that impact the public opinion of the legitimacy of CSR activities are important to address because the public’s reaction to CSR has implications for the role of the private sector as a resource for solving social problems.
Finally, by exploring discourse as a mechanism through which civil society and economic institutions exercise power in response to one another, this research demonstrates reciprocity and legitimation processes that are integral to our understanding of power (see Roscigno 2011). These processes help answer key questions of how social values are translated into market practices, and how firms come to understand their role in society.

**Market Power as a Force for Good: The Case of Corporate Social Responsibility**

*Since man is more than an economic automaton computing market values, what will be the role of business in serving his other needs? (Davis 1960:74)*

There is a longstanding sociological interest in associations between economic and moral behaviors. Durkheim examined the connection between economic development and social cohesion, concluding that increased market complexity brings ambiguity to the collective understanding of what is right and normal ([1893] 1984), and Weber linked religious practices to the rise of capitalism ([1930] 2004). Contemporary sociologists continue to explore the connection between market activity and morality in a variety of contexts (e.g. Carruthers and Espeland 1998, Fourcade and Healy 2007, Zelizer 2007).

Historically, sociologists have placed a strong focus on power struggles between capitalists and producers (e.g. Braverman 1974, Burawoy 1979, Edwards 1979), and this theme of exploitation has more recently broadened to include consumers (Baudrillard 1970, Ritzer 2005, Schudson 1984). Power commonly refers to the ability to achieve
one’s will despite resistance from others (e.g. Mills 1956, Weber 1946). Power in the context of economic behaviors tends to be approached with an assumption of exploitation and abuse (Dobbin 2005). The theme of exploitive market power extends beyond academics to the public interest. Throughout the last decade, several high-profile news stories reported fraudulent corporate practices that resulted in significant financial losses for shareholders (e.g. Enron, Bernie Madoff). These stories made the abuse of economic power salient to the public by connecting institutional practices with the lived experiences of individuals who had lost their life savings.

Although power carries potential for abuse, the large scale of corporate operations can also offer significant, sustained benefits to society. A Dow Chemical production facility, for example, reduced its water use by one billion gallons, enough to supply nearly 40,000 people in the U.S. for a year (Porter and Kramer 2011). Charitable donations by corporations amounted to more than fifteen billion dollars in 2010, representing more than a twenty percent increase from 2008 (Giving USA 2011). During the same time period, all other sources of charitable donations decreased, highlighting the potential societal value of corporate contributions. An NGO (nongovernmental organization) known as Goodness500 in fact assesses corporate social responsibility in terms of a firm’s “power to change the world” (csrhub.com 2012). Yet when such pro-social applications of power are recognized in the literature, they tend to be
overshadowed by suspicions about underlying motives: Are apparently well-meaning actions actually misrepresentations of corporate self-interest?¹

The dichotomy between power and responsibility, and the question of private versus public interest inherent in this theme, is echoed in the business literature. Milton Friedman (1970) famously argued that the role of business in society is to generate the profits that support the economic functioning of society. Voluntary efforts to contribute to the greater good in other ways not only come at the expense of profitable strategic activity, but they fall outside the expertise of business professionals. In a sense, Friedman argues, using corporate resources to contribute social benefits to the public is a form of taxation, but unlike state administrators, business leaders are not well-informed as to how to best direct such efforts.

An alternative perspective is that power must be balanced with responsibility. If businesses do not take the initiative to maintain this balance, other groups such as government and labor unions will fill this role (Davis 1960:73; see also Galbraith’s 1956 theory of countervailing power). Thus, failing to accept responsibility in proportion with power should ultimately result in a rebalancing of the power-responsibility equation in the form of lost power. In other words, if a corporation is a bad citizen then its license to operate will be revoked by ‘society’ (Banerjee 2008:62). In his conceptualization of

¹ One explanation for our preoccupation with this question of self- versus public interest is that self-interest is easily confounded with selfishness, “which emphasizes one’s own interests at others’ expense” (Lantos 2002:219). Lantos explains, “Self-interest is simply a concern for financial reward and is necessary if society is to be maximally productive and efficiently allocate its resources.”
social responsibility, Davis readily recognizes the importance of economic contributions, but he adds what he refers to as “socio-human” responsibilities, such as “making work more meaningful, developing persons to their fullest potential, preservation of creativity and freedom, and fulfillment of human dignity” (1960:76).

**Corporate Social Responsibility: Balancing Power with Responsibility**

*From the neighborhoods where our stores are located, to the ones where our coffee is grown – we believe in being involved in the communities we’re a part of. Bringing people together, inspiring change and making a difference in people’s lives – it’s all part of being a good neighbor. And it’s a commitment rooted in the belief that we can use our size to bring about positive change.* (Starbucks Corporation 2011)

Starbucks’ commitment to making positive contributions to society embodies the spirit of corporate social responsibility (CSR), a term that refers to corporate behaviors that go beyond the economic contributions to “improve the quality of life of the workforce, their families, the local community, and society at large” (World Business Council for Sustainable Development 1999:3). Over time, Friedman’s assumption that directing corporate resources toward social responsibilities must be traded-off for profits has been largely displaced by a conceptualization of social responsibility that more closely resembles Davis’ view. Still grounded in the primary goal of legally-generated

2 Definitions of CSR vary widely. See Carroll (1991) and Dahlsrud (2008) for discussion and analysis of the meaning of CSR. I have chosen the World Business Council definition primarily for its high frequency of use (Dahlsrud 2008), and also for consistency with other sociological literature on this topic (Soule 2009).

3 My description of a broad shift from Friedman’s to Davis’ perspective is an oversimplified representation of responsible business practices over time. Davis, Whitman and Zald (2006)
profits, there is now a widespread expectation that corporations will voluntarily behave ethically, and contribute philanthropically to the broader community: "The CSR firm should strive to make a profit, obey the law, be ethical, and be a good corporate citizen" (Carroll 1991:43). While this conceptualization of responsibility has not entirely replaced Friedman’s argument, there is evidence of the growing institutionalization of CSR. The number of companies in the world publishing corporate responsibility reports increased nearly ten-fold between 1996 and 2006 (Reeves 2007). A report of North American CSR practices claims that 65 percent of S&P 100 firms oversee environmental and social policies and practices through dedicated sustainability committees (Dalheim et al. 2010).

Similarly, studying trends in academic and practitioner CSR-related research between 1970 and 2009, Cotte and Trudel (2009) note a radical jump after 1995, and again after 2005. Brammer, Jackson and Matten (2012:10) describe the current situation this way:

> CSR itself has become a strongly institutionalized feature of the contemporary corporate landscape in advanced industrialized economies. The idea that corporations should engage in some form of responsible behaviour has become a legitimate expectation. The institutionalization of CSR can be seen in the diffusion of CSR departments within companies, the spread of stock market indices related to sustainability, the proliferation of branding initiatives and even and ISO standard on CSR.

Net, “while the Friedman camp is dismissive, in fact downright suspicious about corporate social responsibility outside the shareholder value framework, the fact remains

provide an interesting, more detailed historical account of what would today be labeled as CSR activities dating back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
that corporate social responsibility is publicly espoused by almost all the major corporations of the world” (Banerjee 2008:60).

**The Profitability of Corporate Social Responsibility**

CSR scholarship is dominated by efforts to link CSR to financial outcomes. For publicly held corporations, Lantos (2002:205) maintains that CSR activity is immoral and is not legitimate unless it yields dividends for the firm “because it breaches shareholder property rights, unfairly confiscating stockholder wealth, and it spends money for the general welfare at the possible expense of those for whom the firm should be caring, notably employees and customers.” Interestingly, he adds, “However, for a private firm and for managers using their own resources, altruistic endeavors are commendable and consistent with certain secular and Judaeo-Christian teaching on the meaning and purpose of work.” Lantos also supports CSR activity by publicly held corporations when it benefits both the firm and society.

Positive business effects of CSR initiatives have been well-documented, demonstrating that profit and social responsibility are not necessarily mutually exclusive (e.g. Ameer and Othman 2012; Mackey, Mackey, and Barney 2007; Soule 2009; Trudel and Cotte 2009; Waddock and Graves 1997). Ethical and philanthropic activities have been credited with positive outcomes such as improved public relations, consumer loyalty, strengthened brand reputations, consumer willingness to pay higher prices, and employee recruitment and retention (Barkley 2007; Cotte and Trudel 2009; Marin, Ruiz and Rubio 2008; Waddock and Graves 1997). In fact, there is strong support for deeply
integrating CSR with core business strategies for maximum benefits to both corporations and society. *Profit at the Bottom of the Ladder* (Heyman and Barrera 2010), for instance, details several business cases of progressive workplace practices that are credited with driving business success. Similarly, *SuperCorp* (Kanter 2009) presents examples of leading corporations who apply their expertise to implement transformative social projects, while simultaneously contributing to central business goals. Porter and Kramer (2011) advocate this approach, which they refer to as “shared value”. They argue that placing society’s needs at the center of strategic business planning can stimulate unprecedented growth and innovation for both business and society.

**Linking Market Behaviors with Moral Ideals: Institutional Theory**

The question of how and why markets come to match moral ideals (Fourcade and Healy (2007) can be approached by applying institutional theory. "Institutionalization involves the processes by which social processes, obligations, or actualities come to take on a rulelike status in social thought and action" (Meyer and Rowan 1977:341). At the heart of these processes is legitimation, linking institutional behaviors with the normative expectations of society; these expectations are experienced as external pressures that guide behavior and become internalized as roles (Scott 1995). The preceding discussion about the profitability of CSR strongly reflects the shareholder as an external source of pressure, reinforcing the classic role of business as a profit-generator. This alone is not a satisfactory explanation for the legitimation of CSR, however, because it does not address
the motive for prioritizing social issues as a normative strategic focus over other potential strategies.

One alternative means of legitimation that has not been fully explored is pressure from civil society. The growth of CSR has been described as “a defensive organizational response to growing pressure from civil society” (Harrison 2003:127, see also Gan 2006), implicating business-targeted action as a means through which conceptions of the social obligations of business have been broadened.

A firm’s choice of whether or not to bring its behavior in line with external pressures depends on the legitimacy of the pressure groups, an important underlying process of power (Roscigno 2011). Legitimacy results from social support, which in this case may be instrumental in that complying with civil society pressures will result in financial rewards, or it may be normative in that media attention awarded to business-targeted actions lends a sense of validity to social issues to which firms feel obligated to attend (Scott 1995). In this sense, while corporations hold tremendous economic power, they are at the same time dependent on other social actors for their continued existence. They are vulnerable to lost business to the competition, loss of spending power of consumers, and stock price declines from damaged reputations. Consumers, the media,

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and activists are therefore not powerless to influence the ways in which corporations
direct their considerable resources.\(^5\)

**Civil Society and the Private Sector**

The processes through which civil society makes its interests known to powerful actors have been studied extensively in a political context. State leaders, in theory, maintain an effective democracy by representing their citizens’ needs and interests in public policies. The democratic process relies on citizens communicating their interests to politicians, most commonly via voting, the only form of political participation in which each citizen has equal influence. In other forms of political participation, leaders tend to be most responsive to those who are the loudest and most convincing in communicating their needs (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). This is most effectively accomplished through collective action, typically as part of an organization which serves the purpose of furthering the common interests of its members (Olson 1965). By combining and strategically coordinating their resources, groups of like-minded individuals achieve the necessary power to challenge the status quo (Lipsky 1968; Meyer 2004; Piven and Cloward 1978; Tarrow 1998). Such actions are described as social movements\(^6\).

\(^5\) Other stakeholders such as employees and shareholders are also influential. See King (2008b:4-5) for a discussion of stakeholder relevancy.

\(^6\) Meyer and Tarrow (1998:4) describe social movements as "collective challenges to existing arrangements of power and distribution by people with common purposes and solidarity, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities."
Traditionally social movement scholars have emphasized state-targeted action, but recent scholarship calls attention to non-state targets such as educational, religious, and economic institutions. Studies that have focused on identifying the targets of social movements have found between one third and one half of targets are non-state targets (Van Dyke, Soule, and Taylor 2004; Walker, Martin, and McCarthy 2008), suggesting a substantial portion of social movement activities are missed by focusing only on political targets. Claims, challenging groups, and repertoires of social movement action vary with the choice of institutional target (Van Dyke, Soule, and Taylor 2004; Walker, Martin, and McCarthy 2008), so broadening the literature beyond state-targeted action provides a more complete picture of the ways in which civil society challenges powerful institutions to bring about social change.

Political scientists echo the importance of recognizing businesses as alternative targets to political parties for civic action (Micheletti, Follesdal, and Stolle 2004). Business-targeted action has been attributed to a number of interrelated political and economic conditions that have evolved over the last half century (Soule 2009; Micheletti, Follesdal, and Stolle 2004; Domhoff 2006; Vogel 2005; Shamir 2008): Neoliberal activities such as the deregulation of industry and the implementation of international free trade agreements, along with a new wave of technological innovation, have encouraged a trend toward large, geographically-dispersed corporate operations which are difficult to monitor. This period was accompanied by substantial growth of corporate profits, generating concerns about potential abuse of power via mechanisms such as interlocking directorates among corporate and government elites, political campaign contributions,
and mergers and acquisitions that limit market competition and consumer choice. Net, the power of the state has declined in proportion to the power of multinational corporations, leading to "serious problems of political responsibility-taking nationally and worldwide" (Micheletti, Follesdal, and Stolle 2004:xii; see also Moon and Vogel 2008:309-310). This opens an opportunity for civil society to play a role in helping hold businesses accountable to society.⁷

Shamir links the neoliberal preference for self-regulation to the moralization of the markets, claiming “the very notion of moral duty [is grounded] within the rationality of the market” (2008:4)⁸. The market forces that influence responsible business practices include "consumer demand for responsibly made products, actual or threatened consumer boycotts, challenges to a firm's reputation by NGOs, pressure from socially responsible investors, and the values held by managers and other employees" (Vogel 2005:3). Vogel refers to these forces as forms of “civil regulation”. In other words, in the absence of state-mandated regulation, other market forces inspire private regulation. Fair trade certification, forest products certification, environmental standards, and voluntary labor standards in the apparel industry are examples of programs that have been instituted by

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⁷ Using the case of the U.S. Women’s Suffrage movements, McCammon, Campbell, Granberg, and Mowery (2001) describe mechanisms through which political and social conditions facilitate social movement success. Given my primary interest in economic powers, I subscribe to their advice to use the broader concept of “opportunity structure” to refer to the contextual factors that influence movement success, rather than using the narrower (but more common) “political opportunity structure” terminology (P.66). See also King (2008b).

