Journal of Business Research: Call for Papers for a Special Issue

**Critical perspectives on corporate political activities (CPA): Exploring strategic and stakeholder non-value maximizing implications and externalities of corporate political activities.**

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BACKGROUND

Corporate political activity (CPA) is one of the most common non-market strategies used by firms today (Hadani, Doh & Schneider, 2016, 2019; Nyberg, 2021; Ozer, 2010); its public policy impact ranges from food labels, wages, transportation safety, workplace safety and diversity regulation, industry barriers to entry, the cost of food, corporate liability, individual bankruptcy, cost of utilities, GHG emissions, to tax policy. These are just some among the many public policy issues impacting business and the average citizen on a daily basis. Thus, beyond the politically active firm itself, CPA impacts the firm’s competitors, shareholders, stakeholders and society at large, as well as the broader democratic institutions of society (Barley, 2007; Neron, 2016; Nyberg, 2021; Reich, 2007).

Such an impact has become more pronounced and visible since the landmark 2010 Supreme Court decision in Citizens’ United (and the 2014 McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission decision)– allowing unlimited use of corporate funds in support or opposition of politicians running for office. The January 6th riot at the Capitol in DC and the public backlash to some politically active firms, has further brought to the fore the indirect consequences of CPA. It has highlighted both the risks for the firms engaging in CPA as well as the potential effects on the public at large.

The work of Gilens and Page (2014) indicates that corporate interests impact public policy outcomes in ways that are muting the public interest on public policy. Indeed, a recent book by Katherine Ghel and Michael Porter (2020) - The Politics Industry: How Political Innovation Can Break Partisan Gridlock and Save Our Democracy – highlights some of these issues with a special emphasis on both the supply and the demand side of the so called “political marketplace” and the significant political and social costs and long-term risks associated with CPA.

Despite the growing power and impact of CPA, and the rising concerns about its competitive and societal externalities and costs (Barley 2007; Hadani, 2012; Hadani, Bonardi, & Dahan, 2017; Hadani & Schuler, 2013; Neron, 2016; Nyberg & Murray, 2020; Nyberg, Spicer, & Wright, 2013; Prabhat & Primo, 2019; Repetto, 2007; Walker, 2012), mainstream CPA research has mostly focused on the descriptive and instrumental value of CPA. The literature has focused on the firm as the sole beneficiary of CPA, but ignored, for the most part, ethical and normative analyses of CPA, as well as the societal risks and costs it may engender. Mantere, Pajunen and Lamberg (2009: 106) summarize this situation succinctly: “Indeed, mainstream research has considered CPA to be an integral and equal part of the competitive strategies of a firm”. This is; an instrumental-structuralist view that has become a dominant monolith in CPA scholarship. They further note that there is a clear demarcation between a ‘functionalist’ CPA scholarship and a more ethically oriented CSR scholarship, which is far less developed and explored (for a similar view see Neron, 2016). This suggests that paradigmatic gate keeping may be occurring in CPA scholarship.

Aim and Scope

The special issue is motivated by the above-described state of affairs: the lack of focus on the darker side of CPA, both to politically active firms and stakeholders. The aim and scope of this special issue is to address the above theoretical and empirical voids and potential paradigmatic gate keeping. The aim is to move away from a strict focus on the firm as the major beneficiary of CPA, towards investigating and theorizing the impact of CPA on shareholders, stakeholders and the public at large.

We are calling for both theoretical and empirical papers, quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods papers that explore the potential negative consequences, costs, risks and externalities that may be associated with corporate political activities, across its different types and forms. We seek to showcase the latest developments in, and future directions of cutting edge research on the broader consequences of CPA.

TOPICS OF INTEREST

The topics below provide a general but **non-exhaustive** list of questions and topics that can be addressed in this issue through quantitative, qualitative, or mixed method approaches, drawing on a variety of theoretical lenses and paradigms that should theoretically expand and challenge existing views:

What are the potential risks and costs associated with CPA? What are the boundary or contingency factors that attenuate such risks?

Taking into account the opaque nature of CPA, what role does mass media and other forms of visibility or scrutiny play in impacting the propensity for CPA and CPA outcomes?

Can we model and capture firms’ propensity to use dark money and other less overt means of CPA? And how does such a propensity impact more overt forms of CPA?

How does external and internal ownership as well as top executive and board characteristics shape CPA its potential for negative externalities? How do firms or top executives use celebrity status in CPA?

How does CPA shape firm’s legal environments? How does CPA influence broader public policy roles, functions and processes?

What is the relationship among different forms of CPA and stakeholders? How does CPA impact stakeholders? How do stakeholders impact CPA? Can they?

Can a normative lens be applied to CPA? Should such a lens be applied? Does it complement or conflict with an instrumental focus on CPA? Does it matter to executives’ CPA decision making?

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