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► **To cite this version:**

Christian Voegtlin, Michelle Greenwood. Corporate social responsibility and human resource management: A systematic review and conceptual analysis. *Human Resource Management Review*, Elsevier, 2016, 26, pp.181 - 197. 10.1016/j.hrmr.2015.12.003 . hal-01481479

**HAL Id: hal-01481479**

**<https://hal-audencia.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01481479>**

Submitted on 2 Mar 2017

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**Corporate Social Responsibility and Human Resource Management:  
A Systematic Review and Conceptual Analysis**

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*Unedited version of a paper published in Human Resource Management Review, 26(3), 181-197, DOI: 10.1016/j.hrmr.2015.12.003. For private use only. For correct citations and quotations please see the original publication in Human Resource Management Review.*

**Acknowledgments:**

We thank Monash University for its financial support of this project through the Australian Centre for Research in Employment and Work (ACREW) and the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) that funded this research through the research project on Responsible Leadership (grant number 100018\_149937).

# **Corporate Social Responsibility and Human Resource Management: A Systematic Review and Conceptual Analysis**

## **Abstract**

Despite a significant increase in research and practice linking corporate social responsibility (CSR) and human resource management (HRM), a comprehensive examination of the relationship between these two constructs has yet to be undertaken. Scholars associating CSR and HRM rarely explicate their understanding of the connection between CSR and HRM (CSR-HRM) or the assumptions they make when exploring this relationship. Thus, we argue that a comprehensive review of the literature of the CSR-HRM nexus is relevant and necessary. Such a review would allow scholars to reach more explicit and comprehensive understandings of CSR-HRM, and enhance research both theoretically and empirically. We address this endeavour by means of a systematic review and conceptual analysis of past and current writings linking CSR and HRM, based on key themes and meta-theoretical commitments at the intersection of CSR-HRM. We propose three theoretical perspectives that can be used to conceptualize CSR-HRM: instrumental, social integrative and political. We elaborate on the potential these three approaches hold for research in the field of CSR-HRM. The contribution of this paper is to expose the diversity of understandings of CSR-HRM and provide a conceptual map for navigating and planning further research.

**Keywords:** Corporate social responsibility; human resource management; political CSR; political HRM; systematic review; employee involvement.

**Acknowledgments:** We thank Monash University for its financial support of this project through the Australian Centre for Research in Employment and Work (ACREW) and the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) for funding this research through the research project on Responsible Leadership (grant number 100018\_149937).

## **Corporate Social Responsibility and Human Resource Management:**

### **A Systematic Review and Conceptual Analysis**

Recent attention to employee-focused corporate social responsibility (CSR) and ethical aspects of human resource management (HRM) has been paralleled by an increased focus on research and practice linking CSR and HRM (e.g. Brammer, Millington, & Rayton, 2007; Cooke & He, 2010; Gond, Igalens, Swaen, & El Akremi, 2011; Morgeson, Aguinis, Waldman, & Siegel, 2013; Shen, 2011; SHRM, 2006). HRM plays a significant role in how CSR is understood, developed and enacted; similarly, corporations' understandings of social responsibility have implications for the treatment of workers. Furthermore, both CSR and HRM can be seen as relevant in understanding the assumptions about the role of the corporation and the relationship between employer and workers. Thus, it is not surprising that we observe calls for research on the relationship between CSR and HRM (CSR-HRM) (e.g. DeNisi, Wilson, & Biteman, 2014). However, despite increasing research activity on the CSR-HRM nexus, a comprehensive examination of the relationship between these two constructs is yet to be undertaken. We argue that such an endeavour is relevant and necessary.

It is *relevant*, because changing institutional conditions in a globalizing business environment (Ryan & Wessel, 2015; Stone & Deadrick, 2015), reflected in shifting organizational forms and shifting power relations between business organizations, labour unions and governmental agencies, place ever more responsibility for the treatment of workers on the business firm. On the one hand, more insecure employment relationships emerge due to changing organizational forms (e.g. partnerships, alliances, franchising, sub-contracting), leading to multi-employer sites, outsourcing, temporary forms of employment and self-employment (Marchington, Grimshaw, Rubery, & Willmott, 2005; Rubery et al., 2002). These new employment relationships result in unstable career patterns, work stress and exhaustion, and risk is shifted to the workers. On the other hand, the relationship between the three traditional parties negotiating worker rights and responsibilities (business, labour unions

and nation state governments) is changing due to the globalization of markets. We see a decline in unionization in developed countries (Bryson, Ebbinghaus, & Visser, 2011), constraints in the regulatory power of nation state over global business (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011) and insufficient or non-existing labour laws in developing countries (Cooke & He, 2010). These regulation deficits may result in unintended consequences such as the exploitation of workers along the supply chain, insecure working contracts and an increasing uncertainty over employment status in both developing and developed countries (Marchington, 2015).

Alongside a decline of state agency and labour union capacity to enforce industrial rule that allows business greater powers over employment relations, business companies also experience an increasing scrutiny of company conduct through other stakeholders; that is, NGOs, the media and consumers pressure firms to engage in socially responsible behaviour (Teegen, Doh, & Vachani, 2004). This perceived pressure on CSR has the potential to become a substitute mechanism for improving working conditions. Increasingly, HR professional education includes mandatory training in CSR (SHRM, 2006). Thus, given that responsibility and accountability for working conditions shift to the corporation, HRM comes to be seen as an implicit steward for good work, not only for the corporation's direct employees, but also for the people working indirectly for the organization (e.g. through sub-contracting, temporary employment agencies or suppliers).

An in-depth and comprehensive exploration of the relationship between CSR and HRM is also a *necessary* endeavour, as the research attention on the nexus of CSR and HRM has been largely ad hoc and disjointed (Brammer, 2011); there is a lack of theoretical anchoring, conceptual framing and meta-theoretical awareness in many of these contributions. Despite there being pockets of theorization (e.g. Morgeson et al., 2013), current knowledge about the topic needs to be developed further (following Grant & Pollock, 2011) on the grounds that it is incomplete (i.e. more research needs to be done); it is inadequate (i.e. it fails

to incorporate important perspectives; Grant & Pollock, 2011); and/or it is inaccurate (i.e. fails to acknowledge incommensurable features). Most treatments cover only a limited aspect of the phenomenon as a whole and devote little attention to systematizing alternative perspectives or to developing a vocabulary for describing divergent approaches, thereby limiting potential research to “gap spotting” and “underproblemitization” (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011). We hold that both CSR and HRM are value laden and contested arenas and, as such, that making implicit and unchallenged assumptions about what comprises (or should comprise) either construct will result in narrow, partial interpretations of the CSR-HRM relationship. In the following, we explain our understanding of these constructs.

If any agreement has arisen from the active debates in CSR scholarship about the definition (is CSR best understood as ideology, policy, practice, or process?) and purpose (is CSR best understood as corporate largesse, soft regulation, public relations, corporate accountability, corporate hegemony?), it is that CSR is amorphous (see any number of highly cited papers explicitly addressing definitions of CSR; e.g. Dahlsrud, 2008). CSR means many things to many people: what is understood as CSR has developed over time (Carroll, 1999; Lee, 2008); varies with region, country and culture (Matten & Moon, 2008); is different for different types of organisations (Spence, 2007); and is entirely in the eye of the paradigm beholder (cf. Fleming & Jones, 2012; Porter & Kramer, 2006). To differentiate between different approaches to CSR one needs to consider foundational questions: What is the purpose of the firm? To whom is the firm responsible? What is the role of the firm with respect to society? What is the position of stakeholders? And what is the role of government/regulation? Although we resist the temptation to provide a conclusive definition of CSR, we would be remiss to not make explicit our understanding of CSR. Drawing on writings on CSR (Filatotchev & Nakajima, 2014, Matten & Moon, 2008, Scherer & Palazzo, 2007), we understand CSR to be a *shifting political contest between business, government and civil society actors over governance of the corporation*. This definition allows us to

emphasize the changing institutional conditions of a globalizing business environment and their implications for an organization's CSR.

Definitions and purposes of HRM are less readily accepted as sites of political and philosophical contest within HRM scholarship. Similar to CSR, it is acknowledged that what is understood as HRM has developed over time; varies with region, albeit that a clearly identifiable "US" model is fairly dominant; and is different for different types of organisations, with HRM in many businesses not clearly distinguishable – as a function or process – from general management activities (Kaufman, 2014). However, meta-theoretical debates have, for the main part, occurred outside mainstream HRM scholarship (Alvesson, 2009; Greenwood, 2013). These draw on a range of concepts: ideological frames of reference (unitarism, pluralism and radicalism) as identified by Fox (1974); stakeholder versus firm orientation (cf. Beer et al., 1984; Tichy, Fombrun, & Devanna, 1982); approaches to power, control and agency in HRM from structuralist or humanistic perspectives (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Kamoche, 1991). In an attempt to pin down our understanding of this "fluid, multi-faceted and intrinsically ambiguous phenomenon" (Keenoy, 1990, p. 1) beyond the evident 'the management of humans as resources' we draw from Watson (2010) and Mueller and Carter (2005) to define HRM as *institutions, discourses and practices focused on the management of people within an employment relationship enacted through networks comprising multiple public and private actors*. This definition allows us to understand HRM beyond its functional aspects, to consider both micro and macro levels of the phenomenon, and to expand the employer-worker dyad to include multiple institutions and stakeholders.