⁸ See Kinderman (2012) for a thorough examination of neoliberalism and CSR in the UK.
the private sector in collaboration with civil groups (Bartley 2003, Fransen 2012, Hoffman 1997, Jaffe 2012).

Not only is there a role for civil society to play in encouraging responsible use of corporate power, but with the declining influence of the state in the private sector, targeting businesses directly may be viewed as a more efficient means of influencing social change than targeting the state (Bartley 2003; Soule 2009).9 A body of sociological scholarship on business-targeted action has emerged in the last decade.10 Notably, Soule (2009) provides a thorough historical review and analysis of the anti-corporate movement in the United States from 1960-1990. She examines the tactics, targets, and claims of anti-corporate protesters. In related work, Soule and King examine outcomes associated with collective action. They find that protest negatively impacts the stock prices of targeted firms (King and Soule 2007; see also Pruitt and Friedman 1986) and an important mechanism through which target concessions are achieved is the threat to corporate reputations (King 2008b). Similarly, Bartley and Child (2011) conclude social movements can inflict material business consequences, especially for highly visible targets.11

9 Soule (2009) notes another advantage of targeting businesses rather than states is that it helps avoid the police violence that is more likely linked to state-targeted events.

10 See King and Pearce (2010) for a comprehensive review of the research on the impact of social movements on markets.

Just as sociologists are examining the business impact of social processes, business scholars are looking to the social movement literature to help explain how organizations respond to external pressures. Hargrave and Van de Ven’s collective action model of institutional change (2006) is outlined in Appendix A. Applying this model to explore how CSR has become institutionalized as an outcome of collective action suggests civil groups\textsuperscript{12}, the news media, and the private sector represent an inter-organizational network through which conflict over the causes and treatment of social problems in the market bring about opportunities for reform. The widespread adoption of CSR policies represents an institutional innovation, as new expectations are set for what constitutes legitimate business activity and formal policies and procedures are established.

\textit{The Role of the News Media}

Gaining attention from the mass media is an important factor in a movement’s ability to affect change. Social actors who are at a relative power disadvantage can communicate their goals to their targets by involving third parties, such as the media, allowing them to help shape the public agenda (Andrews and Caren 2010, Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993, Lipsky 1968, Sobieraj 2010). Studying media discourse is therefore a

\textsuperscript{12}I use the term “civil groups” rather than the related alternatives “social movement organizations” and “non-profit organizations”. In practice, the theoretical discussion and nearly all of groups referenced in the news stories that make up my sample are both social movement organizations and non-profit organizations. There are, however some examples of collective action in my sample that exist only to address a defined and temporary problem—they are not necessarily part of any longer-term organization or social movement. To avoid dealing with these nuances, I use the more inclusive terminology.
way to learn about the issues that are raised in the public sphere in the context of the social responsibility of business.

It is important to note the role of the media as mediator in communications between collective actors and their targets. While civil groups raise issues and initiate action, the media chooses which issues and actions to highlight, how to frame their reports, who to select as the primary audience, and so on. Consequently, by using news media data, this study does not consider a complete set of civil society’s business-targeted actions and intended communications, but rather the subset of actions that are communicated through the lens of the media. Oritz et al. (2005) caution that findings from media data are an amalgamation of actual events and the media’s underlying perceptions and motives. The focus of this study, however, is the role of public discourse. The subset of actions that gain the attention of the media are of primary interest because these are the actions and communications most likely to be received and perceived as legitimate by their targets, and therefore the most likely to affect change. “When the media offer the public an item of news, they confer on it public legitimacy…[A news story] transforms an event or statement into the cultural form called ‘news’… It announces to audiences that a topic deserves public attention” (Schudson 2003:29-31). I argue then, since “most movements must reach their constituency in part through some form of public discourse” (Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993:116), media reports provide a valid glimpse into the mechanism by which civil society influences the private sector.
**Discourse and Legitimation**

Despite the recent widespread adoption of CSR policies and practices, a key concern of Friedman’s argument remains: Which social benefits should be prioritized by businesses? This is an important question to address because there is empirical evidence that there is a gap between corporate and public conceptions of CSR. More than two thirds of business leaders surveyed report using some form of CSR strategy, but more than three quarters “admitted they don’t understand their customers’ CSR expectations well” (Pohle and Hittner 2008:2). Correspondingly, one third of consumers surveyed rated CSR in the United States as 1 or 2 on a 5 point scale, with 1 indicating poor performance, compared with just one fifth of respondents reporting scores of 4 or 5, with 5 indicating excellent performance (Fleishman-Hillard and the National Consumers League 2007). Zollo et al. (2007) found that corporate managers tend to take a more narrow, internally-focused approach to what constitutes CSR than do pressure groups, customers, and other stakeholders who not only expect corporations to avoid negatively impacting society but also to contribute positively and proactively to the well-being of others.

I propose a functionalist explanation for the disparity between corporate and public visions of CSR. Durkheim ([1893] 1984) noted the specialization that characterizes modern capitalist societies can have an anomic effect. In recent decades markets have become larger in scale and business organizations have become more
Global corporations now exist in a matrix of norms, organizational interests, and institutional structures that they cannot ignore” (Davis, Whitman and Zald 2006:36). An expected consequence is the moral isolation of business leaders from the public. Determining the best way for a corporation to benefit society beyond its economic contribution is challenging. Vogel (2005) highlights the ambiguity of CSR with an insightful example: Is Walmart’s focus on efficiency a socially responsible strategy because it provides consumers with a supply of inexpensive goods, or is it socially irresponsible for under-compensating its employees? Collective action and the discourse it generates may serve the function of communicating the public perspective on these and other social issues to help clarify the expected responsibilities of business.14

A useful framework for addressing Friedman’s question of which social issues should be prioritized by businesses is Habermas’ discourse ethics ([1983]1997:300). Norms are expressed in communications, so discourse provides a process through which potential norms are introduced and negotiated. Civil society introduces new expectations about the social responsibility of business via contentious action that the media then communicates to the public and to business leaders. The discourse surrounding these collective acts brings about a common understanding of what CSR means. This is the mechanism through which new conceptualizations of CSR have taken hold and are

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13 See Davis, Whitman, and Zald (2006) and Davis (2011) for a description of changes in corporate structures and implications for responsibility.

14 Ingram, Yue, and Rao (2010) demonstrate the role of protest as a signal in their study of Wal-Mart protests. From the public reaction to the filing of new store proposals, Wal-Mart is able to gauge the likelihood of a new store succeeding in a given community.
becoming institutionalized in the form of policies, strategic partnerships, and the integration of social innovation with profit-driven business strategies. By examining the discourse surrounding contentious issues targeted toward businesses, social topics that might constitute valid business responsibilities can be identified, and we can learn about the processes through which civil society and the private sector approach consensus on the social responsibilities of business.

**Practical Relevance of Negotiating Norms**

Zollo et al. (2007:45) analyzed the relationship between pressure from external stakeholders and alignment of CSR expectations, with mixed results. On one hand, greater pressure from external stakeholders can stimulate managers to engage with stakeholders, resulting in greater alignment of expectations. Alternatively, greater pressure from external stakeholders may be the *result* of poor alignment. The authors conclude this relationship is worth further investigation. My analysis elaborates on Zollo et al.’s cross-sectional study by incorporating the element of time. I model these relationships as a process whereby business-targeted collective action is stimulated by the failure of businesses to effectively meet expected social responsibilities, and in response businesses adjust their conceptualizations of CSR to be more consistent with the demands of civil groups. New, more collaborative interactions between firms and civil groups reduce public reports of contentious, business-targeted action.
The Strategic Actions of Civil Society and Private Sector Organizations

If CSR is to develop from solid ground, it is necessary to foster its future development through embedding societal issues and expectations raised by legitimate stakeholders in the day-to-day strategies, policies, and operations of the organization. (Nijhof, de Bruijn, and Honders 2008:153)

The preceding discussion draws from two broad areas of scholarship: institutions and social movements. Leading scholars in these areas have highlighted rich opportunities for building on common ground they share (e.g. Davis et al. 2005, Zald 2008). Particularly relevant to this study is collective strategic action, “the efforts of collective actors to vie for strategic advantage in and through interaction with other groups” (Fligstein and McAdam 2011:2), a central interest for both groups of scholars.

Trends in collective action in developed societies have shown signs that movements themselves have become institutionalized, featuring routinized behaviors, more widespread participation, and less disruptive tactics (McCarthy and McPhail 1998; Meyer and Tarrow 1998; Soule and Earl 2005). Authorities have come to expect dissent and procedures have been put in place to manage protest gatherings. When protests are planned in advance, through a formal process of applying for and receiving permits to protest, they are less likely to be contested by the police and less likely to be newsworthy. Protesters therefore seek other strategies. One strategy is to form collaborative partnerships with their targets. An obvious advantage of these arrangements is that they allow civil groups direct access to their business targets, bypassing the filter of the media and maintaining greater control over their message.

Just as contentious action helps illuminate social issues to the private sector, partnering with civil groups can help solve the problem of ambiguous social expectations.
On-going dialogue with external parties provides guidance to companies as to “how far they need to stretch their responsibilities, what issues to take up, how to give meaning to those issues, and how to successfully combine economic, social, and environmental strategies” (Nijhof, de Bruijn, and Honders 2008:153). By working collaboratively toward commonly-held societal goals, CSR policies are more likely to translate to meaningful social benefits (Zollo et al. 2007).

The result is that civil groups and firms can help each other achieve their goals more effectively than if they were to operate independently. In the process, traditional divisions between sectors become blurred; the private sector takes on social goals that were previously the domain of civil society, and civil groups take on more business-like structures and practices (Laasonen, Fougère, and Kourula 2012). These collaborative arrangements reflect an overall trend toward the blurring of public and private interests in cross-sector interactions (Walker 2009).

**Summary and Research Objectives**

There are three key components to the analysis planned for this study. The first is descriptive, with a focus on exploring long term patterns in the nature and variety of issues upon which business-targeted collective action centers. The second component of the analysis uses multivariate statistical techniques to explain relationships between civil groups, their business targets, their actions, and the media context in which these actions are reported as CSR institutionalization processes. The final component is a theoretically-
based discussion of the role of civil society-private sector partnerships in legitimizing CSR for the public.

The primary goal of this research is to generate conclusions about what civil society expects of corporate social responsibilities, and the social processes that have led these expectations to become integrated with mainstream business policies. The nature of the dataset supports numerous analytical opportunities beyond the immediate objectives of this dissertation. Targeted studies in specific areas such as human rights, public health, and workforce well-being are possible, as are comparative or targeted studies of specific industries, analyses of geographic variation in reported actions and issues, and detailed investigations of media reporting effects.
CHAPTER 2: BUSINESS-TARGETED DISCOURSE

The first objective of this dissertation is to describe the scope and nature of the public discourse regarding the social responsibilities of business. To explore this first objective, I use newspaper reports of business-targeted collective action published over the thirty year period that captures the institutionalization of CSR. This provides a snapshot of the pressures faced by the private sector: the social issues they have been asked to address, the framing of these communications\textsuperscript{15}, and the over-time pattern of these media communications.

Studying the claims and the way in which they are presented lets both the public and business leaders know the range of social issues that may be considered the responsibility of business. The social movement literature and business literature identify the conditions under which social movements can be successful in influencing business policy and the conditions under which socially responsible business policies may result in successful business outcomes, but they overlook the specifics of which social issues are

\textsuperscript{15} Framing processes are “conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action” (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996:6).
socially-relevant. If businesses are not undertaking socially-relevant responsibilities, both the social and business impacts are likely to be limited.

**Newspaper Data**

Chapter one established the role of the media in legitimation processes between civil society and the more powerful private sector. Using news reports of business-targeted action offers a new perspective of corporate social responsibility. Studying media reports of business-targeted collective action is a way to identify socially meaningful issues highlighted by civil society actors as desired business priorities. Further, using news media data supports the study of processes that shape socially responsible corporate behavior (Earl et al. 2004; King 2008b; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2008).

**Sample**

The dataset for this dissertation spans thirty years (1980 to 2010) and thirteen major American daily newspapers. I drew the data sample from the Lexis Nexis Academic database, taking as broad an approach to data selection as was manageable, with an attempt to minimize restrictions on definitions of business-targeted actions. To support analyses of long-term patterns, I included all major daily U.S. newspapers with Lexis Nexis holdings spanning three decades (i.e. newspapers with records from pre-1990 to 2010). These criteria returned thirteen sources (Appendix B). Within this set of thirteen newspapers, I searched for articles using terms informed by the literature (Gabriel and Lang 2006, Manheim 2004, Soule 2009), with the intent of capturing any
form of collective action targeting for-profit commercial enterprises (see Appendix C for detailed data collection criteria). The search returned 4,252 articles, each of which I then manually reviewed to identify those articles that met the criteria for inclusion in the study. I identified a final sample of 803 relevant articles, read each in detail and coded the content with the help of three undergraduate research assistants (all seniors) between January and June, 2011.

**Coding**

From each article we coded: characteristics about the article and its news source, characteristics about the group carrying out business-targeted action, descriptions of the actions themselves, characteristics about the business targets, and descriptions of the business outcomes associated with the collective action (see Appendix D for the coding sheet). I checked inter-coder reliability between the three undergraduate assistants using a sample of 57 articles (7.1 percent). Agreement ranged from 98.7 percent (newspaper identification) to 39.7 percent (for the coding of who was quoted in the articles). The headline tone was coded for all articles by all three coders. Where there was 66 percent agreement, I resolved inconsistencies by choosing the code assigned by the two coders.

