Companies Getting Political:
Examining the Influence of Public-Company Identity Congruence on Publics' Reactions to Corporate Social Advocacy

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Dedication

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Abstract

Corporate social advocacy (CSA), which refers to companies' public stances on socio-political issues, has received growing attention in recent years, given the polarized political environment and publics' expectations on companies as active societal members. As many of the socio-political issues are divisive in nature, CSA initiatives tend to attract certain stakeholder groups but potentially alienate other groups at the same time. In this context, the extent to which publics perceive a company's CSA stance to be consistent with or opposite to their own stances and value become the basis to categorize the company as "our side" or the "opposing side," and form identity similarity perceptions. Such perceptions are likely to lead publics to form or change their attitudes and behaviors regarding the involved company. Therefore, in order to advance the understanding of the risks and rewards of CSA, it is critically important to examine public perception of identity similarity regarding companies involved in CSA and its impact on publics' attitudinal and behavioral reactions to CSA. Despite the growing significance of the role of publics' identity similarity perception in today's increasingly polarized political environment, research on this topic is relatively scarce and more nuanced insights are needed. Applying the social identity theory, this dissertation addresses this research gap and investigates publics' responses to CSA initiatives and a theoretical mechanism mediating the responses by focusing on the role of public-company identity similarity perception.

Methodologically a multi-method approach is developed including experiments and computational analyses. Experiment 1 (N = 196) tested the main effect of stance congruence on CSA outcomes, the mediating effect of perceived identity similarity, and

the moderating effect of ideological identity strength. Experiment 2 (N = 233) tested the interaction effect of stance congruence and CSA strategy. Following the experimental studies, a computational analysis was conducted to further examine the relationships between public-company identity congruence and CSA outcomes in a natural real-world setting using social media data. Pairing sentiment analysis with a self-trained model for the detection of individual ideological identities, naturalistic data generated by 5,181 ordinary Twitter users who were involved in the six CSA events were analyzed.

The key findings from the two experiments and the computational analysis together reveal the critical role of public-company identity congruence in influencing publics' attitude toward companies involved in CSA and their political consumption and extra-role behavioral intentions. When a company's identity communicated in its CSA is congruent with publics' identities, publics have more favorable attitudinal and behavioral reactions, than when a company's identity communicated in its CSA is incongruent with publics' identities. It is further found that publics' perceived identity similarity plays a mediating role in the relationships between public-company identity congruence and publics' attitude toward the company. Moreover, on the individual level, publics' reactions to companies in CSA are found to be dependent on gradations in the strength of individual ideological identities. Meanwhile, on the corporate level, it is also found that the different levels of corporate identity strength can be communicated by differential CSA strategies of engaging in single or multiple socio-political issues, which in turn, influence publics' attitudinal and behavioral reactions.

This dissertation contributes to advancing the CSA research and practice in several ways. First, this study adds important empirical evidence regarding how

engagement in socio-political issues influences the political aspects of companies' communicated identities and publics' reactions in the polarized political climate. Second, by filling the research gap on the role of public perceptions of identity similarity in explaining and predicting CSA outcomes, this dissertation advances theory building on the psychological mechanism underlying CSA processes and effects. Third, this dissertation provides more nuanced insights to the extant CSA research literature, by particularly examining gradations in the strength of individual ideological identities as well as the perceived strength of a company's identities. Lastly, this multi-method project opens a new avenue for future CSA research by introducing an innovative multi-method research approach. The findings also offer useful implications for practitioners about how different groups of publics react to CSA initiatives and how they should appropriately engage publics against the current background of political polarization.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Companies are doing business in an increasingly polarized political environment in recent years. While public debates on socio-political issues become intense, publics' expectations on companies' engagement in socio-political issues are also growing continuously. According to a report by Edelman (2018), over 60% of consumers are "belief-driven buyers" who "choose, switch, avoid or boycott a brand" based on the stances the brand takes on socio-political issues (p. 9), and about half of consumers believe that companies can do better than governments in driving necessary social changes. Similarly, in a report by Sprout Social (2018), 66% of individuals surveyed feel that it's important for companies to take public stances on major socio-political issues. In response to the current political environment, a growing number of companies now move beyond their traditional social responsibility practice that cares for general welfare, and verge into controversial socio-political topics or public policy issues, such as same-sex marriage, gun laws, and racial equality.

The practice of companies taking part in socio-political issues is referred to as corporate social advocacy (CSA) (Dodd & Supa, 2014; Nalick et al., 2016). In practice, CSA can include corporate communications such as formal corporate statements released either internally or externally, interviews or unscripted statements by business leaders, and cause-related advertising, as well as corporate actions like publicized operation decisions, changes in human resource policies, or donations to advocacy organizations with clear affiliations on certain issues (Nalick et al., 2016). Some real-world CSA cases that have received avid attention in public relations scholarship include Chick-fil-A's

opposition to gay marriage legislation (e.g., Dodd & Supa, 2014), Dick's Sporting Goods' advocacy for gun control (e.g., Austin et al., 2019), Nike's "Dream Crazy" campaign with Colin Kaepernick (e.g., J. Hoffmann et al., 2020; J.K. Kim et al., 2020), and Starbucks' and Budweiser's public statements on Trump's immigration ban (e.g., Rim et al., 2020).

Companies' engagement in social issues humanizes them in ways that marketing practice cannot. It renders companies as contributing members of the society rather than entities simply pursuing profits often at all costs (Bhattacharya et al., 2009). By engaging in social issues, companies can verbally and non-verbally symbolize their values and communicate their corporate identities to publics (Marin et al., 2009). Ideologies, policies, and practices are all integral to an organization's identity (Barich & Kotler, 1991), and CSA initiatives can be seen as political demarcations that can determine publics' interpretations of corporate identities. In this sense, CSA has its strategic importance in corporate identity building. As Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) suggested, publics' evaluations of companies are based on their perceptions of those corporate identities. Therefore, it is critical to investigate CSA initiatives as an expression of companies' identities and to understand how such identities built based on CSA initiatives can influence publics' perceptions and reactions.