Despite the plurality of understandings and approaches to both CSR and HRM, these fields tend to be dominated by mainstream functionalist approaches that exhort scholars to explore 'best' ways to achieve organizational outcomes (see Truss, 2001); lack reflexivity; and implicitly hold to prevailing assumptions about the values and goals of research. We bear witness to heart-felt pleas for greater reflexivity in HRM and business ethics (Dachler &

Enderle, 1989; Janssens & Steyaert, 2009) to ward off the dangers posed by mono-chromatic research that reinforces dominant perspectives, masks genuine debate, and undermines pluralism of ideas. Following Jones, Parker and ten Bos (2005, p. 3), we interpret these as the intended or unintended consequences of foreclosing a debate precipitately, whereby “premature responses to questions look like answers [and] we no longer think about the questions”.

The purpose of this paper is to remedy this situation in two ways: first, by providing an overview of the CSR-HRM field, and second by building a range of conceptualizations that specifically focus on the CSR-HRM nexus. With this, we address the following research question: What are the main themes and approaches in the literature on CSR-HRM, and how should future research proceed in expanding this important field of enquiry? The contributions of this paper are threefold: First, to the best of our knowledge, the paper provides the first comprehensive, systematic analysis of research linking CSR and HRM. Second, it develops a typology of CSR-HRM research that can guide theory building at the intersection of these fields and points out relevant future research opportunities within these perspectives. Third, the paper proposes a politically extended view on CSR-HRM as the perspective most suitable to address the challenges of changing institutional conditions in a globalizing business environment for a socially conscious HRM.

In order to accomplish this endeavour, our research will be explained in four stages. First, we will elaborate on the method of our systematic review, followed by the details of the analysis. Our findings will provide a descriptive and conceptual overview of the CSR-HRM literature that we will subsequently discuss in order to develop a typology of CSR-HRM perspectives that informs both present and future research. We will conclude by highlighting the importance and limitations of our endeavour.



## **1. Method**

We undertook a conceptual exploration of CSR-HRM by means of a systematic review and conceptual analysis of academic literature that specifically included these two constructs (Rousseau, Manning, & Denyer, 2008; Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003). The review and conceptual analysis comprised four steps: first, we developed a database by undertaking a comprehensive and systematic search to identify and extract all the relevant literature in relation to CSR-HRM published in peer-reviewed academic journals. Second, in an iterative process between theoretically derived and empirically emerging themes, we developed a template for analysing the articles. Third, a content analysis of the retrieved articles, based on the template, was used to extract descriptive and qualitative conceptual data. Finally, the results were interpreted and the findings meaningfully synthesized.

### *1.1. Development of the database*

The initial step comprised the identification of the relevant research. To capture previously published research in refereed academic journals from the earliest publication date to December 2014, we used 11 EBSCO online databases<sup>1</sup>. We conducted a Boolean search of these, combining one of several ‘CSR-terms’ with one of several ‘HRM-terms’<sup>2</sup>, within the title, abstract or subject terms of peer-reviewed journals, and repeated the search for all possible combinations. We continuously updated the database throughout the period of our research project by means of a Google Scholar alert specific to our key terms. Overall, the searches resulted in an initial database of 254 articles.

We acknowledge that there are debates around the definition and scope of CSR and its relation to the concepts of business ethics (where there is an established stream of research linked to HRM; see Greenwood, 2002, 2013; Schumann, 2001) and sustainability (Ehnert & Harry, 2012). However, business ethics and sustainability (like CSR) are complex, developing and contested fields, and the inclusion of these terms would have added ambiguity to our

research to the degree that would dilute our original research purpose and focus. It is important to note that not including sustainability as a search term (in order to have a more focused review) does not mean that this term or this research was excluded. Indeed, several articles in our final database contain either “sustainability” or “sustainable” in the title (n=11) or the abstract (n=24) in addition to a CSR term. Thus, our database includes sustainability research that is closely related to CSR literature.

Furthermore, even though we did not use specific HR practices (e.g. recruitment or career development) as search terms (because our focus is the role of HRM in relation to CSR rather than on the implementation of particular HR practices) the search results include articles focusing on such HR practices (e.g. when an article focussing on HR practices refers to generic HRM terms in the abstract or keywords). Several articles discuss the design and implementation of HR practices in the context of the more general relation between CSR and HRM. For instance, articles addressing socially responsible HR practices in relation to workplace safety or diversity management (Brown, 1996; Gond et al., 2011), talent management (Tymon, Stumpf, & Doh, 2010), or employee motivation and commitment (Cooke & He, 2010).

This primary list of articles was refined to account for the “tension between the statistical benefits of including a large number of primary studies and conducting high-quality reviews of fewer studies with the use of more selective methodological criteria of inclusion and exclusion” (Tranfield et al., 2003, p. 215). Thus, in addition to limiting our search terms, we excluded articles based on the following criteria: (1) articles where one or both terms (CSR or HRM) were absent from, or marginal to, the study (even though they were named in the title/abstract/search terms); (2) articles with limited substantive content (e.g. short biographies of authors, editorial letters); (3), articles where CSR was used as an abbreviation for something else (e.g. customer service representatives); and (4), four articles that were not retrievable in full text from any of the major academic databases or public internet sites. This

judgment was made during the content analysis of the articles and undertaken separately and independently by the study's two authors. Articles that were borderline, that is not clearly identifiable as included or excluded, were discussed between the two researchers and a consensual decision was made.

Overall, 104 articles (41%) were disqualified from the initial database of 254. This high number of excluded articles reflects that even though aspects of CSR and HRM were included in the titles, abstracts or keywords, they were not the actual focus or research question of the article (perhaps indicating an early trend or "fashion" towards CSR-HRM). The final dataset of articles relating to CSR and HRM consisted of 150 articles published between 1975 and December 2014 (see Figure 1 for the distribution of articles over time).

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Insert Figure 1 about here  
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### *1.2. Development of the template and content analysis*

After the initial step of creating the database, we did a content analysis to retrieve relevant information from the 150 papers with regard to bibliographical data, research process and research content. We developed a template that allowed us to extract descriptive data as well as text from the articles. The development of the template was an iterative process. We began with descriptive categories derived from our analysis of prior templates of systematic reviews (e.g. Bakker, 2010; Brammer, Hoejmoose, & Millington, 2010). We then analysed the articles on the basis of conceptual categories derived a priori from existing meta-theoretical studies of the two fields of CSR and HRM (Garriga & Melé, 2004; Greenwood, 2013; Greenwood, 2002; Kamoche, 1991; Keegan & Boselie, 2006; Legge, 1995; Scherer & Palazzo, 2007; Windsor, 2006). Our interpretation of the categories was amended or adjusted inductively according to the findings. The final template used for the analysis of all the articles comprised two categories of data: descriptive bibliographical data and conceptual

content data. The bibliographical data included type of journal (e.g. business ethics, HRM, general management), type of article (e.g. conceptual, review, empirical), method used (quantitative, qualitative), unit of analysis (e.g. workers, managers, organisation), focal industry and cultural/geographical location of the study. The conceptual categories included definition/approach to CSR, definition/approach to HRM, and assumptions about the position of stakeholders, the role of government and the relation between the two constructs of CSR and HRM. Analysis of each article using this template allowed us to retrieve descriptive data and key emerging themes around CSR-HRM.

The reliability and interpretative validity of the systematic review and the analysis of the results was ensured through several steps: structured and systematic protocols for the search, a formalized template, and cross-referencing and multiple rounds of coding by both of the two study authors. Rounds of coding were always followed up by discussions that helped create a common understanding of the relevant categories. Areas of difference or disagreement were used as opportunities for clarifying the template and ensuring inter-rater agreement. Finally, reliability and interpretive validity of the method is enhanced through the systematic and transparent reporting of the method as presented.

## **2. Development of CSR-HRM research**

We analysed the findings of our systematic review of CSR-HRM scholarship according to the chronological development of this research. We thereby identified shifting trends over time and extracted key themes at the intersection of extant CSR-HRM literature.

### *2.1. Emergence of CSR-HRM research*

The results of our research are displayed in Table 1. These clearly show an increasing interest in the topic over time (see also Figure 1). We identified three phases: an early incubation phase from the earliest article our search retrieved, which was published in 1975, to 2002

(7%), a phase of incremental growth from 2003 to 2008 (21%), and finally, a period of rapid growth in recent years (72% of the articles were published from 2009 until 2014<sup>3</sup>). Surveying the shifts in publications over this 39 year period underscores the surge in interest in the topic and the need for research in an underexplored field. It also highlights the changes in the understanding of CSR-HRM over time. While early publications treated the relationship narrowly in terms of social aspects of work or discussed it with regard to the “social responsibility of business [being] a totally new phenomenon” (Bergmann, 1975, p. 61), with an increase in the relevance of the CSR topic both in research and practice and the broadening scope of HRM’s responsibilities over time, the relationship between the two constructs has broadened to become an interesting and fruitful area of research.