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16 Although I structured the search commands to capture a full range of actions and organizations, the resulting sample is nevertheless a function of my choice of search terms and thus underrepresents the complete universe of business-targeted news reports. References to specific campaigns and organizations (e.g. searching for the Occupy movement, or Greenpeace) would capture a more complete picture of the universe of business-targeted reports but would introduce a new set of biases and would be logistically impractical.

17 At a rate of about 40 articles per hour, for a total of about 110 hours.
who were in agreement. Where there was disagreement among all three coders, I chose which code to assign. I personally coded 21.7 percent of the articles as well as the claims for all 803 articles.

I cleaned the coded data, resolving inconsistencies such as articles that were coded as being on the front page but not in the front section of the newspaper. I collapsed some categories that were, in hindsight, not definitively separate. For instance, we initially coded protests and demonstrations separately. Reviewing the stories revealed there is not a practical difference between the two actions as reported in the news and in many cases both terms appeared together, so I recoded demonstrations as protests.

The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) is not included in the Lexis Nexis Academic database but it is a probable source of news reporting on this subject. I attempted to replicate the Lexis Nexis data collection process with the WSJ database and found only eight articles. Variations on the search yielded widely fluctuating results, ranging into the thousands of articles. Because the Lexis Nexis search yielded an adequate sample of articles without it, I chose not to continue to pursue a Wall Street Journal article search for this project. 18

18 The absence of the WSJ is a symptom of one of the key limitations of the Lexis Nexis database. While Lexis Nexis is widely-used and very well populated, its contents are incomplete and unstable, varying with the terms of media company licensing agreements. Other major news sources that are either absent or incomplete include the Los Angeles Times and the Chicago Tribune, for example. Of note, this is not unique to Lexis Nexis; “Even the most ‘comprehensive’ media databases do not [provide complete, consistent coverage of] all major newspapers” (Oritz et al. 2005:403).
A useful feature of Lexis Nexis is its Discover America’s Story collection of local, small town news publications. In my initial searches I included this source and received only eight results, none of which met my criteria of collective actors targeting private, for-profit groups. Instead, this exercise revealed that these cases of supportive action tend to originate with local business associations as opposed to civil groups. For instance, a report from Buda, Texas describes the efforts of a local citizen to revitalize the local farmer’s market:

Denton went down to city hall and collected a thick stack of documents, but realizing the size of the task, she turned to Buda Drugstore owner Tammy Gray and the Buda Downtown Merchant’s group for help…Buda Tourism Director Alisha Burrow is working with the merchants to organize the new market. “Ultimately, I think that having the farmers market here in Buda would promote that ‘buy local’ concept,” Burrow said. “It would really benefit the community all the way around.” (Hays Free Press, July 28, 2010)

This finding supports the social movement literature that says newspapers report on local events, and activists are more likely to use their limited resources to gain the attention of larger-scale media organizations in major metropolitan areas than smaller papers (Andrews and Caren 2010).

My approach is different from most social movement studies in that it specifically focuses on business rather than state targets19, I accept any form of collective action rather than specifying contentious action, and the dataset encompasses both a long term perspective and geographic variety. This broad approach to data collection helps

19 Soule 2009 and Walker, Martin, and McCarthy 2008 are important exceptions.
overcome issues of selection bias, and also offers the advantage of supporting comparative and over-time analyses (Oliver and Maney 2000).

While this does not claim to fully represent all coverage of business-targeted collective action, my approach is a significant attempt to address concerns associated with the common tendency to base such media analyses on a single news source (Oritz et al 2005). News media analyses are generally vulnerable to selection bias because only a subset of events appears in the media. Activities that involve a large number of participants, large organizations, contentious issues and interactions between opposing groups, and events that are organized by local or particularly prominent actors, for instance, are more likely to receive media attention (Andrews and Caren 2010; Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993; Oliver and Maney 2000; Oritz et al. 2005).

Because my goal is to understand public influences on corporations, I contend news media analysis will provide valid indicators of the public pressures that shape CSR because actions that receive attention in major newspapers are in a greater position to influence the public and corporations than are those that operate at a more grassroots level. Gan (2006) takes a similar approach, operationalizing public scrutiny as a predictor of corporate giving using the amount of coverage a company receives in major

\[20\] This issue is the most concerning when using newspaper data as a census of events and actions. Ortiz et al. (2005:412) acknowledge that when media discourse is the primary focus of the study, as it is in this case, “many of the concerns related to selection bias are eliminated or, at least, markedly reduced.”

\[21\] For a thorough discussion of bias in newspaper data see Smith et al. 2001 and Ortiz et al. 2005.

31
newspapers. She finds the number of news mentions a company receives has a significant positive effect on donation amounts, establishing a precedent for my hypothesis that corporations will respond to public pressure with CSR activity.

Nevertheless, firms do face other sources of public pressure that are not accounted for in this study. News of business-targeted collective action is also publicized in television broadcasts, trade journals, popular magazines, blogs and other social media. Documentary films with mass appeal—including The Corporation, Super Size Me, Enron: The Smartest Guys In the Room, Food Inc., Inside Job, The Shock Doctrine, Walmart: The High Cost of Low Price—could pressure the private sector, as well as collective action that does not involve the media. It is possible that these contribute to the CSR patterns documented here. If this is the case, then my analyses could overstate the significance of these news stories. A later, separate study dedicated to disentangling the relative influence of each of these media types could be enlightening, and would be possible to carry out using data from Lexis Nexis. In the meantime, coverage in a variety of major newspapers across the U.S. provides a reasonable indication of the power of public discourse to influence private sector policy.

An aspect of news media analysis that makes it well-suited to studying CSR time trends is that it captures reports of events and behaviors, as well as publicly-stated attitudes. In contrast, CSR scholars commonly use survey data to measure changes in attitudes about CSR. Self-reported ratings of CSR importance among business leaders and consumers are vulnerable to social desirability bias (i.e. most people say they support social responsibility), as well as non-response bias (those who are place a greater priority
on CSR are more likely to participate in a survey on this topic). As a result, survey data probably leaves an overly-positive impression of the priority business leaders and consumers place on CSR, and changes over time that are measured in this way could be muted by an inflated starting point. The dataset I have created for this dissertation brings a new dimension to the study of CSR by measuring both the societal issues being highlighted to corporations and the interactions between various parties. Furthermore, news data supports analyses of over-time patterns, is not cost prohibitive, and uses publicly available data which facilitates empirical replication.

**Descriptive Results**

The articles in my sample average 26 news articles per year, ranging from only 1 article per year for each of 1980, 1982, and 1983 to 56 articles in 2000. The average article length is 850 words. The majority of articles (90 percent) are 1500 words or less.

The absolute number of articles reporting business-targeted action increases over time, peaking in 2000 (Figure 1). The communications literature provides insight into the relevance of this pattern. By reporting business-targeted claims, the media prime the public to judge businesses according to their performance on matters of social responsibility. It makes corporate social responsibility salient to both the public and to the private sector (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007).

As the business-targeted discourse increases over time, so does the variety of claims made (Figure 2). With more articles, a greater variety of issues are brought to the public’s attention as potential ways in which the private sector could or should be contributing to
society. It is interesting to note that the rise in reported action corresponds with dramatic growth in the non-profit sector over the same time period. The number of non-profit organizations more than doubled between 1975 and 1995 (Meckstroth and Arnsberger 1998), increasing the population of organized civil groups. This growth represents a stronger civil society presence with the capacity to specialize in a greater number and variety of issues.

Figure 1. Business-Targeted Collective Action Stories (Counts Per Year, 3-Yr Moving Average)
These over time patterns should be interpreted cautiously. What is being measured is the discourse on this topic: What are business leaders and the public reading about the social role of business? The prevalence of collective action is only implied. This is an important point to make because the findings described here do not reflect the full range of collective action that has taken place over the last thirty years. Media reports are subject to bias, with coverage varying according to issue, news cycles, location, competition from other news stories, and a host of other factors. Further, selection issues may vary over time making it impossible to reliably predict the direction and extent to which these biases distort reality (Oliver and Maney 2000).

![Graph showing number of business-targeted collective action articles and types of claims per year.](image)

Figure 2. Number of Business-Targeted Collective Action Articles and Types of Claims Per Year
The Framing of Business-Targeted Collective Action

Table 1 shows the presentation of business-targeted action is generally well-balanced. Although the tone of the discourse favors civil society over business, there is not an overwhelming anti-business bias. Three quarters of the headlines are coded as neutral, meaning the language used does not overtly favor either side. Business representatives are quoted in 54.9 percent of articles compared with 60.9 percent of articles that quote representatives from civil society organizations. There is no significant difference in headline tone between front page articles and articles that appear elsewhere in the paper, however, headlines of articles that appear in business sections are significantly more pro-business than headlines of articles that appear in other sections (mean 1.996 vs. 2.076, p= 0.015).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Front Page</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Section</td>
<td>33.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headline Tone</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-Business (1)</td>
<td>9.43</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral (2)</td>
<td>76.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-Civil Society(3)</td>
<td>14.47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of perspectives</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>13.82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Rep.</td>
<td>54.91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Society Org. Rep.</td>
<td>60.85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Rep.</td>
<td>8.53</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>18.73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Framing Business-Targeted Collective Action (N=774 articles)

The neutral framing of these actions may be rooted in the goals of the news media. Smith et al. (2001) point out that not only are the goals of the target and
movement important to consider, but also the goals of the media through which the
protest groups communicate. Newspapers are themselves members of the private sector
who would want to maintain positive relations with their sponsors, business partners, and
corporate affiliates. Because of the interdependence between the news media and
economic institutions, media coverage of business-targeted actions carries the potential to
undermine the impact of civil groups (Oliver & Maney 2000). Nevertheless, one third of
the articles have been placed in business/financial sections of the newspaper, legitimizing
the issues they raise and supporting efforts of civil groups to reach their targets. The
media thus plays an important role in fostering a collaborative environment for
interactions between civil society and the private sector.

The Claims

There is a wide range of social problems addressed in the articles, signaling an
obvious link between moral and economic behaviors. I coded 36 categories of claims, including articles about anti-fur campaigns, unlabeled genetically-modified ingredients in
food products, the misrepresentation and underrepresentation of minorities in television
and film, exploitation of farm workers, misleading claims about the developmental
benefits of watching Baby Einstein videos, opposing reactions to sexual orientation in
workplace policies, and so on. This finding that business-targeted collective action news
stories encompass a variety of issues is consistent with other studies (e.g. King

22 Note, claims may be coded in multiple categories. For example, an article about the
exploitation of immigrant farm workers would be coded as 1 for each of the following categories
of claims: human rights (racial/ethnic), labor (compensation), and exploitation.
The overwhelming variety of (sometimes contradictory) messages received highlights the challenge that companies face in trying to fulfill their social obligations (Zollo et al. 2007).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Rights</td>
<td>20.03</td>
<td>Animal Welfare</td>
<td>9.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>Animal Testing</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic and Racial</td>
<td>10.85</td>
<td>Animal Cruelty</td>
<td>5.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Illness</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>Fur Industry</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Disabilities</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>Animal welfare, misc.</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBT</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>Media Representations</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.94</td>
<td>Political Issues</td>
<td>7.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>19.12</td>
<td>Anti-Nuclear</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Safety</td>
<td>17.44</td>
<td>Peace</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Technology</td>
<td>6.33</td>
<td>Political</td>
<td>4.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol/Tobacco</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>Pricing</td>
<td>6.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dangerous Products</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>Exploitation</td>
<td>5.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health, misc.</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>Child Welfare</td>
<td>5.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>13.44</td>
<td>Traditional Values</td>
<td>4.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Conditions</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>Explicit Sex</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace Discrimination</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>Pro-Life</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
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<td>3.75</td>
<td>Traditional, misc.</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>3.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Rules and Contracts</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Misc. Claims</td>
<td>12.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Claims (N=774 articles)

There are, however, some consistent themes that emerge from the discourse. Human rights (especially with regard to ethnic and racial minorities and LGBT issues), the environment, human health and safety, and labor emerge as predominant themes in business-targeted news reported over the last thirty years. These themes are generally consistent with issues highlighted by other sources. The Better World Shopping Guide (Jones 2010) draws upon five issues to guide its responsibility ratings of producers and
retailers: Human Rights (this incorporates what I have coded as labor and health), Environment, Animal Protection, Community Involvement, and Social Justice (incorporates what I have coded as exploitation, pricing issues, labor, and some elements of human rights). Similarly, findings from a 2006 survey show American consumers tend to equate corporate social responsibility with commitment to communities, employees, and the environment (Fleishman-Hillard & National Consumers League 2007). One apparent discrepancy between my findings and others is the relatively low representation of community issues in my dataset. I expect this may be an artifact of the contentious nature of actions reported in the news. Community issues may be more likely to arise in a collaborative context; for example, Target has donated five percent of its income to local communities since 1946 (Target.com 2012). Further, the discrepancy may also be affected by inconsistent labeling. Articles I categorized as dealing with communities relate very directly to the development or characteristics of communities in question (e.g. A Washington Post article (July 26, 1990) reports a rally “sponsored by the North Dupont Community Coalition to protest a plan by Riggs National Bank to build a 10-story building in the 1500 block of Connecticut Avenue NW.”, whereas others may label an array of actions under the umbrella term of community (e.g. Target.com cites donations to education under the heading of Community Giving).

The variety of claims in the discourse may be viewed as an example of the confusion managers face in navigating the moral direction of their business, but it also represents an opportunity. The business literature advocates integrating CSR efforts with core strategies (e.g. Porter and Kramer 2011; Waddock, Bodwell, and Graves 1997). This
research demonstrates the flexibility that exists for businesses to be socially responsible in a way that is both consistent with their business goals and also beneficial to society. Patagonia is a case in point. As a company that sells outdoor clothing and gear, its recognition as a leader in environmental responsibility (Jones 2010) is a natural connection. Alternatively, emphasizing their contribution to racial and ethnic diversity would be less credible and a more complicated approach to explain.