Corporate identities expressed in CSA initiatives can be coupled with individuals' own political identities to lead to perceptions of identity similarity between themselves and companies. Given this time of polarization, publics' perceptions and evaluations of companies' CSA initiatives are embedded in the context of contemporary identity politics, which has moved away from broad-based, coalitional politics to support and

follow political movements that represent a particular identifying quality (Lock & Seele, 2017). In many controversial socio-political issues, individuals' own ideological identities play important roles in shaping their political views (Huddy et al., 2015), which may impact how they perceive companies' CSA stances on such controversial issues. Indeed, it is argued that, by taking particular stances on socio-political issues, CSA initiatives can attract certain stakeholder groups but potentially alienate other groups at the same time (Dodd & Supa, 2014). Thus, it is important to examine how publics' ideological identities can influence CSA outcomes through the mechanism of perceived identity similarity between publics and companies.

Social identity theory provides a useful theoretical lens to understand how CSA initiatives impact various groups of publics. The theory posits that in articulating a sense of self, individuals categorize themselves as members inclusive of or exclusive from certain social groups (Brewer, 1991; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). When publics respond to companies' CSA initiatives, the extent to which they perceive the CSA stances to be consistent or inconsistent with their own ideological identity becomes the basis to categorize companies as their in-group or out-group members and form identity similarity perceptions. Social identity theory also suggests that individuals are motivated to differentiate their own groups positively from others as a way to maintain the positive distinctiveness of their social identities (Markus & Wurf, 1987; Pratt, 1998). Therefore, publics' perceptions of identity similarity constructed on the basis of CSA initiatives are likely to lead them to form attitudes and behaviors regarding the involved companies, thereby enhancing or maintaining their self-concepts.

In the current scholarship, limited research has studied publics' perceptions of identity similarity regarding companies involved in CSA, as well as its consequences on publics' attitudinal and behavioral reactions to the companies. In light of social identity theory, this study aims to investigate publics' responses to companies' CSA initiatives and a theoretical mechanism mediating the responses, specifically addressing the following questions: (1) how does the congruence between companies' and publics' stances on socio-political issues influence publics' attitudinal and behavioral reactions to the companies' CSA initiatives; (2) how does publics' own ideological identity influence the CSA outcomes; and (3) how do different CSA strategies of engaging in multiple socio-political issues influence the CSA outcomes?

Approach for Empirical Investigations

To address the research questions and practitioners' concerns, a multi-method approach, including both experiments and computational methods, is adopted in this dissertation project. Experiment 1 examines the main effect of public-company identity congruence on CSA outcomes, the mediating effect of perceived identity similarity, and the moderating effect of ideological identity strength. Experiment 2 devotes focus to the interaction effect of public-company identity congruence and CSA strategies. Using the two experiments, this dissertation can provide a comprehensive investigation into the theoretical mechanism underlying publics' attitudinal and behavioral reactions to companies' CSA initiatives and the nuanced effects of both individuals' ideological identities and companies' identities.

In addition to the experiments, this dissertation adopts a computational analysis to further test the relationships between public-company identity congruence and CSA

outcomes in a naturalistic setting. Using social media data from Twitter for recent real-world CSA events, natural language processing (NLP) techniques are used to capture publics' ideological identities and their reactions to CSA initiatives.

The benefit of using this multi-method approach is twofold. On the one hand, the randomized control trials in the experimental approach can to the maximum extent reduce potential bias and confounding factors when testing the proposed hypotheses, so that higher internal validity can be achieved. Also, self-report measures used in the experiments allow for the assessment of people's psychological factors that are not observable from public behavioral data, including perceived identity similarity. On the other hand, the computational research approach using naturalistic social media data generated in real-world events can not only capture publics' actual behavioral patterns at scale, but also address some limitations of the experiments, such as the artificial nature of experimental stimuli and the generalizability of the findings. The multi-method approach can cross-validate the findings and enhance internal and external validity.

Significance of the Research

By investigating the effects of CSA from a public-company similarity perspective, this dissertation project can contribute to the current CSA research in several ways. First, this project adds to the existing body of knowledge with empirical evidence on how companies' engagement in highly divisive issues can influence CSA outcomes and their overall business performance in the contemporary polarized political climate. Second, this project sheds light on publics' perceived identity similarity as a mechanism underlying CSA outcomes and shows that corporate and individual factors together influence the outcomes of CSA initiatives. Publics' perception of identity similarity

between companies and themselves in the emerging trend of CSA is an area of research ripe for investigation. Third, stances on many controversial issues are more complicated than binary terms (Huddy & Bankert, 2017), which calls for more nuanced understandings about CSA stances as well as individual political views. In light of social identity theory, this dissertation seeks to provide new insights to the extant CSA research literature by particularly examining the gradations of identity strength on both corporate and individual levels.

CSA can have a significant impact on companies' relationships with their publics, and as such, it has become an increasingly important area of research in the field of public relations. This dissertation offers important insights into theory building in public relations. By studying publics' reactions to CSA, it provides a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of such an emerging communication practice in the public relations field. This research can inform public relations theories about how companies manage their communication efforts and build relationships with their publics through their advocacy efforts. Moreover, by highlighting the political nature of the social issues being advocated for in CSA, this dissertation points out the urgent need for understanding the social and political contexts in which companies operate when building relationships with their publics. It also sheds light on the importance of understanding how active publics are grouped around socio-political issues as well as companies involved in CSA. As the controversial nature of socio-political issues complicates the relationships between companies and publics, such insights into the dynamics of publics, companies, and issues can facilitate theory building around CSA from the public relations perspective.

Moreover, in an age of politicization of many social issues, CSA becomes an area of increasing urgency not only for researchers but also for corporate communications practitioners. Practitioners are facing the challenge of responding to publics' growing expectations on companies to take stances on socio-political issues. Thus, it is also the purpose of this dissertation project to provide practical insights for practitioners about how different groups of publics react to specific CSA initiatives and how they should appropriately engage in the political sphere.

Dissertation Chapters and Organization

This dissertation is composed of six chapters. Following this introductory chapter (Chapter 1), Chapter 2 reviews existing literature on key research areas relevant to the topic of this dissertation project. It starts with an overview of CSA and its connections with and differences from other corporate practices, including corporate values advocacy, CSR, and corporate political actions. Next, it focuses on the concept of corporate identity from the marketing and communication perspective and discusses how corporate identities are expressed and signaled to publics through CSA. Then, it reviews research on social identity theory and discusses its application in the CSA context for understanding publics' perceptions of and reactions to companies involved in CSA. After that, it discusses key CSA outcomes from consumers' perspective, including their attitude toward companies involved in CSA, buycotting and boycotting intentions, and extra-role behavioral intentions. The research reviewed in Chapter 2 serves as a foundation for the hypothesis development in the next chapter.

In Chapter 3, the dissertation project's hypotheses are delineated, each with a reiteration of the applicable theoretical underpinnings and empirical justifications.

Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 present the empirical examinations of the proposed hypotheses. Chapter 4 covers the experimental design, data analysis, results, and discussion of the findings for Experiment 1 and Experiment 2. Chapter 5 details the data collection, computation procedures, results, and discussion of the findings for the computational analysis. Finally, Chapter 6 summarizes and synthesizes the key findings of this dissertation project and discusses theoretical and practical implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review chapter is divided into four sections: (1) overview of the concept of CSA, (2) research on corporate identities from the strategic management perspective and signaling theory, (3) research on social identity theory and its application in the CSA context, and (4) research on the influences of CSA on publics' attitudinal and behavioral reactions.

Overview of Corporate Social Advocacy

CSA is referred to as companies' active engagement in socio-political issues with split public opinions (Dodd & Supa, 2014; Nalick et al., 2016). Companies' involvement in controversial issues is emerging under the background of increasing politicization of a number of social issues. One defining characteristic of CSA is the controversial nature of the issues that companies act on. Companies' public stances on controversial socio-political issues can profoundly influence their relationships with publics.

In current research, public relations scholars have suggested that CSA has its roots in two key areas of corporate communications: corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Dodd & Supa, 2014) and values advocacy (Gaither & Austin, 2022), while it is also closely related to corporate political actions (E.T. Walker & Rea, 2014). This section reviews research on CSR and corporate values advocacy and discusses CSA as an evolution of these practices. The key distinctions between CSA and corporate political actions are also explicated.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Modern companies are seen not only as product and service providers, but also as societal institutions with responsibilities to address some of the pressing social issues (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). In a broad sense, CSR constitutes corporate activities that are beneficial to the general well-being of society (Hillman & Keim, 2001; Margolis & Walsh, 2003). With a particular focus on the ethical business responsibilities, May (2022) summarized a comprehensive list about the scope of CSR, which included:

> (1) creating a decent product/service that provides a public good at a fair price; (2) establishing good and transparent governance that seeks to enable public benefits; (3) abiding by regulatory and compliance mechanisms to enable fair business practices and that holds those engaged in misconduct accountable; (4) paying a fair share of taxes that strengthens local and global infrastructure and enables opportunities for all; (5) supporting human rights for all people; (6) minimizing negative environmental impacts; (7) fostering fair, equitable, and inclusive treatment of employees that affords them safe working conditions, physical and mental well-being, a living wage, and opportunities for growth and development; (8) establishing fair treatment of customers, suppliers, and competitors; (9) using truthful advertising and marketing strategies; (10) facilitating a sense of responsibility to the local communities in which they operate; (11) enhancing our democratic potential as a country, while minimizing self-interested lobbying; (12) producing a reasonable return on investments, when appropriate, while minimizing the externalization of costs onto others. (p. 24)

These various forms and the wide scope of CSR not only reflect the fundamental role that companies play in society but also reveal the multifaceted nature of CSR. In existing literature, several main views have been proposed to understand CSR, each highlighting different aspects underlying this practice (Rasche et al., 2017).

From the normative view of CSR, some scholars have emphasized CSR's ethical foundations. It is suggested that companies have ethical obligations to make efforts for "the common good" of society, echoing an Aristotelian view of virtue ethics (Sison, 2010, p. 85). Companies do not only have to follow regulatory mandates, but also need to conduct operations in a way that respects societal values (Carroll & Brown, 2018). To fulfill their ethical obligations as societal institutions, companies need to take appropriate social responsibilities and align their activities with socially desirable values (Falck & Heblich, 2007).

From the integrative view, CSR is defined based on various expectations that stakeholders have vis-à-vis a company (Rasche et al., 2017). Extant literature suggests that companies have social responsibilities on multiple different dimensions, from the fundamental economic responsibility, to legal, ethical, and discretionary responsibilities (Carroll, 1999). These responsibilities reflect expectations from different stakeholders around companies at a given point in time, and CSR is a way to integrate various societal expectations placed on business operations.

Furthermore, the instrumental perspective suggests that CSR activities have clear functional purposes of managing potential risks, enhancing corporate reputation, and improving market positioning (Paine, 2003). Many studies in extant literature have revealed the beneficial outcomes that CSR activities can generate. For example,

researchers have found substantial impacts of CSR activities on companies' financial performance, such that CSR activities can significantly increase consumers' intention to purchase (Margolis et al. 2009), Beyond the financial bottom line, it is also found that CSR is an effective means to help companies establish legitimacy with the general public (Rendtorff, 2018) and enhance corporate reputation (Fombrun, 2005). However, unlike many other business practices, CSR places a great emphasis on stakeholders' and societal expectations. Thus, S. Kim (2022) extended this view and proposed a hybrid instrumental approach of CSR in public relations literature. Accordingly, while considering CSR communication as a strategic tool for achieving optimal company-centric outcomes, stakeholder-centric considerations should also come under the spotlight of current CSR research (S. Kim, 2022).

Besides these popular views, a less discussed but long-standing view of CSR is with regard to its political theme. According to Scherer and Palazzo (2011), CSR essentially reflects a power delegated to business sectors, making them active members in civil society to address social welfare. As Scherer et al. (2016) described, CSR "entails those responsible business activities that turn corporations into providers of public goods in cases where public authorities are unable or unwilling to fulfill this role" (p. 3). In other words, this view emphasizes an active role that companies can play in modern governance. While research following this view is relatively limited in the public relations field, this view is gaining increasing relevance in practice in recent years, due to publics' growing expectations on companies as institutions that can help provide solutions to public issues (Edelman, 2018, 2022).

Corporate Values Advocacy

Values advocacy campaigns describe the use of advertising and public relations techniques to influence public opinion, policy debates, and/or legislative outcomes by communicating an organization's stance on an issue or policy (Cutler & Muehling, 1989; Heath & Nelson, 1985). Throughout the 1900s and early 2000s, values advocacy campaigns became commonplace in corporate communication endeavors (Gaither & Austin, 2022). Many of these campaigns are used as a tool by large corporations and industry trade groups to influence legislative outcomes that could improve their business environment or protect the market for their products. For example, values advocacy surfaced in the 1970s when public and media scrutiny regarding environment and energy issues became prevalent. During that period, U.S. petroleum companies began aggressive campaigns to speak about values and identities, which shifted public attention away from debates around their products and services (Bostdorff and Vibbert, 1994; Haley, 1996).

