Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: 28 January 2014

**IDENTIFYING BIAS, FROM TEXT TO AUTHOR**

In the U.S., there has been much debate over same-sex unions. Recently, the CEOs of large companies (including Starbucks and Chic-Fil-A) have made their positions on the topic public, leading others to question the role businesses and business leaders should play in influencing public opinion and policy, and whether these CEOs’ statements are merely grabs for media attention and additional business.

Read the following two passages, which provide contradicting reports on Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz’s response to a shareholder who questioned the company’s support for same-sex marriage.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Text A | Text B |
| At the [Starbucks](http://www.examiner.com/topic/starbucks) annual shareholders meeting on Wed., CEO Howard Schultz sent a clear message to anyone who supports [traditional marriage](http://www.examiner.com/topic/traditional-marriage) over [gay marriage](http://www.examiner.com/topic/gay-marriage): we don't want your business. After saying Starbucks wants to "embrace diversity of all kinds," he told a shareholder who supports traditional marriage that he should sell his shares & invest in some other company.  [According to a report by Forbes](http://www.forbes.com/sites/frederickallen/2013/03/22/howard-schultz-to-anti-gay-marriage-starbucks-shareholder-you-can-sell-your-shares/" \t "_blank), Schultz seemed a bit intolerant of any Starbucks shareholders who opposed gay marriage for moral or religious reasons. During the meeting, shareholder Tom Strobhar (who founded the Corporate Morality Action Center) pointed out that after the company voiced its support for a referendum backing gay marriage in Washington state, a [boycott](http://www.examiner.com/topic/boycott) by traditional marriage supporters caused a drop in sales revenue. Schultz told him "You can sell your shares in Starbucks and buy shares in another company" if he did not agree with the company's pro-gay marriage stand.  Despite strong opposition from the religious and political right, support for gay marriage in America has risen in recent years. The rise of support for gay marriage has also seen a rise of intolerance for those who oppose it. [Many who joined the boycott of Starbucks last year](http://www.examiner.com/article/outrage-over-starbucks-support-of-gay-marriage) were dismissed as bigots, even though the boycott did cause revenue to drop. A website, [DumpStarbucks.com](http://www.dumpstarbucks.com" \t "_blank), has earned tens of thousands of supporters who refuse to buy from the coffee chain in response. | [Starbucks](http://www.businessinsider.com/blackboard/starbucks) CEO [Howard Schultz](http://www.businessinsider.com/blackboard/howard-schultz) has made it clear that his company supports same-sex marriage, and at the coffee titan's annual meeting in Seattle, he had a heated exchange with a shareholder who criticized that stance, [Gabriel Spitzer at KPLU reported](http://kplu.org/post/schultz-defends-starbucks-support-same-sex-marriage).  It stemmed from the National Organization for Marriage's decision to boycott Starbucks after the company endorsed a same-sex marriage bill in Washington state.  Shareholder Tom Strobhar, who, [according to *The Huffington Post,*](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/22/starbucks-gay-marriage-howard-schultz_n_2931734.html?ncid=edlinkusaolp00000003) is the founder of the anti-abortion, anti-gay marriage [Corporate Morality Action Center](http://www.corporatemorality.org/" \t "_hplink), was not happy about the boycott.  He said that it affected Starbucks' bottom line.  “In the first full quarter after this boycott was announced, our sales and our earnings — shall we say politely — were a bit disappointing,” said Strobhar.  Schultz reportedly bristled, and said that it was about respecting diversity, not the bottom line.  "It is not an economic decision," he said. "The lens in which we are making that decision is through the lens of our people. We employ over 200,000 people in this company, and we want to embrace diversity."  The crowd cheered and applauded.  Then, the CEO fired a broadside.  “If you feel, respectfully, that you can get a higher return than the 38 percent you got last year, it’s a free country. You can sell your shares of Starbucks and buy shares in another company.  “Thank you very much,” said Schultz. |

Both of these authors describe the same interaction between Schultz and the shareholder, Tom Strobhar, but they portray it differently. These differences indicate each text’s bias: One text supports same-sex unions and Schultz’s public defense of them, and the other does not. However, neither author just tells us his or her bias; we have to detect it by paying attention to how they have written their texts.

1. What picture does each text paint of Howard Schultz? For example, what words or phrases do the authors use to describe him? What quotes of his do they reprint?

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| Text A | Text B |
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2. What information does each text provide for Strobhar, the shareholder? Why does he oppose the company’s pro-same-sex union stance, and how does each text describe his opposition?

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| --- | --- |
| Text A | Text B |
|  |  |

3. Reread the text, looking for additional examples of strong language or images. How do these also convey a biased perception of the disagreement between Schultz and Strobhar?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Text A | Text B |
|  |  |

4. Now, comment on each text’s organization. How do the authors tell the story of Schultz’s interaction with Strobhar differently? (For example, how does each text conclude its report?)

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| --- | --- |
| Author A | Author B |
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5. Is there any relevant information that the author seems to have deliberately left out? If so, what is it, and why may the author have decided to “silence” it?

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| --- | --- |
| Author A | Author B |
|  |  |

6. Decide which of the following is Author A, and which is Author B. Explain your decisions.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Name & Biography | A or B? | Explain |
| **Kim Bhasin** is the retail editor at <publication>, covering big box, apparel, e-commerce and restaurants. Previously he worked for a financial and strategic management firm. He is also currently a part-time grad. student in Business & Economic Reporting at NYU. |  |  |
| **Victor Medina** writes for *Yahoo! News* and operates the blog *When Liberals Attack!* His work has also been featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Dallas Morning News*, *The American Principles Project*, *New Jersey Right to Life*, and *National Pro-Life Radio*. His blog links to the Conservative Hispanic Society and the Dallas Tea Party. |  |  |

7. Use the information below to decide where each article was printed. Explain your decisions.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Name & Description | A or B? | Explain |
| “**Business Insider** is a fast-growing business site with deep financial, media, tech, and other industry verticals…. There are no subscription fees or production delays. *Business Insider* is dedicated to aggregating, reporting, and analyzing the top news stories across the web and delivering them to you at rapid-fire pace.” |  |  |
| “**Examiner.com** launched in April 2008, to provide free-lancers across the U.S. with a platform to share their knowledge and expertise through informative and entertaining content…. Our network has grown to over 100,000 contributors, captivating our audience with interesting, entertaining, relevant content on a variety of topics. Examiner.com is a top 100 website, reaching over 37 million unique visitors every month.” |  |  |

8. Lastly, write a short essay (about 100 words) in which you explain one of these source’s biased views on the topic of corporate support for recognizing same-sex unions. In your first sentence, identify the bias (for example, you might write that “the article “\_\_\_“ shows a bias strongly in favor of \_\_\_”), and then use your following sentences to defend yourself with examples and direct quotations from the text. Include details about the author and publication, but only the ones that are clearly tied to the bias.