In addition, many of the claims remain relatively stable over time. This is also good news for companies wishing to invest significant resources in CSR programs. While there is a wide range of responsible business expectations, patterns of claims over time do not wildly fluctuate; there are stable common themes upon which to build long-term strategies.

*Human Rights*

Twenty percent of the articles in my sample report claims that I have categorized as relating to human rights (Table 2). About half of these are claims about ethnic and racial minorities. For instance, according to the Washington Post (December 4, 1986), antiapartheid groups such as the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility pressured American companies to withdraw business operations in South Africa using boycotts, shareholder resolutions, and other protest activities. The article states, “Of the 310 U.S. companies doing business in South Africa in January 1985, 69 have sold their operations or announced plans to do so. Others -- including such major players as Honeywell Inc. and Xerox Corp. -- are expected to follow suit by the end of the year.”
In a second example, the Miami Herald (September 16, 1982) reports that Operation PUSH (People United to Save Humanity) spearheaded a boycott of Anheuser-Busch products by retailers associated with the black community to highlight the company’s lack of economic support for the black community as follows:

"Blacks are 15 per cent of Anheuser-Busch's total market and 22 per cent in the top 50 markets where nearly 70 per cent of black people live. Black people spend, at least a minimum $660 million annually on Anheuser-Busch products. Thus we clearly constitute three times their margin of profit." But the fact sheet said only one of the company's 950 wholesale distributors is black, and that of the 38 directors and officers in the parent company -- and 86 directors, if all subsidiaries are included -- only two are black.
While human rights claims appear in a fifth of the articles in my sample, they decline as a proportion of reports over time (Figure 3). I do not believe this reflects that human rights are valued less now than they were thirty years ago. Instead, I suspect the focus of civil groups has shifted to human rights on a global scale, with much of the action taking place internationally. Because I limited my sample to articles reporting domestic action, I have not captured reports of offshore business-targeted action. It is also possible that the declining focus on human rights in the discourse signals the winding down of contention as a common understanding of the private sector’s role in supporting human rights is reached.

![Figure 4. Proportion of Articles Reporting Environmental Claims (3-Yr moving average)](image)

The Environment

Environmental claims constitute about another fifth of the reports in my sample (Table 2), increasing over time. The New York Times (November 4, 1990) reports an
example of the highly charged action taken by the Earth First! environmental group during their Redwood Summer campaign. The group staged a series of illegal protests against Pacific Lumber Company logging of old growth redwood forests in Northern California, spiking trees to interfere with logging equipment and taking other radical steps:

A protester named Dakotah Schrempp places his fingers inches from where the ax blade strikes. "Let me fall the tree," the logger, 60-year-old Doug Coleman, says in exasperation. But then Coleman sets down his ax. He knows he can't cut down a tree that's surrounded by human bodies. He tries to reason. "When you guys leave, I'm gonna cut this tree anyway," he says, "so why not leave now so I can do my job?"

Less dramatic, but more typical, is the report of a boycott of Exxon in response to the Alaska oil spill. The Miami Herald reports (May 2, 1989) that the consumer group Citizen Action asked customers to return their Exxon credit cards to the company. Both cases convey the message that America’s natural resources are not to be blindly exploited for commercial gain. After a fairly steady period of reporting on action involving environmental claims through the mid-1990s to 2000s, they became more prominent in the last five years. Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the successful 2006 release and publicity surrounding Al Gore’s global warming documentary—An Inconvenient Truth, and then the disastrous 2010 BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico represent the high-profile environmental issues surrounding this later time period.
**Human Health and Safety**

Seventeen percent of the databased articles contain claims related to health and safety. About one-third of those report concerns about technology and product innovations such as irradiated and genetically modified foods. For instance, the New York Times (May 21, 1997) reported that consumer advocates prompted the retailer Whole Foods to gather information from its suppliers about which products contain genetically modified ingredients. The goal of their campaign was to bring about mandatory labeling of genetically engineered ingredients, enabling informed consumer choices. In another example, the San Francisco Chronicle (June 20, 2003) reported that McDonald’s implemented a new policy to direct its meat suppliers to phase out the routine use of antibiotics animal feed in response to pressures to from consumer groups concerned about antibiotic resistance.

![Figure 5. Proportion of Articles Reporting Health and Safety Claims (3-Yr moving average)]
**Labor Issues**

Thirteen percent of all articles in my sample report labor-related claims, a mix of work condition and compensation grievances and discriminatory practices. A Washington Post story (November 26, 1997), for example, highlights various actions against employers to provide workers with facilities and freedom to use the restroom, including the case of a production worker who was denied a request to go home when she came down with an upset stomach and consequently soiled herself on the job. An executive spokesperson for the company denied that workers are prevented from taking restroom breaks.

![Figure 6. Proportion of Articles Reporting Labor Claims (3-Yr moving average)](image_url)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>News Sources</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas Democrat-Gazette</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Science Monitor</td>
<td>4.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami Herald</td>
<td>8.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York Times</td>
<td>15.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange County Register</td>
<td>2.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Oregonian</td>
<td>9.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Diego Union-Tribune</td>
<td>10.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco Chronicle</td>
<td>8.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis Post-Dispatch</td>
<td>7.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Petersburg Times</td>
<td>4.78</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Times-Picayune</td>
<td>4.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>4.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington Post</td>
<td>17.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3. News Sources (Percent of Articles, N=774)**

**News Sources**

Table 3 shows that the New York Times (NYT) and the Washington Post account for about one-third of the articles in the sample (15.9 and 17.7 percent, respectively). This is methodologically interesting because it is not uncommon for social movement researchers to use the NYT or the Washington Post as a single data source. With limited resources, focusing on these two newspapers is an efficient way to gather data.

Figure 7 compares the number of news stories per year from the New York Times and Washington Post to counts from the other eleven newspapers. The pattern is generally consistent with patterns found from other news sources, suggesting similar conclusions might have resulted without the additional eleven news sources. This finding supports other analyses of the value of supplementing the NYT and Washington Post with other news sources (see Myers and Caniglia 2004 for a detailed discussion of this topic). Note, however, the trend lines indicate a steeper rise over time for other
newspapers than for the NYT and Washington Post, suggesting conclusions about change over time would have been diluted with a study based on NYT/WP data alone.

![Figure 7. Number of Articles Per Year, by Newspaper](image)

To further investigate the value added by including news sources beyond the NYT and Washington Post, I compared mean values of key descriptive variables (Table 4). In most cases article reporting is consistent between the NYT/Washington Post and other newspapers, with a few exceptions. First, the headlines from the NYT/Washington Post are more biased in favor of civil groups than other sources. Interestingly, there is a counter-trend: articles in the NYT/Washington Post are more likely than articles from other sources to quote business representatives. Actions involving environmental claims and community development claims are more likely to be reported in other news sources, highlighting the need for businesses to show sensitivity to their
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>N (articles)</th>
<th>NYT/WP</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>P&lt;0.05 (two-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Front Page</td>
<td>792</td>
<td>.094</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>(.293) (.285)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business Section</td>
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<td>.362</td>
<td>.322</td>
<td>(.482) (.468)</td>
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<td>2.015</td>
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<td>1.615</td>
<td>1.527</td>
<td>(.060) (.024)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Quote</td>
<td>804</td>
<td>.615</td>
<td>.516</td>
<td>* (.487) (.500)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Society Org. Quote</td>
<td>804</td>
<td>.645</td>
<td>.581</td>
<td>(.479) (.494)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contentious Action Reports</td>
<td>796</td>
<td>.947</td>
<td>.966</td>
<td>(.225) (.181)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Rights Claims</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>.211</td>
<td>.192</td>
<td>(.409) (.394)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Claims</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>.143</td>
<td>.213</td>
<td>* (.351) (.410)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Safety Claims</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>.196</td>
<td>.164</td>
<td>(.398) (.371)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor Claims</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>.147</td>
<td>.127</td>
<td>(.355) (.333)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Welfare Claims</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>.068</td>
<td>.108</td>
<td>(.252) (.311)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Representations</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>.087</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>(.282) (.263)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Issues</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>.064</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>(.245) (.263)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pricing</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>(.265) (.234)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploitation</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>.068</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>(.252) (.211)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Welfare</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>.091</td>
<td>.030</td>
<td>* (.288) (.170)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>* (.232) (.154)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Values</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td>(.224) (.207)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules and Contracts</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>(.106) (.148)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4. Comparison of NYT/WP to Other News Sources**
impact on local conditions such as logging of old-growth forests in Oregon and the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Finally, the NYT and Washington Post are much more likely to report on issues regarding the welfare of children than are other sources. It may be that groups making claims related to children are not only targeting firms, but are also hoping to gain the attention of legislators. Focusing their action in proximity to the federal government would result in overrepresentation in the East coast newspapers.

With increasing electronic access to news sources of all forms, we can learn a lot by looking not only at a range of newspapers, but by also considering other news forms and geographic locations. In the following chapter I revisit the value of sourcing data from multiple newspapers by comparing multivariate analyses of articles from the NYT and Washington Post to the full sample of thirteen newspapers.

**Actions**

Although I constructed my article search to permit a wide range of collective actions, the results are dominated by protest-related activity. Nearly all of the articles are reports of contentious action, with less than five percent (3.63 percent) reporting collaborative action. For example, the San Francisco Chronicle (September 20, 2006) describes the Human Rights Campaign ratings of how corporations treat gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender employees. The tone of the article is very positive, with a list of 25 companies that scored a perfect 100 percent. In another example, the Orange County Alliance for Survival, a group of peace activists, held a seminar to discuss economic alternatives for the defense industry. “Industries that research space-based projects easily can be converted to other technologies that can make handsome profits while reducing
military projects, said Carol Rosin, founder of the Institute for Security and Cooperation in Outer Space. Instead, she urged them to meet with military officials and industrial executives to promote peaceful industrial proposals, such as space stations and satellite technology, which should substitute for military proposals such as the Strategic Defense Initiative.” (The Orange County Register, May 1, 1988). Examples of supportive action reported in major newspapers are few and far between.

Journalists’ preference for violent or contentious events is well documented (e.g. Oliver and Maney 2000). While it is true that contentious tactics tend to be successful (Gamson 1990), it is also true that contentious action is more likely to be judged to be newsworthy by journalists (see Oliver and Maney 2000 for discussion; also Sobieraj 2010). It is therefore impossible to determine with certainty the extent to which this finding is an artifact of journalism conventions versus a true reflection of activist tactics.

**Summary**

In sum, news coverage of business-targeted action has risen since 1980, but has been declining since 2000. There is a wide variety of claims made, the patterns by claim show relative stability over time. Almost all coverage is of contentious action, but the tone of the stories is balanced. This and the fact that the articles tend to appear in the business section of newspapers have likely facilitated the legitimation of CSR to the private sector.
CHAPTER 3: NEGOTIATING THE RESPONSIBILITY OF BUSINESS

The second objective of this dissertation is to examine the processes through which civil society and the private sector negotiate the social responsibility of business. To explain the over-time pattern of business-targeted collective action reports, I statistically model relationships between news reports, annual corporate profits, and reporting of social responsibility policies, controlling for socioeconomic conditions (Figure 8). I assess these relationships in three phases, following institutionalization processes. Phase 1 represents the response of civil society and the media to the economic environment, Phase 2 examines the response of the private sector to public discourse about the social responsibility of business, and Phase 3 addresses the response of civil society and the media to the private sector’s implementation of CSR policies.

Figure 8. Conceptual Model
Analytic Strategy

I model the relationships involved in the institutionalization of CSR using pooled time series (panel) modeling, with the dataset structured as newspaper-years. I use negative binomial regression in all of the multivariate models because in each case the dependent variable consists of over-dispersed count data. All independent variables are lagged by one year.

Applying fixed effects in all models allow me to estimate the effects of changes in corporate power and CSR policy over time on the news about business-targeted collective action (Halaby 2003). Fixed effects control for omitted newspaper characteristics that differ between sources but that don’t vary over time, such as age of the newspaper, political ideology of newspaper, and geographic location of the newspaper company headquarters.

Corporate Power

Because greater corporate power represents resources with great potential to both help solve social problems and further the self-interests of the private sector at the expense of the public good, I hypothesize:

\[ H1: \text{Corporate power, operationalized as annual corporate profits and public opinion about the threat of big business to society, will be positively associated with news reporting of business-targeted collective action.} \]

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I operationalize corporate power as before tax profits (in billions of dollars, with inventory valuation and capital consumption adjustments applied, and seasonally adjusted at annual rates) earned globally by companies with headquarters in the United States. \(^{25}\) Galbraith (1956:26) cites corporate size as an indicator of power because “with size goes the ultimate responsibility for the decisions affecting the largest number of customers,

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\(^{25}\) The data are sourced from Table 1.12, p.210 of the Survey of Current Business- GDP and Corporate Profits, from the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Bureau of Economic Analysis.
over investment policies which work the greatest change in the income, livelihood or landscape of the community.” Figure 9 illustrates the rise in profits over time which underlies much of the recent anti-corporate sentiment popularized in high-profile collective acts such as the 1999 World Trade Organization protests in Seattle and the Occupy Wall Street movement of 2011 (Soule 2009). 26

An additional measure that has been linked to anti-corporate sentiment (e.g. Soule 2009) and that is a conceptually appropriate indicator of corporate power is market concentration. This is commonly operationalized as the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI), calculated using market share data. Unfortunately there were practical limitations to using this measure as an indicator in my models. First, market concentration is calculated for specific industries, but not for the market as a whole. If I were to overlook this first point and simply measure a couple of key sectors such as manufacturing and banking and financial services, it would be difficult to track long term trends because the data are only reported in four-year increments, they are not available before 1992, and the industry coding system changed from SIC to NAICS between 1987 and 1992. I concluded the effort that would be involved in compiling a reasonable-quality measure of market concentration was not practical.