For a long time, corporate values advocacy constitutes an important component of strategic issues management (Heath, 1980). Issue management originated as a business discipline, referring to a systematic process to examine and act on a wide range of public issues in their social and operating environment that may affect the organization and its publics (Jaques, 2002). By definition, companies' strategic issues management "blends strategic business planning, issue monitoring, best-practice standards of corporate responsibility, and dialogic communication needed to foster a supportive climate between each organization and those people who can affect its success and who are affected by its operations" (Heath & Palenchar, 2009, pp. 8-9). It captures a foresight-oriented, proactive part of public relations involving purposeful communication of corporate values. As a

means for strategic issues management, values advocacy allows a company to foster shared values across different stakeholder groups, ensuring that the company is perceived as favorable in society. As scholars suggested, advocating for well-accepted, uncontested values can helps companies promote a positive corporate image, deflect potential criticism, lay the groundwork for future policy debates, and create a favorable operating environment that can bring direct benefits (Bostdorff & Vibbert, 1994; Heath, 1980).

Corporate values advocacy has received profound attention in the rhetorical research, as it involves purposeful, symbolic communication and serves clear strategic goals. It captures the idea that organizations that anticipate future rhetorical situations are to act rhetorically in the first place (Kuhn, 1997). By responding to, anticipating, and shaping rhetorical situations, organizations can strategically shape their own identities and popular beliefs with the help of rhetoric, so as to gain strategic advantages (Cheney et al., 2004). Rhetorically, values advocacy campaigns that directly praise accepted societal values are fundamentally associated with apparently uncontroversial "epideictic," or ceremonial rhetoric (Bostdorff & Vibbert, 1994). By praising shared values, epideictic rhetoric creates a social consensus that forms the basis that audiences rely on in evaluating organizational messages. In many cases, rather than directly taking a stand in public debates on controversial public policies, values advocacy "argue for the acceptance of one value set over another" (Bostdorff & Vibbert, 1994, p. 104). For instance, Cheney et al. (2004) showed that when the tobacco industry opposed taxation of tobacco products, companies joined the debate from the angle of resisting government interference in the free market, helping them gain rhetorical advantages in the public sphere. Because of their simplistic nature and appeals to commonly shared values, values

advocacy campaigns can be an effective means to co-create reality with external publics (Brandhorst & Jennings, 2016; M.F. Smith & Ferguson, 2018). This also underscores the profound impacts that companies can exert on socio-political processes and public policies.

Corporate Social Advocacy as an Evolution of CSR and Values Advocacy

The emergence of CSA in recent years should be attributed to the increasingly polarized political environment. In contrast to the 1970s when the political and social changes led to the rise of values advocacy campaigns among many industries, the recent decade has witnessed an accelerated sorting process in American society (Mason, 2015a). It has been well documented that partisan and ideological gaps on a number of issues have increasingly broadened (Schaeffer, 2022). At the same time, companies are expected by publics to become active contributing members in the society and take clear stances on hotly debated socio-political issues (Edelman, 2020; Nalick et al., 2016).

Compared to traditional CSR programs that address non-controversial issues like education access, disaster relief, and poverty reduction, CSA initiatives focus on socio-political issues with split public opinions, such as same-sex marriage, racial equality, and abortion rights (Hydock et al., 2020). These socio-political issues receive great attention among the general public but lack societal consensus due to religious, ethnic, partisan, or sociocultural and geopolitical reasons (Haider-Markel & Meier, 1996; Nalick et al., 2016). In response to publics' expectations on companies and the increasingly polarized political environment, more and more companies have moved beyond their traditional social responsibility programs that care for general social good and jumped onto making advocacy stances on controversial socio-political issues (Chipman, 2016).

Similar to the CSR practices, companies involved in CSA fulfill their roles as societal institutions by actively engaging in social issues and driving social changes. However, rather than establishing CSR communication through inclusive dialogs with multiple stakeholders, companies involved in CSA explicitly promote stances as being for or against particular socio-political issues. The controversial nature of CSA initiatives is essentially rooted in conflicts among publics with different issue positions or political beliefs. Therefore, by speaking up for a particular issue position and prioritizing a certain political belief, CSA initiatives can attract certain stakeholder groups but potentially alienate other groups at the same time. As Dodd and Supa (2014) noted, public perceptions regarding companies' stances on socio-political issues "may differ among stakeholder groups and across individuals, ultimately impacting organizational goals" (p. 3).

Meanwhile, as Gaither and Austin (2022) suggested, unlike corporate values advocacy, which focuses overwhelmingly on advancing business goals, CSA is driven by motivations to speak up on behalf of certain stakeholders despite polarized reactions from people holding different issue views. From the issues management perspective, companies expressing their public stances via CSA initiatives can be a strategic business decision (Hydock et al., 2020). However, the consideration of such issues management may nonetheless be tied to the balance between positive returns via support from one side of the issue and potential backlashes from the other side.

For companies engaged in CSA, establishing broad-based corporate legitimacy and achieving organizational goals with all publics can be challenging (Dodd & Supa, 2015; Yim, 2021). Because CSA promotes specific stances and supports the values of

certain publics over those of others, it becomes inherently political and potentially confrontational (Ciszek & Logan, 2018). Moreover, in the current social environment where a plurality of publics is politically upholding a diversity of values, many CSA issues seem intractable and leave public consensus nearly impossible (Capizzo, 2022). For example, Capizzo and Sommerfeldt (2021) pointed out the difficulties organizations faced when engaged in intractable socio-political issues like abortion, gun rights/gun control, and gender fluidity. In this sense, central to the comparison of CSA with CSR or strategic issues management is the congruence between a company's explicit stance and its heterogeneous publics' views on controversial issues. A CSA initiative may generate different impacts among various stakeholder groups, depending on the extent to which the involved company's stance is congruent with their own values and seem desirable for the society around them. Therefore, it is critical to understand how a company's CSA stance is perceived among different subsets of publics and what are the psychological mechanisms underlying the potentially differential perceptions.

Distinguishment from Corporate Political Actions

With clear stances on various socio-political issues, companies can play an increasingly active role in social movements and can influence government policies (Fan, 2019). Yet, CSA should be distinguished from traditional corporate political actions, such as contributions to political action committees (PACs) and lobbying, because CSA runs counter to several key assumptions underlying these practices (Nalick et al., 2016; Wettstein & Baur, 2016).

Corporate political actions are defined as actions "by which corporations attempt to shape government policy in ways favorable to the firm" (Hillman et al., 2004, p. 838).