More specifically, research that regards CSR and HRM as overlapping concepts has evolved from one article in the incubation period and the period of incremental growth, respectively, to 27 articles in the last five years. However, judging from the few conceptual manuscripts that really address the CSR-HRM relationship in depth (9%), we see a necessity for further theory building work.

Furthermore, there seems to be an emerging shift over time with regard to the geographical region that is the focus of CSR-HRM research. While the majority of the articles that specified a geographical region in the early incubation period related to CSR-HRM in North America (55%), the main focus in the next period of incremental growth shifted to Europe when CSR-HRM research gained prominence (with 35% the majority of articles in that period). This focus on CSR-HRM research in Europe could be linked to observations that the “European social contract” is more communitarian in nature and has greater emphasis on regulation, albeit that it is shifting towards a “US model” (Waddock et al., 2007, p. 3): Two particular trends of note are the decline of the power and relevance of labour unions and the increasing prominence of CSR in Europe (Matten & Moon, 2008; Preuss, Haunschild, & Matten, 2009); the latter might be seen as a compensation for or replacement of the former.

Most interestingly, however, during the last five years of substantial growth in research, Asia became a strong focus of analysis (with 18% now almost equal to research focusing on North America and Europe). Still only marginally considered are CSR-HRM issues in South America or Africa (only 5% overall). One reason for the growing focus on Asia might be that CSR has become a relevant topic for companies in this area. As a consequence, research started to basically describe CSR practices, including HRM aspects (see e.g. Yam, 2013). Studies focusing on China highlight the role of the state in CSR-HRM (e.g. Cooke, 2011). However, research also conceptualized and empirically investigated important CSR-HRM aspects using samples from Asian countries (e.g. Tymon et al., 2010; Zhang, 2010).

Most of the research articles are empirical research articles (67%), rather than purely conceptual (33%). The empirical studies for instance measure the impact of CSR, including the way employees are treated, on firm performance (Boesso & Michelon 2010) or investigate whether and how HRM can facilitate employee engagement in CSR through qualitative interviews with CSR and HRM managers (Gond et al., 2011). The emphasis has thereby shifted over time from a predominance of conceptual articles in the first period to empirical articles forming the majority after 2002 (see Table 1). This might to a certain extent be due to the development of CSR measurement and outcomes (Morgeson et al., 2013; Wood, 2010), and the growing emphasis on strategy and performance in HRM research (Paauwe, 2009). With regard to the methodologies used, the qualitative studies are predominantly based on interviews/content analysis used as inductive and explorative research (e.g. Davies & Crane, 2010). Most of the quantitative articles are either descriptive or based on cross-sectional data – research articles, for example, identify CSR-related HRM practices of firms in different countries (Vives, 2006), or survey HRM as part of CSR operationalizations or CSR disclosure (most often when CSR is measured via the KLD Database, as is the case in over 10% of all the empirical articles in the database). Other articles investigate the positive effects of already more established aspects of HRM and/or CSR, like commitment, job satisfaction, turnover, or

corporate charitable contributions (see e.g. Brammer et al., 2007; Chen, Patten, & Roberts, 2008; Cheruiyot & Maru, 2011).

Over all three periods, an almost equal number of articles have been published in CSR or business ethics journals, in HRM related journals, as well as in general management journals (see Table 1). The predominant unit of analysis is almost always the organization<sup>4</sup> (117 of the 150 articles), followed by (and also often combined with) an emphasis on managers (31 articles) or workers (44 articles). Articles rarely address other stakeholder groups as the focal unit of analysis (only 18 articles). Thus, when investigating CSR and HRM, the main area of interest is still internal organizational processes and the employer-worker relationship.

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## *2.2. Relating CSR and HRM in CSR-HRM research*

Our systematic review shows that the scholarly debate in CSR-HRM is dominated by two trends – HRM as a part of CSR and CSR as a part of HRM – with little research focused on either an overview of the relationship or an integration of the constructs (see Table 2).

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Where *HRM is discussed as an element of CSR*, CSR is the focus of the research. The emphasis tends to be on the enabling of CSR. The concentration on CSR in this research is reflected by many of these studies being published in journals related to business ethics or CSR (63% of the 41 articles published in these journals). HRM is considered to be part of CSR in various ways that can be summarized in two separate categories. HRM as an antecedent to CSR focuses on the role of “human resources” (i.e. workers) and the role of human resource management in enabling CSR in the organization. HRM as a subset of CSR

would suggest that HRM (i.e. the management of workers) is one of several factors that make up CSR.

Depictions of HRM as an antecedent of CSR explore how various HRM practices could impact CSR policies and practices (see Table 3). These studies differ in their implicit assumptions about the rationale for HRM engagement in CSR, focusing either on effectiveness criteria or on extended responsibility criteria beyond achieving performance related goals. With regard to the former, HRM could positively impact the achievement of performance related goals of CSR; with regard to the latter, HRM engagement could give employees their rightful voice and/or enhance the responsibility goals of CSR. Interestingly, only a minority of studies in this category are based on effectiveness criteria and are concerned with using HRM in order to achieve CSR for strategic reasons (e.g. Becker, 2011; Boesso & Michelon, 2010). More common is a concern for how HRM could contribute to a responsible organization: by respecting workers' right to participate and/or ensuring more genuine and emancipatory CSR.

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Insert Table 3 about here  
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HRM is also considered as a subset of CSR whereby HRM is seen as one of a number of elements that comprise CSR or as partial evidence to demonstrate the CSR of an organization. For example, in studies looking at CSR disclosure, HRM or employee relations are identified as a measure of CSR (e.g. Holder-Webb, Cohen, Nath, & Wood, 2009) and, in some cases, implying "good" HRM is a feature of CSR (Cheruiyot & Maru, 2011). Few of CSR disclosures or CSP studies consider any difficulty involved in measuring a social phenomenon such as HRM (see Power, 2004) and none critique the notion of "good" HRM (see Greenwood, 2002, 2013; Jack, Greenwood, & Schapper, 2012).



Where *CSR is assumed to be part of HRM*, it is HRM that is the focus of the research. The majority of the research in this area considers CSR to be a strategic tool for enhancing “effective” HRM. A smaller number of studies assume that CSR is concerned with acquitting “responsible” HRM. The argument made by Shen and colleagues (Shen, 2011; Shen & Jiuhua Zhu, 2011) that “responsible” HRM can be used for strategic purposes raises the fundamental question of what is meant by “responsible” (responsible for what and to whom?) and in doing so demonstrates the need for this current study. Table 3 depicts various ways CSR can influence HRM practices.

Using CSR for effective HRM provides the rationale for the majority of the studies where HRM is the leading construct. The idea that is developed both conceptually and empirically is that the CSR reputation and practices of a firm can be used to attract, retain and motivate employees, that is, “win the war for talent” (Bhattacharya, Sen, & Korschun, 2008). In another interpretation of “effective”, CSR is seen as arising from the success of corporations, past and present, in preventing unionization or significant regulation of their workplaces (Locke, Rissing, & Pal, 2013; Marens, 2010, 2013). In its most sophisticated form, CSR for effective HRM is an enactment of unitarist philosophies of HRM where CSR becomes a method to align the interest, values and goals of the employee with the organization; a form of “high commitment” or “soft” HRM (Van Buren, Greenwood, & Sheehan, 2011). Indeed, it could be argued that CSR has become the basis of an “ideological psychological contract” between employer and employee (O'Donohue & Nelson, 2009; Thompson & Bunderson, 2003). For example, Rayton et al. (2015) use psychological contract theory to explain their observation that breaches of employees’ expectations with regard to internal corporate social performance (primarily employees and employment practices) have a significantly stronger negative influence on employees’ affective commitment than breaches of external corporate social performance (primarily concerned with consumers and local community). In times of increasingly insecure employment relationships (due to outsourcing,

temporary forms of employment, etc.) such a psychological contract based on internal CSR might even function as a substitute for formal contracts that specify the “traditional” obligations of employees and employers engaging in a fixed long-term employment.

The interpretation of CSR as responsible HRM has surfaced in several studies (e.g. Ardichvili, 2011; McCabe, 2000). One view is that CSR is a form of soft law, a substitute for legislation and/or regulation, suggesting that responsible HRM can be achieved through CSR. One can ask what value is gained in attaching the term CSR to responsible HRM practices, that is, how the new “SRHRM” (or its variation SR-IHRM; Shen 2011) differs from what may have long-established views of responsible or ethical employment<sup>5</sup>.