26 Inventory valuation and capital consumption adjustments account for comparisons to current dollar values. In personal communication (E-mail) with Martin Simmons, a representative from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, I was advised not to conduct additional time adjustments for current dollar values.
**Threat of Big Business**

To supplement corporate profits as an indicator of power, I also consider public perceptions of corporations using Gallup poll responses to the question, “In your opinion, which of the following will be the biggest threat to the country in the future—big business, big labor, or big government? Data are publicly available for eighteen of the thirty years in my dataset. Of respondents who did not answer “no opinion”, I calculated the percent of respondents who chose “big business”, and then interpolated data for missing years.

**Civil Society Business-Targeted Discourse**

I use annual news story counts from my created database (see Chapter 2) to indicate the degree of public discourse generated by civil groups via the media. This is, in a sense, an indirect measure of civil society power because it represents a source of external pressure directing new behavior from the private sector.

**Institutionalization of CSR**

Global standards and codes of conduct are recognized as evidence of broad-based expectations of responsible behavior, thus the existence of CSR reports and well-populated global reporting frameworks implies the private sector acknowledges its accountability to “more than the bottom line highlighted in traditional annual financial reports” (Kreps and Monin 2011:101; Waddock, Bodwell and Graves 2002).

27 gallup.com/poll/5248/Big-Business.aspx
I therefore operationalize the institutionalization of CSR using annual counts of CSR participants populating the Global Reporting Index (GRI) database (Figure 10). Founded in 1997, the GRI is a non-profit organization that provides guidance and tools to companies with the aim of promoting economic, environmental and social sustainability (globalreporting.org 2012). The GRI database is essentially a publicly-accessible spreadsheet populated with details of corporate responsibility policies from companies around the world. Reporting is voluntary. Figure 9 shows that the number of firms participating has grown from just ten in 1999 to 1,865 in 2010.28

The GRI is not the only framework for documenting CSR activity, but it is widely recognized as “the most important reporting and accountability initiative” (Waddock, Bodwell and Graves 2002:138; Levy, Brown and de Jong 2009; Nikolaeva and Bicho 2011).29 Not only is it an important framework, but it is also an appropriate measure of substantive commitment to CSR because preparing the reports involves a significant investment of resources (Lim and Tsutsui 2012; Levy, Brown and de Jong 2009).

Findings from previous research justify the use of GRI report counts as an indicator of CSR institutionalization in the context of civil society, media, and business relations. Media attention to the CSR activities of leading corporations has been

28 Although I restricted my news story search of Lexis Nexis to U.S.-based actions and U.S.-based newspapers, many of the stories reported actions that targeted firms with headquarters located outside the U.S. Because geographic boundaries are in some senses irrelevant for multinational corporations, I counted all of the GRI entries.

29 The Social Accountability System, the United Nations’ Global Compact, and ISO14000 (for environmental standards) are prominent alternatives.
empirically linked to greater GRI reporting (Nikolaeva and Bicho 2011). In addition, there is evidence of a significant, positive association between civil society (indicated by the number of INGOs in a country) and GRI reporting (Lim and Tsutsui 2012). Together, these findings support my expected interactions between media reports of civil group action and GRI participation:

\[ H2: \text{Private sector firms will conform to pressure from increasing counts of business-targeted action news stories by formally reporting their CSR policies.} \]

Figure 10. GRI Reports (Counts Per Year)

If collective action serves the function of communicating civil society’s values and expectations to the private sector, then the institutionalization of CSR in the form of
responsibility reporting should serve as a signal that the message has been received and
internalized as a new normative way of doing business. The necessity of capturing the
attention of the private sector via visible, contentious collective action is thereby reduced.

H3: With increasing participation in the GRI framework, counts of
business-targeted action news stories should decline as the action of civil
groups shifts from public and contentious, to private and cooperative.

**Control Variables**

**Internet Penetration**

I include a control for the proportion of the adults in the United States who use the
internet, using data from the International Telecommunications Union database\(^{30}\). This
data source is documented as “the main source of global, and internationally comparable,
telecommunication/ICT statistics” (undata.org 2011). I chose this source as one of
several available options because it offers the greatest temporal and geographic coverage,
making it ideal for potential extension of this research in the future.

There are two key reasons to control for internet usage. The first is that
technological advancements can affect news reporting and consumption, therefore
“Changes in the numbers and types of events reported may, therefore, reflect changes in
technology and journalistic practices, and not necessarily provide an accurate indication
of change in the events themselves (Starobin 1995; Westerståhl and Johansson 1986)”
(Oritz et al. 2005:411). Because the newspaper data are sourced from an online database,

\(^{30}\) Accessed via undata.org.
annual variance in story counts may be affected by factors related to populating Lexis Nexis as internet usage advances.

A second reason to control for internet usage is as an indicator of information availability. Increasing pressures for responsible corporate behavior have been attributed to the increasing public availability of information about social problems (Waddock, Bodwell and Graves 2002; Davis, Whitman and Zald 2006:23 also link the availability of information to a power shift from producers to consumers). Conceptually, then, internet usage may be viewed as an alternative or supplemental mechanism through which civil society influences corporate behavior.

**Republican Government**

Numerous scholars have linked CSR and associated anti-corporate sentiment to neoliberalism (e.g. Shamir 2008, Soule 2009). Kinderman (2012) argues that the neoliberal market conditions that emerged from the Thatcher-Regan political era opened opportunities for the growth of CSR as a free-market response to government-driven regulatory alternatives. Because the onset of significant neoliberal policies coincides with my earliest news article data (1980), I cannot definitively measure the impact of neoliberalism on the rise of CSR. I do, however, include a dummy control for years with a Republican president\(^{31}\) to check for effects of neoliberal sentiment because it is featured so prominently in the CSR literature.

---

\(^{31}\) www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents
Unemployment Rate

Conceptual arguments that tie the rise of CSR to neoliberal policies imply that CSR is a free market reaction to smaller government—as the state dials back its involvement by reducing spending on social benefits, for example, an opportunity opens for the private sector to take a greater role. As well, when economic conditions are weak, there is a greater need for private support. To account for macroeconomic conditions, I considered and tested a number of indicators. Real GDP is a standard measure of economic health; however, corporate profit is an important component of GDP making its inclusion in the models redundant. Similarly, government spending on social programs is a logical operationalization of the concept discussed in the previous paragraph, but it is also a direct output of corporate profits—as profits increase, so do the tax revenues that support government spending. I therefore use the national unemployment rate as an indicator of overall economic conditions that is not a direct component of corporate profits. The unemployment rate among Americans aged 16 years and older is taken from the Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey.

32 Gan (2006:219) finds “companies tend to give more when macroeconomic variables are weak, signifying times of greater need.”

33 http://data.bls.gov/pdq/SurveyOutputServlet
Phase 1: The Effect of Profits on News Reports of Business-Targeted Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>All Newspapers (Model 1)</th>
<th>All Newspapers (Model 2)</th>
<th>NYT/WP (Model 3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Profits</td>
<td>3.454 **</td>
<td>5.028***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.996)</td>
<td>(1.265)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Profits Sq.</td>
<td>-1.723***</td>
<td>-1.962**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.438)</td>
<td>(.570)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat of Big Business</td>
<td>.032*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.017)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Penetration</td>
<td>-.009*</td>
<td>-.007**</td>
<td>-.025***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.005)</td>
<td>(.003)</td>
<td>(.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Rate</td>
<td>-.184**</td>
<td>-.264***</td>
<td>-.167**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.054)</td>
<td>(.052)</td>
<td>(.077)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican President</td>
<td>.167</td>
<td>-1.50</td>
<td>.367**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.133)</td>
<td>(.105)</td>
<td>(.183)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.294**</td>
<td>2.317***</td>
<td>2.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.651)</td>
<td>(.500)</td>
<td>(1.407)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wald Chi Sq.</td>
<td>49.68***</td>
<td>36.39***</td>
<td>35.82***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N (newspaper-years)</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.001

Table 5. Negative Binomial Regression of Business-Targeted News Story Counts, 1980-2010

To test the hypothesis that increasing corporate power over time stimulates news reports of business-targeted collective action, I predict the number of news stories as a function of corporate profits (both linear and quadratic terms), controlling for internet usage, the unemployment rate, and whether or not there is a Republican president in office (Table 5, Model 1). I then repeat the model, replacing corporate profits with the percent of Americans who view big business as the greatest threat to the country’s future (Table 5, Model 2). As an additional check on the methodological question of the value added by collecting data from a variety of news sources, I repeat the model a third time to
predict the news story counts from the New York Times and Washington Post (Table 5, Model 3).

**Corporate Power**

As corporate profits increase, the number of reports increases—for each additional trillion dollars profit generated by corporations in the United States, an additional 3.5 news stories discussing business-targeted collective action are predicted to be published per major newspaper, per year. The likely explanation for this is that as corporate profits have risen dramatically over time, the private sector’s power has become apparent, marking corporations as both a threat to social conditions and a resource for solving problems. This explanation is supported by a significant effect in the same direction for an alternate indicator of corporate power, public opinion of the threat of big business.

The effect of corporate profits is curvilinear, declining beyond 1.002 trillion dollars (the inflection point at the peak of the curve) (Figure 11). I included the quadratic form of corporate profits in the model in order to capture the period of dramatic change in the global market characterized by international trade agreements, technological innovation, and corporate restructuring. This volatile period coincides with the rapid rise in corporate profits seen in figure 9, and it is this period of change and rapidly rising profits that can be expected to motivate collective action. As the absolute amount of profit reaches unprecedented amounts—into the trillions of dollars—it is reasonable to expect the shock value of an extra billion dollars in profit to diminish in comparison.
Figure 11. Predicted News Story Counts (from a time-series version of model 1)

Controls

As internet penetration increases, the number of reports declines. Of course, the proportion of American adults using the internet before 1990 is zero, and as of 2000 still under half (45 percent) of the population was using the internet. The main contribution of this variable is to control for changes in internet adoption given my use of the online Lexis Nexis database as a data source. It is reassuring to find that the hypothesized relationships hold, net of the effect of internet usage.

News story counts also decline as unemployment increases. When the unemployment rate drops from 5 percent to 4 percent, for example, the number of news
stories discussing business-targeted action can be expected to increase 0.184 articles per newspaper per year (or, one of every 5.4 major newspapers will carry an additional story). It could be that poor economic conditions compete for media space with business-targeted collective action. Alternatively, there may truly be less business-targeted action in a weak economy because civil groups face tighter resources as donations dwindle or because they recognize the reduced resources of the private sector.

The non-significant effect of Republican president years is not surprising since the true impact of neoliberalism likely pre-dates this analysis.

**New York Times and Washington Post Analysis**

Finally, the overall conclusion from this model—that corporate power is positively associated with news story counts, and that this relationship declines at increasing levels of profit—would have been reached by sourcing articles only from the New York Times and Washington Post, as many scholars do. This should be reassuring for researchers whose limited resources prevent a more comprehensive data collection approach.

The one finding that is inconsistent between the models is that the presence of a Republican president in office is positively related to news story counts. In years with a Republican president, there are more reports of business-targeted collective action published in the New York Times and in the Washington Post. This supports assertions that the growth in CSR may be traced to a neoliberal political environment. It is not surprising that this result is found for the newspapers published in and near the nation’s
capital, since business-targeted actions may simultaneously hope to influence public policy, directly or indirectly.

An alternate explanation for the trends in reporting business-targeted action could be that these patterns are indicative of the total number of news articles published. I have not been able to find a measure of the total number of news articles published annually, even with assistance from OSU’s journalism librarian. In lieu of this, I generated a control variable using the total number of articles available in Lexis Nexis for the newspapers in my dataset. In the time between collecting my data and generating this control variable, the Lexis Nexis holdings changed, and five of the thirteen newspapers were no longer accessible. Even with a considerable reduction in sample size from 319 to 212 newspaper-years however, the results of model 1 remain consistent with this control included, and the effects of the control itself are not significant34.

Phase 2: The Effect of News Reports of Business-Targeted Action on CSR Reporting

To test the second hypothesis, that private sector firms will conform to pressure from increasing counts of business-targeted action news stories by formally reporting their CSR policies, news story counts could be modeled as a predictor of GRI participant counts. Modeling this relationship as a pooled time series is inappropriate in this case because the dependent variable (annual GRI participation counts) only varies by year, not by newspaper. Instead, a time series model should be conducted; however, because the

34 For simplicity, this model is not reported in Table 5.
GRI reporting system was not introduced until 1999, there are insufficient data points (twelve) to carry out a robust quantitative analysis.

Figure 12. Patterns of News Story and GRI Participation Counts

Overlaying the growth of GRI participation with the pattern of business-targeted collective action reports over time (Figure 12) qualitatively supports the hypothesized relationship and findings from previous studies. Nikolaeva and Bicho (2011) model factors that affect the diffusion of GRI participation among the largest global
companies. They find that greater media attention to CSR and the GRI encourages GRI adoption. Although the measure of media attention in this case is specific to counts of stories that mention CSR and/or the GRI, and not media mentions of collective action, Nikolaeva and Bicho nevertheless establish that public attention given to expected standards of corporate behavior can influence participation in the GRI reporting standards.

Reinforcement of the link between civil society and the institutionalization of CSR, indicated by GRI participation, comes from a cross-national study. Lim and Tsutsui (2012) demonstrate a significant positive influence of civil groups on GRI participation by modeling the number of NGOs as a predictor of the number of GRI participants.

Further supporting the broader premise that civil society has influenced the institutionalization of CSR, Bartley (2003) and Fransen (2012) both examined the creation of private regulatory programs using detailed multi-method research designs. They describe the rise of certification programs—another indicator of CSR institutionalization—as being based in partnerships between civil groups and firms, and preceded by more disruptive pressures from civil groups, a pattern that mirrors the relationship I outline here.

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35 They use event history analysis to predict the timing of GRI adoption.
Phase 3: The Effect of CSR Reporting on News Reports of Business-Targeted Action

In the third phase of the analysis, I investigate the decline in news story counts that begins after 2000 (Figure 1), working from the hypothesis that counts of business-targeted action news stories decline in response to increasing participation in the GRI framework. I model news story counts using the same set of predictors as in model 1, with the addition of GRI participant counts (both linear and squared terms). The quadratic term is included to account for diffusion effects. I limit the analysis to the years 1999-2010, corresponding with the timing of the GRI’s existence. Because of the shortened timeline for this analysis, I exclude the quadratic corporate profit term used in models 1, 2 and 3.