In other words, the primary driver of corporate political actions is companies' endeavor to maximize their economic interests and improve competitive positions, though it is possible that corporate political actions can generate win-win situations where the corporate interest matches certain public interest (Scherer et al., 2013).

CSA, as studied here, refers to corporate involvement in socio-political issues that are beyond companies' immediate economic interests. That is, CSA have relatively limited connections to the core business of the involved company (Dodd & Supa, 2014). Instead, CSA initiatives are usually driven by companies' intrinsic ideological values and ideals (Nalick et al., 2016). Companies understand those values and stances as worth promoting, no matter what their businesses are or which industries they are in. Although business considerations cannot be entirely ruled out in companies' decisions to engage in CSA, it is reasonable to assume that at least direct and immediate economic self-interest is not the primary driving factor.

In addition, despite that engagement in controversial issues is inherently political in nature, CSA usually takes place outside official political channels (Wettstein & Baur, 2016). CSA is always promoted to and made visible for a larger public, rather than exclusively to formal political institutions and agents (Nalick et al., 2016). In CSA initiatives, many companies leverage mass media channels to promote their stances, and typical practices include public statements, press releases, executive interviews, and so forth. In contrast, corporate political actions like lobbying "typically happen behind closed doors and thus lack the voice-element which is constitutive for advocacy" (Wettstein & Baur, 2016, p. 201).

In sum, different from typical corporate political actions, CSA is companies' public engagement in socio-political issues that are of limited or no direct relevance to their economic interests. Given that CSA is ideology-driven and publicly visible, it becomes critically important to understand how such practice works with different publics' political views to influence public perception and evaluation of the involved companies. In recent years, a growing number of researchers have devoted attention to individual-level evaluation of companies involved in CSA (e.g., Dodd & Supa, 2015; J.K. Kim et al., 2020; Yim, 2021). This dissertation also recognized the importance of individual-level reactions and focused on how the CSA outcomes can be different across different factions of publics.

Research on Corporate Identities

The unique characteristics of CSA bring the concept of corporate identity into view. As CSA can provide the catalyst for developing corporate identities, investigating the related areas of corporate identities and CSA may afford new perspectives to help answer important questions. Specifically, in developing theories on CSA, it is very helpful to examine CSA through the lens of corporate identities because what companies are, and what they represent, now have a clear political dimension, especially in today's political climate, which places companies firmly on socio-political agendas.

This section reviewed the theoretical concept of corporate identity from the strategic management perspective. Following the review, this section discusses how corporate identities were expressed and communicated to publics in the context of CSA from the lens of signaling theory.

The Strategic Management Perspective on Corporate Identities

In the management literature, the theoretical concept of corporate identity has been traditionally approached from visual, communication, and behavioral perspectives, each of which captures certain aspects of corporate identity (Kitchen et al., 2013). While agreements on the specific dimensions of corporate identity still need to be built, a holistic view on corporate identity is generally accepted in extant literature, suggesting that each company has a tangible essence that can be demonstrated in corporate characteristics and traits and discerned by stakeholders (Balmer, 2017). Taking the systems perspective, Markwich and Fill (1997) defined corporate identity as "the organization's presentation of itself to its various stakeholders and the means by which it distinguishes itself from all other organizations" (p. 397). In later studies, Melewar (2003) and colleagues (Melewar et al., 2018; Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006) broaden the meaning of corporate identity, considering it as the sum of the factors defining "what the organization is," "what it stands for," "what it does," "how it does it," and "where it is going."

From the perspective of strategic management, corporate identity consists of two aspects. First, corporate core missions and legal requisites held by staff and management are the kernel of corporate identity (Balmer, 2017; Urde, 2009). Through a company's mission statements, its corporate identity entails the articulation and dissemination of the company's goals and purposes, which highlights the uniqueness of the company (Balmer, 2017; van Riel & Balmer, 1997). The second aspect is expression of corporate identity, which involves strategic decisions on how to communicate companies' identities to stakeholders (Abimbola et al., 2012). Companies' identities can be considered

instrumentally and functionally as strategic resources for building positive images among stakeholders (Melewar, 2003). From this aspect, management literature has emphasized the symbolic factors embedded in the material manifestation of corporate identities, considering external publics as the audience of corporate marketing and communication practices (Cornelissen et al., 2007).

Focusing on companies' needs to reveal their corporate identities to external stakeholders, Balmer (2001) suggested the "communicated identity" as the external projection of the corporate identity. The "communicated identity" can essentially be seen as the sum of the communication efforts that position the company in the minds of stakeholders (R. Bravo et al., 2012). In this sense, the successful transmission of corporate identities is critical because it should properly reflect the "desired identity" or "ideal identity" of companies (Powell et al. 2009, p. 443).

In strategic planning practices, a variety of cues can be used to communicate corporate identities to stakeholders and shape publics' perceptions of corporate identities (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). In most cases, companies can to some extent control and deliberately decide how their identities are framed and disseminated (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). As suggested in existing research, these identity cues include typical planned communications like the use of public statements, consistent content in advertising messages, and customer contact channels, as well as corporate actions and initiatives in the marketplace (Markwick & Fill, 1997). Ashforth et al. (2008) particularly noted that corporate engagement in external issues also serves as a significant cue of corporate identity.

Signaling Theory on Corporate Identities

The idea that corporate identities can be strategically managed and communicated by companies is in line with signaling theory. Signaling means that one party can use observable demonstrations to reveal its unobservable attributes when there are information asymmetries (Spence, 1974). According to signaling theory, corporate communications act as signals. Companies (senders of signals) can communicate relevant information to their stakeholders (receivers of signals) through signals, which can help reduce information asymmetry, and stakeholders can assess the quality of the company based on the signals they receive (Spence, 1974; Zerbini, 2017). Signaling theory argues that various signals create a separating equilibrium, in which all pieces of information reveal different hidden characteristics of the sender. Those signals give stakeholders the ability to distinguish companies with different qualities (Bergh et al., 2014).

Building upon this mechanism, CSR researchers have suggested that companies' engagement with society can be understood as identity signals to publics (Marin et al., 2009). Expressing the ethical practice and the care for public goods can signal a company's identity in ethical and socially responsible aspects correspondingly. Some researchers even suggested that CSR activities should be considered as a direct determinant of companies' identities, because they manifest the central and enduring values of companies, which can possibly make them distinctive in the marketplace (R. Bravo et al., 2012; Collier & Esteban 2007). This theoretical perspective has often been applied to investigating the role of corporate identities in influencing CSR outcomes. In general, studies have found that CSR programs, if appropriately implemented, can send positive signals to publics, which in turn, can generate favorable outcomes for companies

in many ways, such as enhancing corporate reputation and building beneficial relationships with stakeholders (Bae et al., 2018; Marin et al., 2009; Su et al., 2013).