Rather than pursue narrow uni-directional depictions of HRM as a part of CSR or vice versa, a small number of studies consider *CSR and HRM as a complex and rich interactive phenomena*. A series of European cases presented by Preuss et al. (2009), showing the capacity of both HR and labour unions to shape corporate policy, highlights two important features: that different regional settings may entail different aspects of CSR being shaped by different constellations of actors; and that various stakeholders such as worker representatives and trade unions can play a pivotal role in CSR-HRM. Martínez Lucio and Stuart (2011, p. 3661) focus on the influence of the state and argue that “the reality is that we need to engage more fully with the state as a broad ensemble of traditional and new institutional practices if we are to fully understand the politics and realities of understanding HRM”.

The studies focusing on the conceptual overlap between CSR and HRM can be used to extract key themes relating to CSR-HRM. Thus, rather than considering one a subset of the other, these themes show areas of mutual influence and overlap between the two concepts. The previous examples of Preuss et al. (2009) and Martínez Lucio and Stuart (2011) indicate for instance that one key area of CSR-HRM is stakeholder integration. Such integration thereby not only considers employers and workers, but also other stakeholders like labour unions, the state or the local community (Cleveland, Byrne, & Cavanagh, 2015;

Mariappanadar, 2014). Moreover, the studies indicate that the globalization of business poses challenges for CSR-HRM, for instance with regard to heterogeneous norms and expectations in different regional and cultural contexts, precarious working conditions along the supply-chain, and business (self-) regulation (e.g. Becker, Carbo, & Langella, 2010; Cooke & He, 2010; Westermann-Behaylo, Berman, & Van Buren, 2014).

In light of the changing institutional conditions for business firms in global business mentioned at the outset of the article and the topics discussed in research addressing the nexus of CSR-HRM, we consider the following themes especially relevant and promising areas for CSR-HRM research: CSR-HRM in relation to (social, environmental and financial) performance; the micro-foundation of CSR through HRM; stakeholder integration; regulation and the role of the state; changing employment relationships; and plurality of interests, power and conflict. In the following, we will elaborate on how these themes are related to different meta-theoretical commitments and research assumptions. We thereby develop our typology of CSR-HRM approaches alongside extant classifications of CSR research and introduce three CSR-HRM perspectives: the instrumental, social-integrative and political approaches. Thus, research from the instrumental CSR-HRM approach relates strongly to the micro-foundation of CSR and the link between CSR-HRM and performance. Integrative approaches first and foremost consider stakeholder integration as a relevant research endeavour. Finally, the political CSR-HRM approaches characterized henceforth are concerned with the responsibility implications of changing employment relationships, especially with regard to (global) regulation, the role of the state, precarious working conditions, and the critical role of power and conflict in negotiating CSR-HRM aspects.

To conclude, we take to heart the salient findings of the most comprehensive exploration of the CSR-HRM relationship to date by Brammer (2011): that extant research is overly focused on employment issues (e.g. diversity, worker involvement, human rights) at the expense of conceptual foundations and theoretical development; that existing research is

highly fragmented; that there is a divide between research that is CSR oriented and research that is employment relations oriented; and that much current research is organization rather than worker oriented. We thus move to our substantive contribution, a typology of CSR-HRM perspectives that sets the ground for both dialogue and disagreement across a range of ontological and epistemological perspectives.

### **3. A typology of CSR-HRM perspectives and their implications for theory and research**

The analysis of the research articles that are part of the systematic review and that considered CSR-HRM as mutually dependent revealed key themes at the intersection of both concepts. In order to develop these themes and to uncover future research opportunities on how to address them, we propose a theoretical categorization of CSR-HRM research. Our framework for analysing CSR-HRM research builds on previous mappings of social systems and CSR research (Garriga & Melé, 2004; Parsons, 1961; Windsor, 2006). Specifically, we draw on the typology proposed by Garriga and Melé (2004) who build on Parsons' theory of social systems. Parsons argues that every social system needs to cope with four fundamental problems: mobilizing and distributing resources; establishing priorities among the goals of the system; coordinating relationships; and defining appropriate values for the actors in the system (Garriga and Melé 2004; Parsons 1961). However, as noted by Garriga and Melé (2004), the theoretical perspective that scholars adopt to answer these fundamental challenges and problems influences the roles and responsibilities they assign to business firms and other actors (e.g. government, workers, labour unions) in addressing these challenges, and how they prioritize the allocation of firm resources to the respective functions (e.g. putting an emphasis either on the economic function, the political function or the social integrative function of the business firm).

A business organization fulfils all of these functions, both as a social system in itself and as part of the broader society. For instance, we observed a growing political role of

business in a globalizing environment, where business organizations contribute to global governance and the production of global public goods (Kaul, Conceicao, Le Goulven, & Mendoza, 2003; Scherer & Palazzo, 2011). HRM plays an important role in this, as it influences how an organization deploys its resources to achieve performance goals, how it defines its political responsibilities internally and externally, and how it integrates various stakeholder groups, like employees, families and communities. Thus, drawing on these assumptions of social systems and the related mapping of CSR research (Garriga & Melé, 2004; Parsons, 1961), we developed our typology of CSR-HRM research and identify instrumental, social integrative and political approaches<sup>6</sup> which are differentiated by their conceptualizations and meta-theoretical commitments to CSR-HRM (see Table 4).

Here we advance the diversity of these various approaches, their potential to contribute to different forms of knowledge around this link and their positions regarding relevant themes in CSR-HRM research that surfaced in the review. Each of the three perspectives on CSR-HRM incorporates research that relies on similar assumptions about the nature of the phenomenon under investigation, and about the goals and means of CSR-HRM (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). These perspectives have heuristic relevance as they can guide researchers to consider specific CSR-HRM problems and challenges in relation to particular perspectives and to more fully appreciate their contexts and limitations. However, this is not to say that the boundaries of these perspectives are fixed or that the perspectives are mutually exclusive. Indeed we would suggest that research might touch upon more than one perspective and that, furthermore, there is some heterogeneity of research approaches within the perspectives.

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Insert Table 4 about here  
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### 3.1. Instrumental CSR-HRM

*Instrumental* approaches to CSR-HRM materialize in several forms, but the underlying premise is that the involvement of workers in CSR is instrumental in achieving positive economic outcomes for the organization. There is some variation within these approaches depending on whether positive outcomes for workers as a result of worker involvement in CSR are a goal (rather than a default by-product) of CSR-HRM such that the research might be considered *integrative* (see next section). Approaches that rely either explicitly or implicitly on an *instrumental view* of CSR-HRM are based either on HRM being used strategically to pursue practices of CSR or, alternatively, on CSR as strategic in pursuing practices of HRM; either one being for the ultimate purpose of enhanced organizational performance outcomes and concomitant shareholder value (de Bussy & Suprawan, 2012; see e.g. El Ghoul, Guedhami, Kwok, & Mishra, 2011; Jin-Woo, 2010).

The theoretical underpinnings for an instrumental perspective often derive from the neo-classical economics approach (e.g. from instrumental CSR; McWilliams & Siegel, 2001) and also from “hard” or transactional models of HRM (Tichy et al., 1982). There is an implicit assumption that management acts as the agent of shareholders and holds the singular source of authority (Fox, 1974). This understanding of HRM is based on the premise of a transactional psychological contract, where the owners of the firm expect managers and workers to pursue ‘their’ financial performance goals in exchange for fair remuneration and other benefits of the employment contract (Mirvis, 2012; Rousseau, 1995).

The direct role of business, and subsequently the function of CSR-HRM, in society is seen as passive and undertaken through market mechanisms. The purpose of the firm is to maximize profit for its owners and, as a consequence, economic considerations dominate strategic decisions. The underlying normative assumptions of neo-classical economic approaches are thereby based on the fairness of property rights of the owners and the fiduciary duties of agents (e.g. directors, managers and workers). Furthermore, utilitarian considerations

may be invoked to support such approaches based on the ‘invisible hand’ argument, which assumes that market exchanges driven by self-interested prudential actors will, by default, satisfy needs and bring about efficient allocation of resources, and thus serve the greatest number of those that are part of such liberal market societies (Friedman, 1970; Jensen, 2002). The focus of instrumental CSR-HRM is most often on internal organizational mechanisms, the individual workers, and implementation of the strategic targets of the firm. In the case of conflicting interests, shareholder interests prevail, even if in some instances this means that employees might ‘lose’ (e.g. lose their job). Table 4 provides a comparison of these characteristics with the other two approaches.

Research based on instrumental approaches addresses two important themes in CSR-HRM: First, it investigates HRM aspects in CSR measures and their relation to financial performance and, second, it focuses on the micro-foundations of CSR, explaining the impact of and on CSR through individual worker behaviour. Research relating to the first theme focuses mainly on the level of the firm and tries to establish the link between CSR and different performance indicators drawing on the results of quantitative studies. An example is the study of Boesso and Michelon (2010) that investigates the effect of stakeholder prioritization on corporate financial performance. The authors hypothesize that only through strategic prioritization on specific social issues, like employee relations, can firms create competitive performance advantages. Using firm-level performance data and the KLD as a measure for CSR, the findings show that “employee relationships and the highly correlated issues of diversity seem to have a ‘per se’ positive impact on some measures of financial success” (Boesso & Michelon 2010, p. 491). The study shows that regarding CSR not only as a monolithic construct but also as comprising multiple dimensions (specifically focusing on the employee relations dimension) can contribute to more parsimonious explanations regarding its contribution to firm performance. However, the study also highlights some of the limitations of the macro-level instrumental CSR-HRM research with regard to the empirical

methods that are used, i.e. this research is predominantly based on a cross-sectional data, which limits the causal interpretation of its findings.