Controls

The results of model 4 (Table 6) show in phase 3, corporate profits cease to be a driving factor of business-targeted news story counts. Thinking of the interactions between the private sector and civil society as a process, this result implies the factors that motivate civil society action and media attention are not static, but rather fluctuate with the evolution of inter-institutional relations.

The effects of the broader socioeconomic environment are consistent with those in model 1. As the unemployment rate increases, news story counts decline, and whether or not a Republican president is in office has no effect.

The effect of internet penetration is significant and positive: as more people become internet users, more news stories are reported about business-targeted action. The
time period of this analysis corresponds with the widespread adoption of the internet.

Between 1999 and 2010 the percent of American adults who used the internet more than doubled, rising from 36 to 78 percent. With increased internet usage, the public has greater access to information about corporate practices and policies and about civil society actions involving business. A better-informed public may mean larger turn-outs for collective events that make business-targeted stories more newsworthy, or perhaps journalists believe a better-informed public would be interested in these sorts of stories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>All Sources (Model 4)</th>
<th>All Sources (Model 5)</th>
<th>All Sources (Model 6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Profits</td>
<td>.872 (.842)</td>
<td>1.095 (.846)</td>
<td>1.177 (.891)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Penetration</td>
<td>.031* (.019)</td>
<td>.034* (.018)</td>
<td>.050* (.026)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Rate</td>
<td>-.431* (.234)</td>
<td>-.485** (.234)</td>
<td>-.349 (.243)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican President</td>
<td>.467 (.533)</td>
<td>.559 (.529)</td>
<td>.444 (.529)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRI (100s)</td>
<td>-.831** (.391)</td>
<td>-.933** (.392)</td>
<td>-.712* (.404)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRI Sq.</td>
<td>.054** (.027)</td>
<td>.061** (.027)</td>
<td>.049* (.403)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front Page Stories</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.502 (.372)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Nonprofits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-5.152 (4.923)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.833*** (.782)</td>
<td>2.979*** (.821)</td>
<td>7.760 (.103)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wald Chi Sq.</td>
<td>33.92***</td>
<td>36.84***</td>
<td>34.88***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N (newspaper-years)</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.001

Table 6. Negative Binomial Regression of Business-Targeted News Story Counts, All 13 Newspapers, 1999-2010
**Institutionalization of CSR**

As hypothesized, the number of GRI participants is negatively associated with news story counts; with each additional hundred GRI participants, there are 0.8 fewer news stories reported (per newspaper, per year) about business-targeted collective action. The quadratic term has a significant positive effect, meaning as the number of GRI participants increases, there will be fewer news reports of business-targeted action; however, once a minimum threshold is reached (774 participants; this was reached between 2007 and 2008), the decline in news stories becomes less steep with continued increases in the number of GRI participants.

Although there is a significant relationship between public discourse about business-targeted action and the institutionalization of CSR, as indicated by GRI participation, my explanation that this occurs because civil group-private sector interactions have shifted from public and contentious to private and collaborative is not measured by this analysis, so I look to the following descriptive analyses for support.

First, figure 13 shows that the proportion of news stories reporting co-operative or collaborative action does increase during the post-2000 time period in question, lending support to my argument that the absolute number of news stories declines because contentious action is more newsworthy.
In total, there are only 29 reports of co-operative action, so I inductively examined these articles (Appendix F) to gain qualitative insight into the reported relations between civil groups and their business targets. This exercise reveals cases of civil group integration into business processes, often by attending industry meetings or by becoming involved in policy and contract negotiations. The Coalition of Immokalee Workers in Florida has collaborated with the Bon Appetite food service company to develop a code of conduct for tomato growers to improve wages and working conditions, for example (Washington Post, April 28, 2009). In some cases, civil groups appear to be a source of information that enables firms to proactively pursue responsible practices. One story cites

Figure 13. Co-Operative Action as a Proportion of All Reports
an environmental group’s work with guitar makers to use wood from sustainable forests (Christian Science Monitor, November 4, 1997). Another describes a partnership between leading food companies and the Alliance for a Healthier Generation to improve snack food standards (Washington Post, May 22, 2008). Despite the overwhelming tendency for the public discourse to emphasize contentious relations between civil groups and the private sector, these cases give a glimpse into alternative interactions that, according to the academic literature (e.g. Austin 2000, Sagawa and Segal 2000) are much more prevalent than the news media implies.

**Alternative Explanations**

To further strengthen my argument, I tested the alternative explanation that the downward trend in news stories is simply a reflection of the news cycle—that reporting business-targeted collective action stories essentially went out of fashion. To check this hypothesis, I repeated model 4, adding a control for the proportion of business-targeted action stories reported on the front page (lagged one year). If the downward trend in story counts was caused by the news media placing a lower priority on these types of actions, the stories reported should be less likely to appear as front page news. Model 5 (Table 6) shows this control does not have a significant effect, and the effects of the other variables in the model remain consistent with model 4, suggesting the overall decline in news stories is not a consequence of news reporters losing interest in business-targeted collective action. A sixth model (not reported) controls for the proportion of business-targeted action stories reported in the business section. Declining journalist interest in this area could be expressed by categorizing more business-targeted action stories as business
news rather than as general interest, in which case a higher proportion of stories in the business section should be significantly associated with declining numbers of reports overall. Instead, the effect is not significant.

Another explanation to consider is that civil groups do not shift tactics but instead become less active overall. In other words, the number of news stories declines not because civil groups are working cooperatively with the private sector, but because there is simply less civil action of any form. Given trends in the nonprofit sector during this time period, that seems an unlikely explanation—the number of nonprofit organizations registered with the IRS rose steadily from 1,203,273 in 1999 to 1,617,303 in 2010 (IRS Business Master Files 2011). When the number of nonprofits is added to the model as a control, the effect is not significant and the key findings of the analysis remain stable (Model 6, Table 6).

It may also be that business-targeted action is still contentious but civil groups have moved toward more directed communications rather than relying on mass media to convey their messages to the public. The internet offers an alternative means of reaching potential supporters without risking having their message misrepresented by journalists. To some extent the models account for this with the inclusion of an internet penetration measure. It would be ideal, however, to measure this impact more directly in future studies. Likewise, it is possible that other media such as television, documentary films and trade magazines have supplanted newspapers as a source of discourse about business-targeted action. This explanation could be explored with a more comprehensive dataset of stories sampled from multiple forms of media. If it is the case that contentious civil action
has continued to increase rather than decline as my data indicate, then the argument that the institutionalization of CSR indicted by rising GRI reporting has been influenced by pressure from civil groups would be strengthened.

While it is possible that newspaper counts underestimate the prevalence of contentious action, support remains for my claim that collaborative civil society-private sector relations are occurring outside of the public discourse.

**Support from the Literature**

The nature of the relationship between a movement organization and its target is influenced by the compatibility of their goals. When their goals conflict, leveraging the media and the public can help gain the attention of the target. When their goals are aligned, forming an alliance is an effective strategy (Lipsky 1968). This can help explain the pattern shown in figure 1. The rise in business-targeted news reports through the 1990s represents a time when there was not yet widespread acceptance that social issues were a business concern, thus the goals of business targets were inconsistent with the goals of civil groups, so civil groups leveraged the media to gain attention and achieve legitimacy with the private sector. Through increasing public pressure over time, businesses signaled their acceptance of social responsibility as a goal by adopting formal CSR policies. The decline in reports through the early 2000s is consistent with a shift in strategy toward collaboration triggered by the private sector’s acceptance of their social role, bringing the goals of the private sector more in line with the goals of civil groups, and opening opportunities for direct interaction.
Finally, there is secondary evidence that the decline in news of contentious interactions between civil society and the private sector has been paralleled by increases in strategic partnerships. Laasonen, Fougeré, and Kourula (2012) examine the academic discourse on NGO-business relations, noting a steep increase in numbers of academic articles published on the topic of NGO-business collaborations post-2000. Figure 14 breaks down the type of NGO-business interactions described in each article as a proportion of articles published. The category labeled “blurred roles” refers to relationships in which it was difficult for the researchers to assign distinct roles to either party, with examples clearly paralleling the concept of strategic partnerships.

Figure 14. Development of NGO-business models (Fig.3 from Laasonen, Fougeré, and Kourula 2012)
Summary and Discussion of Multivariate Analysis

In summary, these results demonstrate that economic power is accompanied by heightened expectations of social responsibility. There is more news media discourse about claims against business targets now than there was thirty years ago. The level rose through the 1990s, and peaked in 2000. The rise is explained by socioeconomic conditions, in particular, corporate profits (model 1). The subsequent decline appears to be a result of corporate responsiveness to previous discourse, as evidenced by the influence of discourse on CSR policy reporting in the GRI database, and later declining discourse in response to increasing GRI reports.
CHAPTER 4: CIVIL SOCIETY AND PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

These NGO-private sector coalitions can be much more effective in terms of advocating for a position." When a company the size of Walmart, Kraft, or Ford makes even small voluntary changes, they create a huge ripple effect. Having such a powerhouse in the activist group's corner helps strengthen its position when it comes to regulatory issues, too. (The Christian Science Monitor, December 28, 2009)

The results reported in Chapter 3 contribute an empirically-based explanation for how and why the private sector has come to accept as legitimate a broadened concept of their social role. Another dimension of CSR's institutionalization is the extent to which the public accepts the private sector's activities as legitimate. At issue is the impulse to disentangle purely altruistic motives from self-interest, a task that is complicated by the fact that firms vary in their commitment to CSR.

The Benefits of Strategic Partnerships

The business literature has carefully established that CSR and profit-driven activities may effectively coexist in “shared value” (Porter and Kramer 2011), “strategic CSR” (see Lantos 2007 for discussion) or “total responsibility management” (Waddock, Bodwell and Graves 2002) approaches, exacerbating suspicions that corporations are misrepresenting their self-interest as public interest. For instance, adopting energy efficiency policies may simultaneously yield environmental benefits and cost savings (Bird et al. 2007). The paradox is that purely altruistic corporate activity may be
inherently immoral (Lantos 2007). To complicate matters further, even so-called altruistic CSR—which by definition lacks any direct financial motive—may result in intangible corporate gains such as enhanced reputation or strategic alliances with non-profits that help prevent government regulation (Gan 2006). Participating in standardized reporting programs such as the GRI and partnering with civil groups are strategies that can help a firm overcome this skepticism by bringing legitimacy to their CSR efforts.

Civil groups contribute awareness and knowledge about social problems to firms that enables them to effectively direct their activities toward meaningful social goals (Pava and Krausz 1997). By leveraging the insights and expertise of civil groups, firms can show they understand the issues, and they can communicate convincingly to the public that they are working toward effective solutions. On-going partnerships between the private sector and civil society also demonstrate a long-term, proactive commitment to social goals that can itself enhance public perceptions of social responsibility (Pava and Krausz 1997; Zollo et al. 2007).

**Risks of Strategic Partnerships**

Strategic partnerships can introduce an additional challenge to the legitimacy of a firm’s CSR programs, however, by raising the question of the extent to which these are mutually beneficial partnerships and not exploitative co-optations of civil groups by corporations. Gamson (1990) assesses outcomes of collective action according to whether or not the challenging group achieves acceptance by its target and/or gains new advantages. Co-optation occurs when acceptance is achieved but new advantages are not gained. In the context of collaborative agreements between civil groups and firms, co-
optation involves shared goals and interests between the two parties, “manifest in sponsoring relationships, labeling agreements, and personal ties with corporate leaders” (Baur and Schmitz 2012:10). A partnership is established that gives the firm access to information and helps legitimize its actions to the public by associating with a non-profit organization, but brings no new advantages to the civil group.

Power relations are characteristically asymmetric, with the party who has more to offer in a social exchange holding greater power than the party who has more to gain (Blau [1964] 2002; Roscigno 2011). Baur and Schmitz (2012) frame this question in terms of the tension between the costs and benefits of strategic partnerships: In a balanced power relationship, firms stand to gain public legitimacy from their associations with civil groups, and civil groups gain access to resources and influence by partnering with firms. Civil groups put their independence and therefore their legitimacy at risk though, especially when real or perceived co-optation occurs. The apparent incompatibility between the traditional role of many civil groups as watchdog organizations, and the insider status they achieve through strategic partnerships raise concerns for some. One way to reduce the risk of co-optation is for civil groups to tip the balance of power in their favor by forming multiple partnerships, thereby reducing their dependence on any one firm.36

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36 Baker (1990) explains inter-organizational relations in terms of resource dependence. For example, corporations rely on investment banks for access to capital, market information, and other resources, and investment banks rely on corporations for financial transactions to process. Baker concludes that organizations deliberately manipulate the power equation to reduce
In Chapter 3, I argue an explanation for the decline in discourse about business-targeted action reflects a shift in the interaction between civil groups and firms. The rise in discourse through the 1990s represents the introduction of new expectations about the social responsibility of business. By the 2000s, businesses and civil groups have begun to come to a consensus about the meaning of CSR. From this consensus, businesses and civil groups can work collaboratively toward compatible goals to implement new policies and practices.

A Strategic Partnership Examined: Walmart and the Environmental Defense Fund

For further insight into the implications of strategic partnerships for the legitimacy of CSR and to illustrate the strategic shift in civil society-private sector interactions, I examine the case of the longstanding partnership between the Environmental Defense Fund and Walmart. This is an interesting case because Walmart has been the target of heavy scrutiny from civil groups. There are seven articles in my dataset naming Walmart as a target, all of which were published between 2002 and 2007. In 2005, Wake-Up Walmart and Walmart Watch groups began campaigns to protest Walmart’s treatment of employees. The same year, a highly critical documentary film was released, *Walmart: The High Cost of Low Price*. Evidence of the effect of public pressure is seen in a Washington Post report about the company’s annual meeting in 2006: “Wal-Mart chief executive H. Lee Scott Jr. attempted to rally shareholders...

dependence on other organizations and exploit their power advantages, in this case by holding accounts at multiple banks to reduce their dependence any given bank.
yesterday by outlining sweeping transformations underway to broaden the company's appeal and quell criticism of its treatment of employees,” (June 3, 2006).