In a similar vein, CSA practices can be seen as a signal that reveals additional information about corporate identities to relevant publics. Through the stances on controversial socio-political issues, companies' CSA practices can send effective identity signals to the pertinent publics (K. Park & Jiang, 2020). Corporate press releases (e.g., Patagonia's announcements in support of the Paris Accord), corporate actions (e.g., Delta and United Airlines discontinuing discounts to NRA members), as well as business leaders' remarks and interviews regarding social-politico issues (e.g., widespread CEO commentary on the George Floyd killing) all serve to express corporate identities. Such "communicated corporate identities" can be created, maintained, and managed strategically by companies involved in CSA.

Since CSA stances are inherently political (Ciszek & Logan, 2018), it can be argued that CSA initiatives can clearly signal the political aspects of corporate identities. For instance, through taking supportive stances on gun control, racial equality, and LGBTQ rights, companies like Ben & Jerry's and Starbucks send clear signals as being "liberal" companies (Fellner, 2008; Petroski & Khan, 2015; M. Scott & Rothman, 2002). In contrast, Hobby Lobby signals itself as a "conservative" company, given its stances on abortion, COVID-19 store opening policies, and so on (Biron & Schlitz, 2022). In their interactions with companies involved in CSA, publics can easily recognize the political-related aspects that constitutes companies' identities, as companies' stances on controversial issues become the key source defining their central characteristics in the CSA context.

Yet, according to signaling theory, the effects of a signal are determined not only by the sender's effort but also by the characteristics of the receiver (Zerbini, 2017). Different publics may interpret the same signal differently. Individuals' own ideological beliefs can play an important role in shaping their political views on socio-political topics (Huddy et al., 2015; Pildes, 2021), which may impact how they perceive corporate statements and actions on such issues. Given the political and confrontational nature of CSA stance-taking, the influences of CSA may still largely depend on publics' own identities.

CSA Strategies and the Strength of Corporate Identities

When advocating for socio-political issues, some companies stand on multiple issues based on political ideologies, while others stand on only a single issue. The former one refers to the practice that a company takes proactive stances on multiple socio-political issues under one particular ideology. For instance, to support the LGBTQ community, Nike introduced the BETRUE Collection (Nike, 2019). The company also took a stance on the immigration issue by publicly condemning the travel ban in 2017 (Waldron, 2017), and spoke for women's empowerment with its "Dream Crazier" campaign (Pasquarelli, 2019). All these stances Nike took fell into liberalism. Meanwhile, standing on a single issue describes the practice in which a company only adopts a stance on one particular issue, but remains silent on other topics. Some examples include Merck CEO speaking out over Trump's Charlottesville remarks (Thrush, 2017) as well as Patagonia's long-standing support for tackling climate change (Kottasová, 2018), but these companies are not very active on other socio-political topics.

In the context of corporate engagement in socio-political issues, information asymmetry exists, because publics want to understand to which extent companies are devoted to particular ideologies. Different CSA strategies can become unique signals that reveal the level of such corporate devotion. While specific CSA stances being for or again a socio-political issue signals the directions of companies' identities as being ideologically "liberal" or "conservative," the use of different CSA strategies – especially how companies take stances on a single issue or multiple issues – signals the strength level of companies' identities. The strength of corporate identities reflects the degree to which companies internalize values associated with those identities, which can be signaled by their communication efforts (Cornelissen et al., 2007).

In political psychology research, the instrumental perspective argued that individuals' attachments to specific ideological groups can be formed based on their perceived extremity, importance, and left-right positions regarding a set of socio-political issues (Ellis & Stimson, 2012). In contrast, individuals' positions on separate issues are less indicative of such ideological attachments (Mason, 2015b). This difference between single- and multiple-issue positions can be projected to the signals underlying different CSA strategies of engaging in multiple socio-political issues. Specifically, consistently standing on multiple issues under one particular ideology signals a company's steadfast attachment to an ideological group that holds the "liberals" or "conservatives" label. In this sense, when a company takes consistent stances on multiple issues under one particular ideology, it can send a stronger identity signal to publics than taking a stance on a single issue.

Furthermore, while research suggests that CSA initiatives must reflect consistent values to strengthen public perceptions of similarity between companies and themselves (Heffron & Dodd, 2021), in real-world practice, there are some companies that seem to hold different political ideologies (i.e., advocating both liberal and conservative stances) when they engage in multiple socio-political issues. Chick-fil-A and Wendy's, for instance, are known for their support for conservative groups (Dunn, 2020), but they both issued statements after George Floyd death, promising to fight injustice (Folley, 2020). Also, despite its constant support for LGBTQ groups and diversity issues, New Balance welcomed Trump's conservative stance on international trade in 2016 (Snider, 2016).

According to Scheidler et al. (2019), when companies engage in social issues, any inconsistency that occurs can interfere with how companies' signals are interpreted by publics. In the CSA context, this happens when a company's stances on multiple issues send ideologically contradicting signals to its publics. If publics perceive inconsistencies underlying the corporate identity, part of which is signaled to the public via CSA initiatives, they might raise the question: "What is this organization really about?" (Dutton et al., 1994). In this sense, taking inconsistent stances on multiple issues along different ideologies represents a weak and blurring signal of a company's identity. Such a signal can be even weaker than the signal of standing on a single issue, because of the equivocality of inconsistent corporate voices (Kline et al., 2008).

Social Identity Theory and Its Application in the CSA Context

By speaking up on socio-political issues, companies involved in CSA allow publics to see the political aspects of their corporate identities. While a company's identity can define "what the company is or expects to be," "what it does," and "what it

stands by" (Melewar, 2003), individuals also have self-conceptions that can define themselves and answer to the question "who am I." This brings the congruence or incongruence between companies' communicated identities and publics' own identities into view, because in the CSA context, it may generate different influences across different segments of publics. This dissertation project aims to understand the downstream effects of company-public identity congruence in CSA, and social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) is adopted to explain the underlying psychological mechanism.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory was initially proposed as a theory of intergroup relations and used for understanding conflicts and collaborations between social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). As it continues developing, the theory has been expanded into a much broader theory in social psychology, focusing on "the role of self and identity in group and intergroup phenomena in general" (Hogg, 2016, p. 3; see also Turner et al., 1987). Starting from the 1980s, social identity theory has been extended to a variety of sub-topics on group processes and the nature of social groups (Hogg, 2016). The theory has also been applied and developed to explain individuals' interactions with organizations (e.g., Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Cummins & O'Boyle, 2014; C.R. Scott, 2007) and the dynamics of organizational communication as identity symbols (e.g., Lauring, 2008; Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997).