The second focus of instrumental CSR-HRM research is on the micro-foundation of CSR. Morgeson et al. (2013, p. 813) observe that micro-level theories, especially with regard to HRM practices, “can help us to ascertain the underlying psychological processes (i.e. mediators), as well as contingencies (i.e. moderators) of CSR and its outcomes.” Morgeson and colleagues are the editors of a special issue related to CSR-HRM that has been published in the journal *Personnel Psychology*. The four articles of the special issue draw on psychological theories to explain CSR related effects pertaining to employees. That Gully et al. (2013) have, for example, drawn on signaling, person–organization fit, and attraction–selection–attrition theories shows that communicating about CSR has an influence on job seekers in that it attracts applicants who perceive a strong fit with the propagated values of the organization. This research stream in instrumental CSR-HRM offers explanations on how individual characteristics and behaviour, triggered by HRM, can impact on CSR, and vice versa; again, this research contributes to our knowledge in that it provides more fine-grained explanations of the mechanisms relating to CSR. Furthermore, micro-level research on CSR-HRM starts to use more sophisticated methods to establish the validity and reliability of its findings. For instance, in another study from the special issue, Rupp et al. (2013) establish their effect of CSR on job applicants and internal employees through a scenario-based experiment and further support these results with a study of full-time employees, and Gully et al. (2013) use a field experiment where job seekers are randomly assigned to treatment and control groups. The findings of these research articles suggest that CSR can help an organization attract the best talent in order to stay ahead of competitors.

With regard to HR practices, instrumental CSR-HRM research primarily considers CSR as a means to improve these practices insofar as they contribute to organizational goals and economic performance. For instance, CSR may be regarded as a way to improve



recruiting practices to attract the best talent, to motivate employees and increase their commitment to organizational goals, and to train employees in CSR to avoid reputational penalties. It is less concerned with how HR practices can improve the social performance of the organization.

Overall, research within the instrumental perspective on CSR-HRM can contribute to scholarly knowledge by identifying how CSR and HRM aspects relate and how they can contribute to performance. We see the potential for future research in this area in a differentiated analysis of the two constructs HRM and CSR. With regard to HRM, many aspects of well-being and performance, but also work-group-related processes and aspects of leadership that are discussed in HRM research can influence CSR and vice versa. More importantly, CSR should not be regarded as a unified construct, but rather, as for instance the study of Boesso and Michelon (2010) shows, it is feasible to analyze separate dimensions of CSR, especially those focused on workers and working conditions. Furthermore, given the strong critique of the frequently used KLD measure (in particular its construct validity) to assess CSR (see e.g. Chatterji, Levine, & Toffel, 2009; Morgeson et al., 2013), future research should try to construct more specific measures of work-related CSR aspects at the organizational level that can help to open the “black box” of CSR and offer more fine grained explanations. Alternative measures, for example, might be those that rely on specific CSR perceptions or manipulate CSR aspects experimentally through vignette-studies. Examples of such approaches can be found in studies focusing on the micro-foundation of CSR (e.g. Gully et al., 2013; Rupp et al., 2013).

However, the instrumental perspective also faces limitations. Instrumental CSR-HRM approaches rely predominantly on contingency models and on best way solutions and do not consider multi-faceted open-ended resolutions. For instance, they cannot help us understand how workers make sense of CSR practices or how socially responsible HRM practices are negotiated within firms. Within this research there is negligible account for power relations,

reference to the changing institutional environment of global CSR challenges or dynamic investigation of changes over time. These are aspects that are taken up by the remaining two perspectives we discuss in the following.

### *3.2. Social integrative CSR-HRM*

*Social integrative approaches* to CSR suggest that social demands should be integrated with businesses demands, as businesses and society are dependent on each other for continuity and growth (Garriga & Melé, 2004). Similarly, the “soft” or relational view of HRM is based on integration of worker needs with organizational purposes. Therefore, from an integrative CSR-HRM perspective, involvement of workers in CSR practices and/or delivery of responsible employment is undertaken for the benefit of workers, the organization and other stakeholders.

The theoretical underpinnings of this perspective are integrative CSR theories, such as value creation stakeholder theory (e.g. Freeman, 1984) and theories of “soft” or relational HRM (e.g. Beer et al., 1984). The assumption is that “the purpose of the firm and the capitalist system within which it operates, when viewed rightly, [is] the creation of value for all stakeholders” (Noland & Phillips, 2010, p. 40). Social welfare is not assumed to emerge automatically as a consequence of the invisible hand of the market, in the manner that instrumental CSR-HRM approaches would argue. Instead, due to the limitations of market mechanisms and the resulting business externalities, stakeholder interests need to be taken into account and actively managed in order to create “win-win” situations for business and society (Jones & Felps, 2013). Consequently, profit maximization is regarded as not necessarily superordinate to ethical concerns; indeed, ethical concerns can form the basis for re-examining existing strategy, ultimately becoming strategically relevant themselves (Noland & Phillips, 2010); the ultimate goal is long-term value creation for stakeholders. Thus, integrative approaches do not prioritize shareholder interests over employee demands in the

case of conflict; rather it is assumed that conflict is undesirable and should be managed actively through the alignment of interests and the search for mutually beneficial solutions for all those involved (see Table 4).

Within this perspective, we find research that treats HR practices as antecedents to improved CSR or CSR affecting worker commitment and motivation, but also research arguing for wider stakeholder engagement as part of CSR-HRM (see e.g. Brammer et al., 2007; Cortini, 2009; Davies & Crane, 2010; Lehmann, Toh, Christensen, & Rufeï, 2010). The literature review revealed that human resource development research (HRD) in particular draws on the idea of integrative CSR-HRM. Exemplary in this regard is the work of Garavan and McGuire (2010). Garavan and McGuire (2010) develop their integrative concept around societal HRD, which “focuses on a situation where CSR, CS [corporate sustainability], and ethics are fully integrated into all aspects of the organization” (Garavan & McGuire, 2010, p. 499). They propose ways of how HRD in its global and strategic role, through its policies and practices, its systems and its roles can foster the responsiveness of an organization toward its stakeholders.

The notion of integrating different stakeholder interests and creating win-win situations for all, which is inherent in these approaches, entails an implicit assumption of ‘unitarism’. In contrast to the instrumental perspective, this assumption relates to the relational dimension of psychological contracts theory (Mirvis, 2012; Rousseau, 1995), i.e. approaches in integrative CSR-HRM assume that interests between different stakeholders can be aligned through shared value creation, rather than by give-and-take transactional relations. The relational contract is thereby based on joint obligations of employer and worker towards each other and towards society. These obligations can for instance be conveyed by HRM by influencing the employees’ social identity formation, as the article of Garavan and McGuire (2010) suggests. Overall, these organizational-level approaches to CSR-HRM (see also, Gond et al., 2011) contribute to our knowledge of CSR-HRM in that they provide a holistic

overview of the relation between different facets of the two constructs, including the integration of different stakeholders.

HR practices suggested by integrative CSR-HRM research focus on the co-design of HRM and CSR practices (Gond et al., 2011); defining on the one hand socially responsible HR practices, like the development of standards for decent work, and on the other hand HR practices to support CSR activities, including for example practices that encourage employee involvement in CSR. Selection, motivation, and compensation practices reward success toward long-term, sustainable economic and social success (Becker et al., 2010; Garavan & McGuire, 2010). After interviewing CSR and HRM managers, Gond et al. (2011) for instance distinguish between “HR practices reported as CSR” (e.g. training, competency planning, union support, health and safety), “practices identified as being at the overlap of CSR and HR” (e.g. ethics, compliance, diversity, discrimination), and “CSR practices involving HR” (e.g. community involvement, sustainability and environmental initiatives).

Integrative approaches to CSR and HRM uncover a number of significant ideas for research. Importantly, they highlight that HRM does not act in isolation, it is much more relational and interconnected, not only at an interpersonal level but also the societal level (integration of the economic and ethical, and integration of business and society) than instrumental CSR-HRM research often portrays it to be. What HRM does, its strategic direction and its operational practices, affects stakeholders beyond the organizational boundaries (e.g. by influencing the extent to which workers feel responsible for a sustainable engagement with society and the environment). At the same time, it is affected by stakeholders who carry their expectations of CSR into the organization. In this regard, integrative CSR-HRM research offers the ‘richest’ view of all three perspectives and the most detailed account on how HRM practices might contribute to CSR. Furthermore, integrative CSR-HRM discovers the potential for creativity, innovation and for doing things differently

from what CSR offers and what HRM can help to realize (e.g. by engaging in business opportunities that can create shared value).