During this period of intense public criticism, Walmart and the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) joined forces. Named in Forces for Good as an “exemplary” non-profit organization, the EDF is noted for its effective corporate partnerships (Crutchfeld and Grant 2012), illustrated in the following passage from my dataset.

The Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) has worked with McDonald's, DuPont, and FedEx. But its most intense partnership began in 2005 when Walmart sought out the environmental group for advice on how to craft a better corporate responsibility plan. At the time, the megaretailer was getting lambasted for everything from killing small business to poor personnel management. The relationship grew closer as it shifted to strategy. "Getting involved with Walmart at the strategy-setting side has been a significant change from us saying 'We don't like what you're doing,' then they make a decision and let us know and we'd say 'That's good, but this would be better,' " says Michelle Harvey, EDF's project manager of corporate partnerships. "Now, they sit down and say, 'Give us your thoughts on what we should do about this.' It's not that we direct it, but we have a greater potential to influence the direction they take." In 2007, EDF opened an office in Walmart's hometown of Bentonville, Ark (Christian Science Monitor, December 28, 2009).

The EDF’s claim that they are able to influence the strategic direction of one of the world’s largest companies implies not only acceptance, but also that the non-profit has gained an advantage through its partnership with Walmart. Presumably their influence allows them to pursue their organizational goals on a scale that would not otherwise be possible. This exemplary case, then, is not a coopted relationship, but rather a more balanced power relationship.

Exploring the websites of the EDF and Walmart brings additional insight to the relationship. Both sides acknowledge their cross-sector partnerships. The EDF site
showcases their corporate partnerships, describing their projects and accomplishments
(http://business.edf.org/projects/walmart). It is very clear that they are engaged in a
number of projects with a variety of corporate partners. Sensitivity to perceptions of co-
option is salient throughout their public communications, and evident in the statement
that is referenced in all discussions of corporate partnerships on their website
(http://www.edf.org/approach/partnerships/corporate-donation-policy):

> Our partnerships are designed to influence not just single companies but entire industries. Since **we do not accept funds from our corporate partners**, we are free to broadly share our recommendations and innovations. (Environmental Defense Fund 2012)

Further, their corporate donation policy states:

> To be truly effective in achieving meaningful and significant environmental gains, we must maintain our independence and our organizational integrity.

The EDF has taken active measures to guard against both the threat of co-option and
public perceptions of co-option that could harm their legitimacy as an organization that
places social benefits ahead of profit.

In contrast, reference to the EDF is difficult to find on Walmart’s website. It
appears only in the 2012 Global Responsibility Report’s statement of Stakeholder
Engagement, which includes NGO partnerships
(http://www.walmartstores.com/sites/responsibility-
report/2012/stakeholderEngagement.aspx). Walmart’s public communications are
notoriously guarded, hence details of their partnerships are vague and do not mention

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EDF by name. Their statement about the Live Greener Working Group (LGWG) states simply:

The LGWG is a group of NGOs that Walmart collaborates with monthly to make progress in areas including climate change, poverty and resource degradation. We are proud of our part in this new movement of cooperation between companies and environmentalists. It makes all of us better and stronger.

Like the EDF, Walmart is not reliant on only one partner; however, the relatively low public profile of these partnerships implies Walmart holds the balance of power.

The success of the partnership between the EDF and Walmart is very likely related to their focus on environmental programs. Public perceptions of legitimacy not only pertain to power relations in cross-sector partnerships, but also to social issue choices. A legitimate corporate social program should address an issue of public importance (Zollo et al. 1997) and it should be consistent with the firm’s core business strategies in order to be credible (Ihlen 2009). Prioritizing environmental policies is consistent with Walmart’s reputation for efficiency. My analysis shows labor issues are also important (Chapter 2; also Fleishman-Hillard and National Consumers League 2007; Jones 2010); however Walmart’s cross-sector partnership in support of human rights was not effective in overcoming persistent high-profile criticism for low pay and discriminatory treatment of minority workers. The Washington Post (September 24, 2006) reports:

When news got out last month that Wal-Mart Stores Inc. had partnered with the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, it created a
stir among some religious groups that said they would consider not shopping at the retail giant. Wal-Mart received a scored of 65 [out of 100] on the [Human Rights Campaign’s Corporate] Equality Index this year.

**Implications for the Future of CSR Legitimacy**

So what are the implications of this debate for the future of CSR? A firm’s financial returns from CSR initiatives are tied to the supply of and public demand for CSR activity (Mackey, Mackey and Barney 2007). If skepticism about CSR’s legitimacy suppresses the public demand for such activities, it follows that over time the private sector’s support of CSR activity may diminish. This raises questions for future research: What factors affect public opinion about the legitimacy of CSR? If the public fails to accept CSR policies and practices as legitimate, how might the private sector adjust its understanding of its social role? How might interactions between firms and civil groups be affected in this process? Brand loyalty and relationship marketing theories are a good starting point. I hypothesize that the CSR activities of firms that enjoy positive reputations and strong customer loyalty are more likely to be seen as more legitimate than those of firms that are less well-known or that have poor reputations. Further, because discourse is a component of legitimation processes, legitimacy should be promoted by consumer advocacy—“Consumers become champions of the companies with whom they identify (e.g. Apple, Greenpeace)” (Bhattacharya and Sen 2003:77). In other words, when consumers see themselves reflected in a brand, they are more likely to advocate for a firm, and when this advocacy is heard as public discourse, the firm’s actions are viewed more legitimately.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

This dissertation is a story of how and why civil society has contributed to the acceptance of CSR as a legitimate business activity. I have argued that the CSR public discourse arose in response to the dramatic rise of corporate profits that occurred in recent decades, prompting a dynamic process of interactions between civil society and the private sector that has institutionalized CSR. I have presented empirical evidence that a pattern of sharply rising corporate profits stimulated news reports of business-targeted collective action, in turn prompting corporate response in the form of formal CSR policies. This was followed by a decline in business-targeted discourse, a pattern I attribute to the displacement of contentious, public business-targeted tactics by collaborative, strategic partnerships between civil groups and business organizations. I then examined the theoretical basis of these cross-sector partnerships, illustrated with a case study of a best-in-class arrangement between the Environmental Defense Fund and Walmart.

Public discourse has played an important role in the legitimation of social issues as a business concern. As CSR activities become further entrenched in market policies
and practices, the focus of CSR’s legitimacy will undoubtedly shift from its acceptance by the private sector to the public’s belief that corporations can be motivated by the public interest in place of or in addition to self-interest. Corporations will need to overcome the deeply engrained skepticism that exists toward apparent corporate goodwill. Aligning CSR efforts with civil group partnerships is a possible means of bringing legitimacy to their actions. It remains to be seen whether this will be effective, or if instead such partnerships will delegitimate civil groups appearing to sell out to corporate interests. A story from the St. Petersburg Times (October 6, 2009)\(^3\) illustrates the types of activities that raise suspicion with this description of TECO Coal company’s public relations Coal Mining Our Future campaign:

On Labor Day, it reportedly chartered 28 buses to take thousands of people from eastern Kentucky to a coal rally in Holden, W.Va., where rock 'n' roll guitarist Ted Nugent, known for his conservative views and pro-gun stance, performed.

The campaign includes a "Coal for Kids" charity to provide children with clothing, and a "Coal Gear" Web site selling caps, bumper stickers and T-shirts proclaiming "Coal Keeps the Lights On" and other pro-coal phrases.

The group, emphasizing area jobs, may be gaining some momentum in a struggling economy. It also opposes pending "cap and trade" provisions restricting carbon emissions that are part of the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009.

A companion, so-called grass roots group known as "FACES of Coal" - short for Federation for American Coal, Energy and Security - calls itself "an alliance of people from all walks of life" who advocate coal. But the

\(^3\) Note: This particular story is excluded from my database because it is not clearly a case of business-targeted action. Instead, the action appears to be directed toward the public, the state, and other civil groups.
group's origin has been tracked not to Appalachia but to a K Street public relations firm in Washington, D.C.

A key question moving forward will be the extent to which civil groups benefit from these partnerships. Are these simply examples of cooptation, or are the benefits to civil groups meaningful enough to conclude a more mutually-beneficial relationship?

Further examining the relative positions of corporate and civil partners can add valuable understanding to questions of market power.

An important contribution of this research is that it measures the impact of collective action on the private sector broadly. Social movement tactics often aim for a broader impact than their direct targets, and this research gets at that in ways that other studies have not. The following passage (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, June 28, 2001) demonstrates this point:

Across the country in recent months, protesters have been gathering at Starbucks. And it's not a double-tall nonfat latte they're after. Instead, they are hoping that the coffee chain's omnipresence and its socially conscious customers will help draw attention to such issues as racial profiling and food safety. The protesters readily admit that Starbucks is not a bad corporate citizen...But that didn't stop Ronnie Cummins of the Little Marais, Minn.-based Organic Consumer Association from going after Starbucks last spring when he announced plans to picket Starbucks stores over the use of bovine growth hormone in some of the milk they serve. "We believe that Starbucks is the weakest link in the chain because their customer base cares about the environment and cares about social justice and cares about their health," Cummins said.

Implications

One of the key findings of this research is that corporate power is tied to social responsibility. As predicted by Davis (1960) and others, power is accompanied by moral
expectations that are naturally enforced through other sectors of society. When the state took a step back from regulating the private sector, corporate profits soared. Civil society then reacted with increased pressure on corporations to use their resources for the public good. In response to Fourcade and Healy’s (2007) question of market power dynamics, this research supports a perspective of “feeble” markets. Markets are embedded in and are therefore dependent on and responsible to other parts of society.

The process through which these social expectations have become routinized by the private sector involves negotiation of norms through public discourse. Discourse is a means through which legitimacy is achieved, and legitimacy is itself a dimension of power (Roscigno 2011). Studying the relationships between public discourse and CSR policy illuminates civil society’s expectations become normative market practices.

Market practices have implications for broader social change. The Washington Post (September 24, 2006) illustrates this point with the case of workplace policies leading the way for human rights. The Human Rights Campaign advocacy group produces an annual report on workplace anti-discrimination policies and benefits for domestic partners. Their 2004 report concluded,

Among the Fortune 500, 216 companies provided domestic partner benefits, 10 times the number in 1995, when 21 of the companies offered the benefits. “As we suspected, corporate America is well ahead of America generally in terms of extending basic rights to all people,” said Joe Solmonese, president of the Human Rights Campaign…At the end of 2004, 410 companies on the Fortune 500 included sexual orientation in their non-discrimination policies. Another four companies had added the policy by March 1. Among the Fortune 50, 49 companies included it in their non-discrimination policies. Exxon Mobil Corp. is the only that does not. At a recent shareholders meeting, the Irving, Tex., company’s directors opposed a proposal to include it, saying its "written policies
prohibit discrimination or harassment for any reason, including sexual orientation."

The prevalence of such private sector policies clearly pre-dates public policy and public opinion (Figure 15). In May, 2012, President Obama made headlines with his public endorsement of same sex marriage, still a controversial topic that may be an important point of division in an election year.

![Figure 15. Changing Attitudes On Gay Marriage (from Pew Research Center, 2012)](image)

It is important, then, to understand the forces that influence corporate responsibility policies as part of the broader democratic process.
Limitations

There are two noteworthy limitations to this study. The first is that I have not addressed the influence of the state on the institutionalization of CSR. Moon and Vogel emphasize that governments have publicly encouraged CSR policies, and have provided tools to guide and support self-regulation, as well as actively fostering CSR partnerships with or between business organizations (2008:312-314). It is possible that the unmeasured impact of government action could account in part for the institutionalization of CSR that I am attributing to civil society pressures and public discourse. Similarly, Vogel (2005) identifies three critical drivers of CSR: pressures from consumers, employees, and investors. I capture this indirectly in that consumers, employees, and investors may be components of collective action, but there is not a perfect correlation—some consumers, employees, and investors assert pressure independent of civil society organizations. Consequently, I may be over-emphasizing the impact of civil society pressures.

On the other hand, this study may underestimate the impact of civil society on CSR because, as noted in Chapter 2, I have only captured a portion of the reported business-targeted action. By using broad search terms, a wide range of events and organizations are included, but I undoubtedly miss actions that would have been referenced by more a more precise search. I am also not able to capture the private processes that mediate the interactions between civil society, the media, and the private sector. For instance, Vogel (2005) points out that internal pressures for CSR from
employees may reinforce external pressures--employees feel embarrassed to be associated with a CSR scandal, for example.

A second limitation is the difficulty in accurately accounting for the geographic context of influence. Business targets of collective action tend to be large multinational corporations. Davis, Whitman and Zald (2006:33) note that multinationals are prone to pressures from multiple regions, and “social movements and regulators are increasingly transnational in their scope”. Although some of the actions reported in my sample may be connected to transnational movements, I have limited my sample to U.S.-based actions and news sources, thus underestimating the impact of business-targeted action.

This study could be further developed in the future to assess the relative influence of civil society and the state. Understanding the influence of media discourse and civil action relative to other potential influences such as the threat of regulation and the role of the state as mediators in cross-sector partnerships, for instance, would bring important perspective to our understanding of the power of civil society.

Future Research Directions

*Disentangling Institutionalization Influences*

This study supports the perspective that conceptions of business responsibility have broadened over time to include matters of public interest that had been viewed as outside the domain of the private sector in the past. I approach this argument with a focus on normative systems and external pressures on businesses, focusing on how expectations between civil society and the private sector have become more aligned.
Institutionalization processes are not only normative, however. Scott (1995) defines three institutional pillars: normative, regulative, and cultural-cognitive systems. While normative systems have shaped the perspective of CSR presented here, regulative systems such as international safety, environmental, and labor standards are another CSR-promoting force. Conversely, regulative systems may present a counter force that discourages CSR, as in international trade agreements that enable global supply chain operations to circumvent responsible practices.