In the development of social identity theory, two social cognitive bases are proposed and considered as the main thrust of the theory: self-categorization of social groups and motivations to maintain self's positive social identities (Hogg, 2016).

First, at the core of the theory was that an individual's self-conception has not only a personal identity that reflects personal and idiosyncratic characteristics, but also a number of social identities. As Tajfel (1972) defined, an individual's social identity is his/her "knowledge that he[/she] belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him[/her] of this group membership" (p. 292). Social groups can be as large as demographic categories or as small as task-oriented workforces within organizations, both of which provide members with a shared identity that defines who they are and guides their beliefs and behaviors. Social identity theory suggests that human beings need to simplify the social world by categorizing people into groups based on "prototypes" – which are "fuzzy sets of interrelated attributes (attitudes, behaviors, customs, dress, and so forth) that capture overall similarities within groups and overall differences between groups" (Hogg, 2016, p. 8). Individuals can also assign themselves memberships of a number of different social groups in the construction of their self-conceptions.

Based on their definitions of prototypes and groups, individuals form in-group and out-group perceptions depending on the extent to which they view characteristics of the target as consistent with the norms, values, and definitions that reflect their self-conceptions (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This tendency usually happens in a binary way, such that people define the group they are in as an in-group and all the others as an out-group. Such binary categorization does not only capture similarities within the in-group but also accentuate differences between the in-group and the out-group (Hogg, 2016; Shkurko, 2015).

Second, the other part of the cognitive base is that individuals have a tendency for social comparison in order to make sense of the world, and they often compare themselves with other people on the basis of their membership of a particular group (Hogg, 2016). In such social comparisons, individuals have self-esteem needs, which involve the need to maintain positive self-regard, and thus, have strong motivations to enhance a positive self-image (Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Sedikides & Strube, 1997). As individuals use the status and social values of a group to define themselves, the belief that "we are better than them" becomes one of the most significant features in intergroup interactions (Hogg, 2016). Members of social groups are highly motivated to protect or promote their positive intergroup distinctiveness (Tajfel & Turner, 2004).

Social identity theory also highlights the self-evaluative consequences of people's pursuit of positive social identities. In assigning themselves as members of a particular social group, people need to ensure that this group is a source of a positive social identity and that it compares well with other potential social groups (Hogg, 2016). Once their attachment to a particular social group is established, people are often motivated by the need to positively distinguish their own group (in-group) from others (out-group). As a result, people have a natural tendency to favor their in-group and derogate the out-group, both of which can help them maintain and strengthen positive social identities (Dutton et al.,1994). This tendency can be manifested as various positive behaviors and attitudes toward in-group members and negative behaviors and attitudes toward out-group members (Lewis & Bates, 2014)

Social identity theory can be applied to study people's interactions with organizations. When a person's self-concept and the perceived identity of an organization

are congruent, that person is likely to be drawn to the organization because it provides an easy opportunity for self-expression (Shamir, 1991). Categorizing such an organization as an in-group member and possibly developing social attachment to the organization can enable individuals to maintain and express their sense of self more fully and authentically and help them positively distinguish themselves from others (Dutton et al., 1994).

In this context of this dissertation, CSA provides a platform for publics to form the in-group and out-group categorization. However, as mentioned above, it should be noted that a unique characteristic of CSA initiatives is its political nature. Since corporate identity in the CSA context is demonstrated through a company's clear stance on a controversial socio-political issue, stance congruence or incongruence becomes an important basis for publics to form in-group and out-group categorization on. Specifically, publics are likely to perceive a company as an in-group member when the company's stance on a socio-political issue is in line with their own issue stance but likely to perceive the company as an out-group member when the company's stance is opposite to their own stance. In this sense, it is likely that when a certain subset of publics has in-group favoritism toward a company involved in CSA, the other subset of publics with the opposing stance has out-group derogation toward the same company.

Perceived Identity Similarity in CSA

Individuals' self-conceptions are stable and consistent over time and across situations, which help individuals understand themselves and their relationships with other members in society (Hitlin, 2011). To fully define the roles that individuals can occupy in society, their self-conceptions can contain multiple social identities, as they

rely on their memberships of various social groups to describe and express their sense of self (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Terry et al., 1999).

One of the most salient social identities that people use to define themselves is their ideological identities. Following previous political psychology research, ideological identity is traditionally defined as individuals' adoption of an ideological moniker (i.e., liberalism or conservatism) as a term of self-description, reflecting their social attachments to ideological group labels (Huddy, 2001). The liberalism-conservatism ideological divide is characterized by polarization in American politics (Mason, 2015a). In the U.S., there is a noticeable division in values held by these two ideological groups, characterized by the liberals coming to embrace values of benevolence, universalism, hedonism, and social/economic security, whereas conservatives have stressed values of tradition, conformity, and national security (Goren et al., 2020; P. Jones et al., 2018). The differences in ideological values lead liberals and conservatives to have contrasting views on many socio-political issues, such as abortion rights, immigration policies, gun legislation, and LGBTQ rights (Pew Research Center, 2020a). Individuals' ideological identities also generate bias against ideological opponents and intention to defeat ideological out-groups (Huddy et al., 2015).

Social identity theory suggests that individuals always attempt to maintain a balance between minimization of in-group differences and maximization of intergroup differences (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). To do so, individuals accentuate certain social identities depending on contextual cues (Terry et al., 1999). In other words, a particular social identity can become more salient than others depending on the specific context. For example, when an individual is in a context where understanding and expression

about himself/herself is associated with explicit ideological beliefs, his/her ideological identity becomes a salient one among all the social identities (Mason, 2015a). CSA is one of these contexts that can make people's ideological identities salient. As issues advocated in CSA initiatives are divided among ideological factions, such as same-sex marriage, immigration, climate change, healthcare coverage, etc., individuals' ideological identities become an important factor influencing CSA outcomes, because it is often related to how people see and engage in these issues (Huddy & Bankert, 2017).