Several suggestions for future research can be drawn from these considerations. For instance, research could further elaborate the changes to HRM philosophy and beliefs that would help to reflect the relational nature of CSR-HRM and think about HRM interventions to overcome behavioural barriers to CSR (Garavan, Heraty, Rock, & Dalton, 2010; Gond et al., 2011). In this regard, research drawing on relational theories from feminism (e.g. Benhabib, 1985), psychoanalysis (e.g. Contu, Driver, & Jones, 2010) and ethics (e.g. Levinas, 1961) could provide ontological and theoretical diversity to the field. It could help to shift the strong instrumental focus of HRM toward general well-being as the goal of HRM and redefine constructs such as ‘value’, ‘identity’ and ‘meaning’ in the workplace.

However, we would also argue that these approaches have limitations, because what they assume, i.e. that alignment between the different stakeholder interests is possible and that such alignment, especially when supported by HR management, leads to win-win situations for HRM, the organization and its stakeholders, is often an oversimplified portrait of the difficulties associated with stakeholder engagement. Similar to critique on the shared value concept (Crane, Palazzo, Spence, & Matten, 2014), research in integrative CSR-HRM tends to ignore the tensions inherent in reconciling different interests or the potential for conflicts between economic considerations and social or environmental concerns. For instance, this perspective may have limited explanatory potential for the power relations between corporations and low power stakeholders (e.g. workers in developing countries). Despite offering a broader view on HRM interconnections, it is still based on somewhat idealistic assumptions about unitary interests between workers, employers and other stakeholder groups. An inherent danger of a strong focus on shared value creation lies in the appeal for practitioners to decouple these activities from the more unsustainable core-business practices, thereby drawing the attention away from the ‘real’ problems by doing ‘alibi CSR’.

Finally, the conceptual CSR-HRM models developed in this stream of research are primarily substantiated with anecdotal evidence or illustrative examples. Rigorous empirical research that would show how, why or under which conditions shared value creation between HRM and the organization's stakeholders really works is still missing. Many empirical papers in integrative CSR-HRM use qualitative methods (e.g. Davies & Crane, 2010; Mankelov, 2008). This seems a promising approach for future research due to the difficulties involved in measuring shared value creation or the relational nature of the proposed CSR-HRM relationship, and especially in elucidating the consequences of the possibly contested nature of stakeholder engagement. Yet, we would have liked to see more in-depth qualitative research that investigates struggles over sensemaking of HRM and/or CSR practices, considering power and conflict as essential parts of these change or bargaining processes. In this regard, we would suggest that one way to encounter the critique of shared value creation would be to provide empirical evidence which shows, first, that shared value creation really works and how big the potential for social innovations is, secondly, that integrative CSR-HRM processes, practices or strategies can really contribute to such value creation, given certain favourable conditions and, thirdly, research that investigates the difficulties, conflicts and power relations that could hinder integrative CSR-HRM and eventually points to ways in which these conflicts can be resolved.

### *3.3. Political CSR-HRM*

Of interest are the *political approaches* of CSR-HRM. Given the conceptual development around political theories of CSR (Frynas & Stephens, 2014; Scherer & Palazzo, 2007, 2011), and the unspoken socio-political implications of HRM in a world of deregulated or deregulating labour markets (Edwards & Kuruvilla, 2005), these interpretations of CSR-HRM hold great potential for conceptual and empirical development. Political approaches to CSR, according to Garriga and Melé (2004), address the power of corporations in society and

concomitant responsibilities. Likewise, critical approaches to HRM are “advanced in order that HRM might be better contextualized within the prevailing socio-economic order of capitalism” (Delbridge & Keenoy, 2010, p. 800).

Political CSR-HRM thus incorporates issues of CSR in terms of the role of the firm in society, the position of workers vis-à-vis the firm, power relationships and political activity (see e.g. Cooke & He, 2010; Fenwick & Bierema, 2008; Marens, 2010, 2013; Martínez Lucio & Stuart, 2011; Preuss et al., 2009). Firms are thereby regarded as both, economic and political actors (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007), i.e. apart from their economic mandate to make a profit, they are considered citizens in society; moreover, due to their power and influence, firms are assumed to take over political responsibilities and act as corporate citizens, in particular where the state is unable or unwilling to do so (Matten & Crane, 2005). The focus of CSR-HRM is thereby considerably widened by conceptualizing the nature of its political role in society (see Table 4), wherein the ‘political role of firms’ refers to the provision of public goods and the contribution to (global) self-regulation of business (Scherer, Palazzo, & Matten, 2014).

However, even though research on political CSR has gained momentum in recent years in its search for answers to the challenges of globalization (e.g. Frynas & Stephens, 2014; Scherer & Palazzo, 2007, 2011), research in the area of political CSR-HRM is still scarce. The articles retrieved through the systematic review offer tentative and preliminary responses as to the importance of this perspective, and to the directions of and the potential for its future development. One of the articles of our database that offers such tentative forays by addressing topics that are relevant in the context of a political approach to CSR-HRM is the article of Baek and Kim (2014). Baek and Kim (2014) develop a stakeholder-based model of HRD (SBHRD). SBHRD “pursues the goals of various multilayered agencies that are part of the social system” (Baek & Kim, 2014, p. 6) and is based on what the authors call normative (e.g. Freeman & Evan, 1990) and analytic (e.g. Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997)

stakeholder theory. The authors (2014, p. 6) argue that we “need an HRD theory that is able to explain a wider application of HRD practices and expand its scope vertically (e.g. to include national, local community, and global domains), horizontally (e.g. to include environment, civil society, government, and mass media), or in terms of business value chain (e.g. to include workers, labour unions, suppliers, and customers)”, and discuss three SBHRD characteristics: plurality, legitimacy, and interdependency. ‘Plurality’ means that HRD represents not only the interests of workers, but also of other stakeholders, extending for instance to family members, workers from suppliers, but also to the support for marginalized groups like sexual minorities or people with disabilities. SBHRD furthermore secures ‘legitimacy’ of HRD practices, which is gained by successfully balancing internal and external stakeholder demands. Finally, ‘interdependency’ is about breaking down dichotomies like the worker-manager dichotomy and focuses on a broader contribution to social, environmental and economic outcomes. The article of Baek and Kim (2014) is one of the few studies that mention power relations inside and outside the organization as a critical aspect that HRD has to cope with. However, they do not further elaborate on the related implications

The article illustrates the differences to the instrumental and integrative CSR-HRM approaches. In contrast to these, political CSR-HRM is concerned with the rights and responsibilities of different stakeholders, not just their potential for value creation; with the inherent plurality of stakeholder interests that are not easily reconciled, as integrative approaches seem to suggest; and with the implications of citizenship and political responsibilities of organizations within society and also across societies.

It is especially this last point, i.e. the global reach of business activities that is paralleled by limitations of national regulation of global business conduct, that endows business organizations with enhanced political responsibilities for self-regulation (Scherer and Palazzo 2007, 2011). Transnational business activities cause many of the problems CSR-HRM can help to address, like insecure working conditions, precarious employment



relationships and human rights violations in company locations around the globe, but also of third-party employers alongside the supply-chain. These issues offer many fruitful research opportunities to investigate the influence of a politically enlarged role of CSR-HRM.

One pertinent question in this regard is what responsible HRM means in times when the nature of work is changing. We can for instance observe not only the tendency to outsource production, but facilitative functions, like the HR department itself; including a shift of responsibility for HR practices to either external providers or line management (Sheehan, De Cieri, Greenwood, & Van Buren, 2014). A significant omission in the extant research on CSR-HRM is the implication of and for CSR arising from the outsourcing of HRM. Our database contains only four articles that addressed outsourcing, all of which focus on the outsourcing of production, not the HR function. Outsourcing HRM has implications for the role and the political influence of HRM (Sheehan et al., 2014) and, therefore, its connection to CSR-HRM. How can HRM become a steward for decent work if the function is outsourced? How can CSR become a substitute mechanism for improving working conditions if there is no centralized function in the organization that would assume responsibility for implementing employee-related CSR practices? These are questions that future political CSR-HRM research might tackle.

Apart from research that discusses the influence of CSR-HRM on its external environment, we also find research in our database that emphasizes the strong influence of national business systems and the state on CSR-HRM configurations. The previously mentioned study of Preuss et al. (2009) indicates that CSR is subject to national differences, and HR engagement with CSR topics is dependent on the national or regulatory context. Cooke and He (2010) show in their research the decisive role that the state plays in China with regard to CSR-HRM. The results of their case study of textile and apparel firms indicate that in China legal compliance and government are the main source of pressure for engaging in any activities that might be related to CSR while, at the same time, international pressure

still remains a largely negligible factor. In considering the role of CSR in labour regulation in the Czech Republic and Mexico, it has been argued that CSR acts either as a compliment to regulation (where regulation is stringent and enforced) or as a substitute for regulation (where regulation is weak or poorly enforced), depending on the particular regulatory regime rather than the national setting (Locke et al., 2013). Marens (2010, 2013) argues that the very success of US style CSR arises from its design to mitigate unionization and labour regulation.