Similarly, while external pressures generally seem to encourage CSR, internal pressures—especially the need to satisfy shareholders—can complicate this process. I hypothesize that many employees and shareholders now view social contributions as a normative business responsibility, thus satisfying shareholders includes behaving responsibly. Even if this is not the case, if consumers expect socially responsible behavior from the private sector, then to some degree profit-driven activity must consider CSR.

Future research could create a more comprehensive picture of the state of CSR by modeling the relative effects from each of these forces, and the mechanisms through which they operate. There are some thorough industry-specific studies to this effect (e.g. Hoffman 1997; Fransen 2012). Building on this work with research that enables cross-industry, cross-sector conclusions would provide a better indication of the balance of power between the private sector and civil society.
Cross-National Analyses

A further issue to consider is how legitimation processes may help explain cross-national differences in the institutionalization of CSR. Lim and Tsutsui (2011) find the factors associated with the expansion of CSR differ between developed and developing countries. Understanding CSR institutionalization in a cross-national context is particularly relevant given that corporations are increasingly structured around contractually-based, often geographically dispersed partnerships, blurring “boundaries that mark the distinction between activities and transactions occurring ‘inside’ as opposed to ‘outside’ a corporate entity, and national boundaries that separate ‘domestic’ from ‘foreign’ (Davis, Whitman and Zald 2006:10). On one hand, when all of the members of a given supply chain are held to the most advanced CSR standards of any one component of the chain, moral standards for market activity may be elevated broadly. For example, some multinational companies act in compliance with the requirements of the Kyoto Treaty even though the United States has not signed it “because customizing products to meet different rules and standards in different countries would vastly increase complexity and expense; uniformity requires that the most rigorous regulations and standards will prevail” (Davis, Whitman and Zald 2006:31).

On the other hand, the dispersed nature of today’s corporation can open the door to skirting responsibility, eroding moral standards for market activity. The 2010 BP Oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico led to a frenzy of finger-pointing. Public scrutiny mostly focused on BP, but BP blamed Transocean, the oil rig’s owner. Halliburton and Cameron International were also looked to as responsible parties due to their provision of services
and parts that may have contributed to the accident (Zeller 2010). Studying the patterns and factors that influence CSR policies and practices when the social norms surrounding moral market behaviors and the socioeconomic conditions vary across multiple entities in the supply chain is a daunting but relevant goal.

**Organizational Characteristics and Perceptions of CSR Legitimacy**

There are a number of opportunities to further explore public perceptions of CSR legitimacy from an organizational perspective. My data might be leveraged to investigate how organizational characteristics of civil groups and firms could alter the processes and relationships I have identified, examining variations in the effects of size, age, and geographic location of the organizations in question. Similarly, my data could support issue- or industry-specific analyses to help determine whether or not patterns I have identified in this dissertation vary according to the social problem at hand or the targeted industry.

Examining relationships between organization size and the public perceptions of legitimacy could be an interesting contribution to the organizations and institutions literature. Smaller firms have less access to the mechanisms that communicating legitimate CSR: they do not have as much to offer to cross-sector collaborations, and too few resources to participate in standardized CSR reporting programs. On the other hand, smaller firms may be viewed as less of a social threat and have lower expectations placed on them, making these assurances of legitimacy less relevant.
Additional Research Opportunities

The dataset created for this dissertation and my theoretical approach are a foundation for continuing exploration of how moral issues are manifest in interactions between civil society and the private sector. The dataset could be expanded and updated to explore additional media—blogs, television and online news, trade magazines (e.g. Forbes), and to include international action.

A short term goal to expand on this research by incorporating measures of industries targeted in news reports of business-targeted action into models predicting GRI reports by industry-year offers an important opportunity to strengthen this work. Structuring the GRI data into a report count by industry-year would yield a sample size large enough to test the effects of news story counts on GRI reporting in a multivariate model. This would add greater confidence to the phase 2 process discussed in chapter 3.

Analyzing industry-level data would also provide a foundation for examining the influence of civil society pressures in the context of the regulatory environment (both public and private), which can vary dramatically by industry.

The Social Benefits of CSR

The ultimate question that should dominate future CSR research is whether or not it yields meaningful social benefits. Current and previous studies have established the meaning of CSR, its changes over time, the processes underlying these changes, and the benefits of CSR for firms. If we assume the private sector continues to accept and invest
in CSR as a normative business responsibility, then how can we objectively determine the effectiveness of their efforts?

This is a question that will be immediately relevant for justifying individual projects at the firm level, but it is also an important macro-level question. Are the most significant social problems being addressed through private industry programs? How do the outcomes of these programs compare to alternative solutions that might have resulted from the public sector or from non-profits? Are concerns about the conflict between self-interest and altruism warranted in the terms of long-term societal change? And, on what geographic scale should we make these judgments? Undoubtedly many social improvements in one locality have detrimental effects for others. Some researchers are already tackling these questions. Wayne Visser argues that the current conception of CSR has failed and needs to be re-envisioned to have the desired effects (Visser 2011). Such a claim is open to debate, setting the stage to for opportunities to look at the question from new perspectives.

**Conclusion**

Public discourse suggests civil society expects economic institutions to use their considerable power to act in the public interest. Widespread practices such as standardized CSR reporting and partnering with civil groups indicate business leaders accept this challenge. Civil groups make claims across a spectrum of social problems, most frequently related to human rights, the environment, health and safety, and labor issues, presenting both a challenge and an opportunity to socially responsible firms. The
challenge is to make a meaningful social contribution, and to do it in a way that is not only credible but also both socially and financially effective. The Occupy Wall Street protests exemplify the intricate web of interactions between civil society, the news media, the private sector, and the state that helps explain how market behaviors come to match the moral ideals of society.
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX A: DIMENSIONS OF A COLLECTIVE ACTION MODEL OF INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION

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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>How do institutions emerge to facilitate or constrain social movements or technological innovations?</th>
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<td>Networks of distributed and partisan actors in an interorganizational field who are embedded in a collective process of creating or revising institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Generative mechanism</td>
<td>Recognition of an institutional problem, barrier, or injustice among groups of social or technical entrepreneurs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Process: event sequence</td>
<td>Collective political events dealing with processes of framing and mobilizing structures and opportunities for institutional reform</td>
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<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Institutional precedent, a new or changed working rule, an institutional innovation</td>
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APPENDIX B: NEWS SOURCES

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APPENDIX C: LEXIS NEXIS ARTICLE SEARCH CRITERIA

I used the following criteria to search and screen news articles:

- **Major US Newspapers:** English language newspapers published in the United States that are listed in the top 50 in circulation in Editor & Publisher Year Book.

- **Boolean search:**
  (BODY((activis! OR advoca!) OR ((group OR movement) W/3 (consumer OR shopper))) W/30 (protest OR demonstrat! OR boycott OR buycott OR campaign OR promotion)) AND (SUBJECT(company OR industry)) AND NOT ((SECTION(editorial OR opinion)) OR (election OR coupon OR obituaries OR support group OR political parties OR letters to the editor))

- **I screened the articles returned from the search above using the following criteria:**
  - Subject= civil society organization (i.e. not one business protesting another, not government pressuring business)
  - Action=collective, not individual (such as a celebrity promoting a cause); action takes place in the United States
  - Object= for-profit, commercial, business organization (not community housing boards, academic research labs, abortion clinics, etc.)
# APPENDIX D: CODESHEET

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<td>Action Completed?</td>
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<td>planned action</td>
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<td>third party organization/experts</td>
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**Summary Paragraph**

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<th>Summarize the core of the issue: Who does what to whom, and why? Focus on the most important interaction between the main civil society organization(s) and the main business target(s)</th>
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<td>e.g. Earth First! Environmental activists sabotage logging activities using spikes and chains to preserve old growth forest for spotted owl habitat.</td>
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**Claims**

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### APPENDIX E: SUMMARY STATISTICS FOR KEY VARIABLES IN MULTIVARIATE MODELS

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## APPENDIX F: CO-OPERATIVE ACTION QUALITATIVE DATA

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Description of Co-Operation Between Civil Groups and Businesses (Quoted or Paraphrased)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Christian Science Monitor</td>
<td>Censorship advocates, anti-censorship advocates and pop musicians participated in the New Music Seminar, discussing the treatment of social issues by musicians.</td>
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<td>1988</td>
<td>San Diego Union-Tribune</td>
<td>Community groups worked with California First Bank to develop programs to better serve minority, women, and low-income customers, as well as women and minority employees of California First Bank.</td>
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<td>1988</td>
<td>The Orange County Register</td>
<td>Peace activists attended a seminar on how to work collaboratively and intellectually to influence defense industries to change into businesses that don't make weapons. They acknowledge the destructive consequences of adversarial protest on sudden, mass job losses and are seeking ways to work more peacefully toward a common goal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Washington Post</td>
<td>This is a general description of filmmakers' efforts to include sensitive and accurate portrayals of special interest issues in film by seeking input from groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>The Oregonian</td>
<td>The makers of the film &quot;Basic Instinct&quot; met with members of GLAAD and other organizations in order to discuss proposed changes to the script that may paint gay and lesbians in a negative light.</td>
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<td>1991</td>
<td>New York Times</td>
<td>The pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church is in negotiations with Phillip Morris over their tobacco advertisements on billboards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>San Diego Union-Tribune</td>
<td>The Committee on Social Action of Reform Judaism urged Procter &amp; Gamble to stop buying coffee from El-Salvador whose coffee growers, the group says, are supporting death squads.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
1991 **New York Times**
Panelists at a symposium on free speech from the Creation Coalition objected to the content on MTV's network.

1992 **Washington Post**
Disability advocates are working to enable Bell [telecommunications] to make widely available some of their products that are currently outlawed by anti-monopoly laws. In return, consumer groups are working against this effort, claiming Bell is exploiting these groups and working toward monopolistic efforts.

1992 **St. Louis Post-Dispatch**
Members of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill and other advocacy groups were offended by the portrayal of the mentally ill in a comic book. Meetings were held and while some advocacy groups were pleased with the final result, others still planned to picket DC Comics parent company, Time Warner

1993 **Christian Science Monitor**
Community groups have initiated an effort to convert the over-represented liquor stores to other types of businesses.

1995 **San Diego Union-Tribune**
The Institute for Health Advocacy in San Diego pitched an idea to the Beer Institute to keep Halloween images out of beer ads as they may appeal to children.

1995 **The Oregonian**
John Stahmer, a spokesman for the Ashland environmental group Headwaters, said protesters are frustrated and want to keep attention on the sale and closure [of timber from a national forest]. Headwaters is asking that it be allowed into the sale to ensure Boise Cascade is following the contract's specifications.

1996 **Washington Post**
The Advances in Health Technology Inc. is trying to avoid threatened boycotts of the pharmaceutical companies who would sell the abortion drug, RU-486, by proactively collaborating with the government to try and influence the pharmaceutical companies to sell the drug and remove the barrier of the threatened boycotts.

1996 **The Oregonian**
People for the West is a counter force to protect business interests from environmental efforts. They lobby in favor of industry and participate in public debate to preserve business interests.

1997 **New York Times**
Consumer groups pushed Whole Foods to ask its food suppliers if they supplied the company with genetically engineered foods and if so, which foods.
1997 The Oregonian  The Campaign for Hate-Free Oregon joined black activists in meetings on how to proceed about Act III withholding the movie Malcom X from their most mainstream theaters.

1997 Christian Science Monitor  The environmentalist group SoundWood works with guitar makers to try to incorporate more wood from sustainable forests into guitar making. Companies such as Gibson, Martin, and Modulus have begun doing exactly that, by releasing lines of "green" guitars.

1999 Washington Post  Latino rights activists have met with officials of Cable TV Montgomery to complain about a lack of Latin channels in their line-up. Cable TV Montgomery has stated that they will be adding another Latin channel as they upgrade.

2000 USA Today  GLAAD is seeking meetings with major markets to apprise television station managers of [Dr. Laura] Schlessinger's record on gay issues

2000 The Orange County Register  Transfair USA, a non-profit monitoring organization has worked with Starbucks and Diedrich Coffee Inc. to incorporate fair trade coffee into their stores. Both stores have begun the process to buy and sell fair trade coffee.

2002 The Oregonian  Diamond Parking and Teamsters Local 206 signed a three year contract which includes pay raises, pension plans, and grievance procedure protections. The workers are organized as the Urban Workers Union

2004 Washington Post  A North Carolina based environmentalist group has succeeded in getting some companies, such as Staples, to take a more responsible stance towards paper production by increasing the amount of recycled content in their paper.

2006 Washington Post  Wake-Up Walmart and Walmart Watch, groups critical of Walmart's employee relations, sent representatives to Walmart's annual shareholders meeting. "Our goal is not to destroy this company," Wake-Up Walmart spokesman Chris Kofinis said. "It has always been from Day One to make them a better company."

2007 New York Times  Some credit for the increased demand for eggs from cage-free chickens is attributed to the Humane Society for pressuring companies and influencing industry experts (e.g. Wolfgang Puck) to adopt eggs from cage-free chickens.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>Washington Post</td>
<td>In 2006, Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, Danon and Campbell all took pacts to improve snack nutrition standards, working with The Alliance for a Healthier Generation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Miami Herald</td>
<td>The Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), which represents the farmworkers, has requested two things of Publix officials: (1) that they work together to develop and enforce a code of conduct against abuses, including zero tolerance for slavery; and (2) that they agree to pay one penny more per pound of tomatoes harvested to improve farmworker wages. Yum Brands, McDonald's, Burger King, Subway, Whole Foods and other companies have agreed to pay the extra penny per pound and to work with the CIW.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Christian Science Monitor</td>
<td>&quot;These NGO-private sector coalitions can be much more effective in terms of advocating for a position.&quot; When a company the size of Walmart, Kraft, or Ford makes even small voluntary changes, they create a huge ripple effect. Having such a powerhouse in the activist group's corner helps strengthen its position when it comes to regulatory issues, too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Washington Post</td>
<td>CIW and Bon Appetit worked together to code of conduct for tomato growers to improve wages and working conditions of tomato pickers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>