Finally, political CSR-HRM, unlike integrative CSR-HRM research, does consider conflict between stakeholders as inevitable and often not easily resolvable. Moreover, in contrast to instrumental approaches, priority might be given to workers' interests over shareholder welfare maximization. How conflicts are resolved, thus, depends strongly on those involved in decision making, on their personal moral values, their perceived obligations towards different stakeholder groups and their power. One way to try to accommodate conflicting stakeholder interests is to establish discursive modes of conflict resolution, where those affected can voice their concerns and can contribute to the development of solutions (Voegtlin, Patzer, & Scherer, 2012). Responsible leaders might play an important role in this regard, as they can act as initiators and moderators of stakeholder dialogues (Voegtlin, 2015; Voegtlin et al., 2012). HRM can help to develop such responsible leaders, encourage decision making based on personal moral values and create arenas for discursive conflict resolutions (going also beyond traditional mediation between employees and employer to include NGOs, workers of sub-contractors, etc.).

Thus, HR practices that might be the focus of political CSR-HRM are practices that develop employees' abilities to deal with stakeholder conflicts and the resulting complexity (including the ability to think holistically and to deal with moral and social complexity). Service learning programs can be a way to strengthen personal moral values and encourage responsible leadership (Pless, Maak, & Stahl, 2012). HR practices (e.g. job design, performance management systems) can be designed to foster participative processes that are

aimed at the democratic control of organisations (Maclagan, 1999) and to promote employee involvement in citizenship behaviours external to the organisation. However, not only can HR practices contribute to political CSR, a strong political CSR agenda can also facilitate the citizenship engagement of HRM.

Following from these findings of research related to political CSR-HRM, we propose that two directions can be regarded as especially relevant for future research. First, it will be important to examine regulatory and normative influences on CSR-HRM configurations alongside soft- (cultural norms, business self-regulation) and hard-law regulations, and second, it might be interesting to identify and analyse the impact of (global) CSR-HRM on the political role of the firm and its influence on institutional conditions. For example, research could investigate the contribution of CSR-HRM with regard to the adoption or creation of soft law, or the role of HRM as steward, but also as enabler, of decent working conditions along the supply chain. As the limited number of studies on political CSR-HRM show, theories that might guide this research are institutional theories or theories on political CSR (Matten & Moon, 2008; Scherer & Palazzo, 2007).

One important aspect of political CSR-HRM remains the critical stance toward ‘mainstream’ practices and conceptualizations. It thereby challenges the often idealistic and simplistic notion of HRM or CSR activities as being always positive. Rajak (2010) adopts such a critical perspective on CSR-HRM in that she argues that the ‘moral power’ of CSR is misused by capitalist companies to further their business interests, thereby treating humans as resources or capital that needs to be nurtured to preserve its productivity, and illustrates this for the rollout of a HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment program in the world’s third biggest mining company, Anglo American Plc. Apart from interfering in the intimate realm of workers’ sexual conduct, the author holds that “one of the unintended effects of corporate-sponsored HIV treatment has been to reinforce the economic and social inequalities in South Africa according to which the trajectories of the epidemic have been patterned” (Rajak, 2010,

p. 568). This research shows the emancipatory research interest of political CSR-HRM, i.e. to challenge given assumptions and aim at changing the status quo by empowering the less powerful actors or by demanding an enhanced responsibility of those more powerful.

Overall, we consider the political CSR-HRM the most promising perspective for future research, as it offers the most complex perspective and addresses the most pressing challenges concerning the CSR-HRM nexus. Connected to this is the demand for an exploration of the political role for HRM such as the interrelation between HRM and legal standards (rule making and rule taking), or the political aspects of HRM on the individual worker, the organizational, the societal and the global level. Political CSR-HRM therefore holds the possibility of exploring the social and political embeddedness of HRM – relationships between stakeholders in the management of “human resources” both internal and external to the firm; shifting institutional arrangements and balances of power between corporations, governments and civil society – in order to address hitherto hidden wicked problems with regard to HRM, including human trafficking, poverty, indigenous rights and income security. This political CSR-HRM perspective is insofar limited as not much research has been done in this area, and it still needs conceptual development around the political role of HRM and empirical research on CSR-HRM configurations and their interrelation to political and institutional aspects.

#### **4. Conclusion**

We have undertaken the task of a systematic review of the relationship between two broad ranging and contested constructs: CSR and HRM. Our motivation was the marked increase in research linking these two constructs in the absence of overt conceptualization and theory building. We have provided the findings of our review and these, unsurprisingly, confirmed that this newly developing area of research is fragmented, *ad hoc* and highly partial. Our study reveals important detail of the various lines of argument and perspectives employed,

and thus enabled us to move towards our goal of developing overarching conceptualizations of CSR-HRM: instrumental, social integrative and political CSR-HRM and a subsequent research agenda.

Conceptualization of CSR-HRM holds promise for both theoretical and practice developments in CSR and HRM. The strategic turn in HRM has paradoxically seen a shift in the discipline away from considerations of external stakeholders. CSR-HRM provides a lens through which to view multiple internal and external stakeholder relationships within HRM. A move towards consideration of internal stakeholders has been noted in the CSR literature. CSR-HRM can more fully develop notions of workers as stakeholders – the nature of their stake and their engagement with the organization – and their special role as constituting and representing the firm.

Notably we seek to provide grounds for dialogue and plurality among multiple perspectives. Our own extensive and subjective research experiences bring both value and limitations to this analysis. Inevitably, there will be disagreement with our analyses and resultant theses; critique on what we have gotten wrong and what we have omitted. We look forward to such dissensus and debate; rather than gather the field together as an integrated whole, we hold that the goal for a conceptual analysis such as this is to map the territory, trek less-explored paths and expose the terrain.

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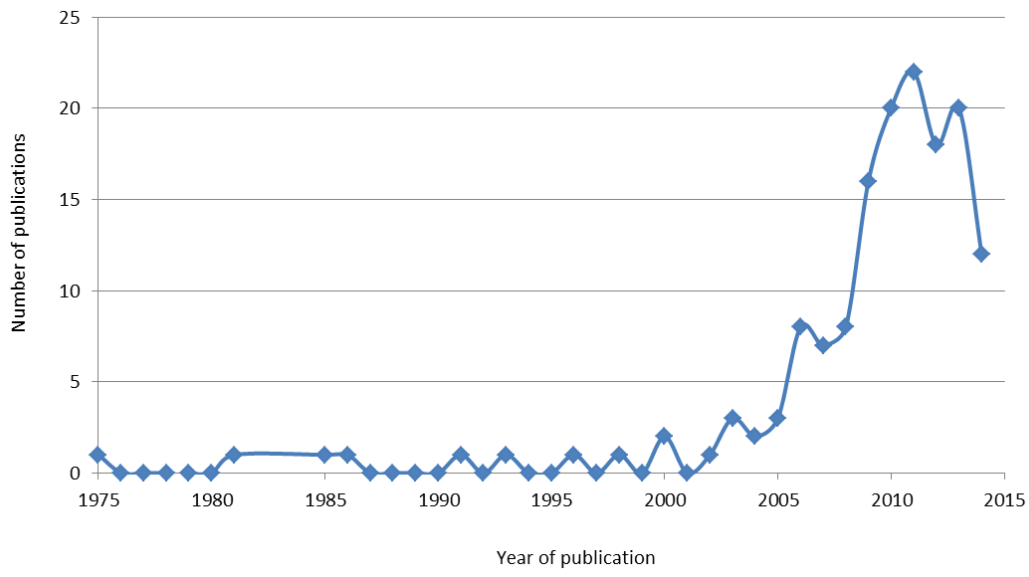


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**Figure 1**  
**Publications over time**



Note. The figure displays publications until 2014.

**Table 1**  
**CSR-HRM research characteristics by period of publication**

<b>Year of publication</b>	<b>1975-2002 (27 years)</b> <b>Incubation period</b> <b>(1≥publications per year<sup>1</sup>)</b> N=11 (7%)	<b>2003-2008 (5 years)</b> <b>Incremental growth</b> <b>(1&lt;publications per year&lt;10)</b> N=31 (21%)	<b>2009-2014 (5 years)</b> <b>Substantial growth</b> <b>(publications per year&gt;10)</b> N=108 (72%)	<b>1975-2014</b> <b>Total (39 years)</b> N=150 (100%)
<b>Type of journal</b>				
Business Ethics/CSR	3 (27)	8 (26)	30 (28)	41 (27)
HRM	3 (27)	11 (35)	21 (19)	35 (23)
General management	2 (18)	3 (10)	26 (24)	31 (21)
Other management specialities	3 (27)	5 (16)	21 (19)	29 (19)
Other	0	4 (13)	10 (9)	14 (9)
<b>Type of article</b>				
Conceptual	7 (64)	9 (29)	34 (31)	50 (33)
Empirical	4 (36)	22 (71)	74 (69)	100 (67)
<b>Geographical region<sup>2</sup></b>				
North America	6 (55)	6 (19)	19 (18)	31 (21)
Europe	1 (9)	11 (35)	24 (22)	36 (24)
Australia	0	1 (3)	4 (4)	5 (3)
Asia	0	1 (3)	19 (18)	20 (13)
Africa/Middle East	0	0	4 (4)	4 (3)
South America	0	1 (3)	2 (2)	3 (2)
None	4 (36)	11 (35)	37 (34)	52 (35)
<b>CSR-HRM relationship<sup>3</sup></b>				
HRM is part of CSR	5 (45)	19 (61)	56 (52)	80 (53)
CSR is part of HRM	4 (27)	11 (35)	22 (20)	36 (24)
CSR and HRM overlap	1 (9)	1 (3)	27 (25)	29 (19)
CSR and HRM present but no overlap	2 (18)	0	3 (3)	5 (3)

Note. Values = number of articles; values in brackets = % of total articles. <sup>1</sup>The year 2000 (N=2) is an exemption. <sup>2</sup>Adds to 101% as one article was coded for two geographical regions. <sup>3</sup>This feature is analysed qualitatively in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
**Trends in CSR-HRM research with regard to the CSR and HRM relationship**

<b>CSR and HRM relationship</b>	<b>Specifications</b>	<b>Example references</b>
<b>HRM as a component of CSR</b>	<b>HRM as antecedent to CSR</b>	Becker, 2011; Chih et al., 2010
HRM as an element of CSR. CSR as the focus of the research	“Human resources” (i.e. workers) and human resource management as enabling of CSR in the organization	Fenwick & Bierema, 2008; Garavan & McGuire, 2010
	<b>HRM as subset of CSR</b>	Chen et al., 2008; Cheruiyot & Maru, 2011; Boesso & Michelon, 2010; El Ghouli et al., 2011; Holder-Webb et al., 2009
	HRM is one of several factors that make up CSR	
<b>CSR as a component of HRM</b>	<b>CSR as enabling “effective” HRM</b>	Bhattacharya et al., 2008; Mueller et al., 2012; Sousa Filho & Farache, 2011; Tyron et al., 2010
CSR as an element of HRM. HRM as the focus of the research	CSR is used to achieve HRM goals (e.g. improving recruitment or mitigating regulation)	
	<b>CSR as enabling “responsible” HRM</b>	Ardichvili, 2011; Deakin & Hobbs, 2007; McCabe, 2000; O’Donohue & Nelson, 2009; Shen, 2011; Shen & Jiu Hua Zhu, 2011
	CSR is considered a means for ensuring responsible management of workers	
<b>CSR and HRM as mutually dependent</b>	<b>CSR and HRM present but no overlap</b>	Nollen, 1986; Smith & Langford, 2011
Both CSR and HRM are the focus of the research	CSR and HRM both identified as subjects but discussed in parallel (e.g. both are variables of another construct)	
	<b>CSR and HRM in interaction</b>	Baek & Kim, 2014; Becker et al., 2010; De Bussy & Suprawan, 2012; Cooke & He, 2010; Gond et al., 2011; Martínez Lucia & Stuart, 2011; Preuss et al., 2009; Sharma et al., 2009; Westermann- Behaylo et al., 2014
	CSR-HRM as a complex and rich interactive phenomena. Workers, worker representatives, and those who manage workers, are actors in networks involving multiple stakeholders and institutions	

**Table 3**  
**Examples of HR practices contributing to CSR and vice versa**

<b>HR practices</b>	<b>HR practices contributing to CSR</b>	<b>CSR contributing to HR practices</b>
<b>Recruitment and selection</b>	HRM can check potential employees for their sensitivity towards CSR topics	CSR can help to attract the best talent as job applicants increasingly value CSR-related aspects
	HRM can select employees based on fit between the CSR-values of the organization and values of the potential employee	CSR can inform HRM selection procedures on issues of diversity and equal opportunity
Example references	Becker et al. 2010; Davies & Crane, 2010; Gully et al. 2013	Cooke & He, 2010; Gond et al., 2011; Gully et al., 2013; Rupp et al., 2013
<b>Appraisal and motivation</b>	HRM can foster commitment to CSR practices and values	CSR can help to appraise social HR practices
	HRM can promote CSR-values to create a socially responsible culture in the organization	CSR can help to motivate employees, foster commitment and organizational identification
Example references	Cooke & He, 2010; Davies & Crane, 2010; Gond et al., 2011; Mirvis, 2012; Shen, 2011	Brammer et al., 2007; Cooke & He, 2010; Kim et al. 2010; Shen & Jihua Zhu 2011
<b>Compensation and reward system</b>	HRM can develop long-term compensation schemes	CSR can help to define goals HRM can use to incentivise and reward employees
	HRM can search for incentives that contribute to CSR goals	CSR can help to introduce standards for decent work
	HRM can reward economic, social and ecological innovations	
Example references	Becker et al., 2010; Davies & Crane, 2010	Cooke & He, 2010; Tymon et al., 2010
<b>Training and development</b>	HRM can sensitize employees for CSR issues and help to educate employees to become more socially responsible	CSR managers can train HRM in developing socially responsible HR practices
Example references	Becker, 2011; Garavan & McGuire, 2010; Muthuri et al., 2009; Pless et al., 2012	Fenwick & Bierema 2008; Pless et al., 2012

**Table 4**  
**Typology of CSR-HRM perspectives**

	<b>Instrumental CSR-HRM</b>	<b>Social integrative CSR-HRM</b>	<b>Political CSR-HRM</b>
<b>Theories</b>	Economic theory of the firm	Value creation stakeholder theory	Political theories of democracy
	Instrumental CSR and "hard" HRM approaches	Integrative CSR and "soft" HRM approaches	Political CSR and critical HRM approaches
<b>Purpose of the firm</b>	Profit maximization	Value creation for society	Fulfil obligations towards society as a political and economic actor
<b>Strategic priorities</b>	Economic considerations dominate strategy	Economic and ethical concerns are integrated into strategy	Proactive political strategy to advance institutional conditions
<b>Role of CSR-HRM</b>	CSR and HRM can reinforce each other to improve firm financial performance	CSR and HRM can reinforce each other to create benefit for the firm and its stakeholders	CSR and HRM can reinforce each other to help address institutional deficits
<b>Employees as stakeholders</b>	Employees as strategic human <u>resources</u> are important stakeholders for firm success	Employees as <u>human</u> resources and valuable stakeholders	Employees as citizens with rights and obligations towards the firm and society
<b>Issues of employee involvement</b>	CSR-HRM as involvement practices that contribute to firm performance (e.g. through increasing employee commitment)	CSR-HRM as involvement practices that improve at the same time employee well-being, motivation and overall stakeholder value	CSR-HRM as involvement practices that address power imbalances and employee citizenship behaviour
<b>Power and conflict of interests</b>	Multiple actors are considered relevant (strategically)	Multiple actors are considered relevant (strategically and morally)	Multiple institutions and actors are considered relevant
	In the case of conflict, shareholder interests dominate	Interests are assumed to be unitary. They can be aligned to create shared value	Plurality of interests that are difficult to reconcile
<b>Key themes in CSR-HRM</b>	CSR-HRM and performance	The role of CSR-HRM in stakeholder integration.	CSR-HRM and the responsibility implications of changing employment relationships
	Micro-foundation of CSR through HRM	The role of CSR-HRM in integrating economic, social and environmental activities	The role of CSR-HRM in business (self-)regulation  The critical role of power and conflict in negotiating CSR-HRM aspects



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<sup>1</sup> Databases included for the review: Business Source Premier; EconLit; Regional Business News; SocINDEX; ERIC; Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts; Historical Abstracts; Communication & Mass Media Complete; GreenFILE; Political Science Complete; PsycARTICLES.

<sup>2</sup> “CSR-terms”: ‘CSR’, ‘corporate social responsibility’, ‘social responsibility’, ‘political responsibility’; “HRM-terms”: ‘HRM’, ‘human resource management’, ‘human resource\*’, and ‘employ\* relation\*’. Searching for “human resource\*” also covered research under the label of human resource development.

<sup>3</sup> Despite a reduction in the year 2014 there were still >10 publications. A trend cannot be identified without future data collection.

<sup>4</sup> We coded the organization as the unit of analysis when it was considered as an entity on its own (an indication was e.g. when the article spoke explicitly of how the organization implements CSR or treats its employees in a certain way, whereas in the latter case employees would have been regarded as an additional unit of analysis).

<sup>5</sup> The authors thank Susan Mayson for this valuable insight.

<sup>6</sup> We have not included an overtly ethical approach as such an approach was not apparent in the CSR-HRM literature. As previously noted there is already an existing literature on ethical approaches to HRM.