Meanwhile, as mentioned earlier, companies' identities can be strategically communicated to publics. Thus, publics can establish perceptions of identity similarity and dissimilarity between a company and themselves based on to which extent they feel the company's identity overlaps with their own. Individual members of the public are likely to perceive a company's identity more similar to their own identity when the self-relevant information inherent to the company's identity is congruent with their own sense of who they are (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). In contrast, they would perceive a company's identity dissimilar when the company's identity is opposite to their sense of self.

In the context of CSA, since a company's clear stance on a controversial issue explicates the political aspect of its corporate identity, ideological identity – as compared to other subsets of identities – becomes a more salient basis for the publics to perceive identity similarity or dissimilarity between the company and themselves. Specifically, publics perceive identity similarity when companies' identities communicated by CSA stances are in line with their own ideological identities, and they perceive identity dissimilarity when companies' communicated identities are opposite to their ideological

identities. For example, liberals are more likely to find identity similarity with companies actively advocating for liberal stances, whereas find dissimilarity with companies that support conservative stances.

Moreover, according to social identity theory, when a particular social identity is a salient basis for one's self-conception, that person is likely to be assimilated to the perceived in-group prototype, which then leads him/her to develop attitudes and engage in behaviors in accord with characteristics related to that particular social group (Terry & Hogg, 1996; Terry et al., 1999). Cornelissen et al. (2007) specifically suggested that companies' communication practices can make particular social identities salient and affect external individuals' (e.g., consumes') perceptions and behaviors. In this sense, when a company takes a stance on these socio-political issues through CSA, individuals' ideological identities are likely to influence their reactions to the company, because people are more likely to use political-related self-conceptions as an evaluative lens when evaluating the company (Swaminathan et al. 2020). Thus, individuals' perceived identity similarity, which is formed based on the political aspects of corporate identities and their own salient ideological identities, becomes a key mechanism that can explain their attitudinal and behavioral reactions to companies involved in CSA.

Strength of Individuals' Ideological Identities

On the individual level, not only the directions of ideological identities (i.e., liberals or conservatives), but also different levels of strength of ideological identities (i.e., weak, moderate, or strong) can influence publics' reactions to political-related activities. According to social identity theory, individuals' sense of belonging to a social group can be internalized to varying degrees, which could result in individual differences

in the strength of the social identity (E.R. Smith & Henry, 1996). Once identified with a social group, or in this instance ideological faction of liberals or conservatives, people can have ideological identities with different levels of strength, depending on the extent to which they internalize the norms and values of ideological groups into their own sense of self (Huddy, 2001).

While the categorization of liberals and conservatives that defines "our side" and the "opposing side" can determine the general positive or negative direction of people's reactions to in-groups and out-groups, the strength with which they identify as liberals or conservatives can magnify or mitigate the reactions. Individuals with strong ideological identities have a tendency of increased intention to protect and advance their identities (Simon, et al., 1995). In existing research, there is ample evidence that strong identities promote engagement in political-related activities (Homola et al., 2022). For example, Malka and Lelkes (2010) provided experimental evidence that strong ideologues (both liberals and conservatives) were more persuaded than weak ideologues to support a public policy in their own ideological camps. Research has also found that strong ideologues demonstrate more perceptual bias in policy evaluations (Devine, 2015; Mason, 2018).

A strong ideological identity also generates increased defensiveness in the face of group threats (Huddy, 2013). For instance, Huddy et al. (2015) showed that group-based threats conveyed in electoral settings generated strong emotions and led to increased political engagement, particularly among strongly identified individuals. Also, perceptual biases tend to be more pronounced among strongly identified individuals on both sides of the ideological groups (P.E. Jones, 2019). For example, research has found that strongly

identified partisans rate the opposing party more negatively, rate presidents and presidential candidates from the opposing party more negatively, apply more negative stereotypes to political opponents, and demonstrate more partisan bias in evaluations of policies (Mason, 2015a; Bartels, 2002; Iyengar & Westwood, 2015).

Extending these findings to the CSA context, it can be expected that the strength of individuals' ideological identities can influence their reactions to CSA. Specifically, compared to an individual with a weaker ideological identity, an individual with stronger ideological identity may have more favorable reactions to a company, if the company's identity revealed in its CSA stance is congruent with and perceived as similar to their own ideological identity, or react more negatively to a company, if the company's identity is incongruent with and perceived as dissimilar to their own ideological identity.

Research on Publics' Reactions to Corporate Social Advocacy

As social identity theory suggests, people's perception of identity similarity between themselves and a target is established based on their categorization of in-group versus out-group members (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Existing research has provided profound supporting evidence that the in-group versus out-group distinction can lead people to demonstrate cohesion, favoritism, and cooperative intentions with in-group members (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), as well as competition and derogation against out-group members in various contexts and situations (Dutton et al., 1994).

This pattern of favoring in-group members and discriminating out-group ones exists in the interaction between publics and organizations, as manifested in publics' attitudes and preferences regarding the organizations with similar or dissimilar identities (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). With regard to publics' reactions to companies, studies have

found that publics who perceive high identity similarity with a company are more likely to be loyal to the company, purchase the company's products, dismiss negative information about the company, and become less likely to switch to other brands (e.g., Currás-Pérez et al., 2009; Lam et al., 2010; Marin & Ruiz, 2007). On the contrary, research has also found that publics' perception of dissimilarity between the company's identities and their own can result in their negative evaluation of and resistance to the company (e.g., Elsbach & Bhattacharya, 2001; Hawkins, 2019), because a company that is perceived dissimilar to themselves can be seen as a threat to their sense of self (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991).

Given the relatively nascent state of systematic research on the influence of CSA on publics' attitudinal and behavioral reactions to companies, this dissertation project draws on more substantial research that exists on publics' reactions to CSR activities to facilitate the investigation into CSA outcomes. Focusing on publics' reactions, some typical outcomes investigated in previous CSR research include consumers' attitude toward the sponsoring company (e.g., Wigley, 2008), purchase intention (e.g., Lee & Shin, 2010), consumers' extra-role behaviors that support the company like positive word-of-mouth (e.g., Lii & Lee, 2012), corporate reputation (e.g., Fombrun, 2005), and organization-public relationships (Browning et al., 2020). Golob et al. (2013) differentiated these CSR outcomes into consumer-related and business-related outcomes. Consumer-related outcomes focus on how consumers as important corporate stakeholders and receivers of CSR communication react to CSR endeavors, whereas business-related outcomes concern how CSR communication influences companies themselves with regard to corporate reputation, image, and identity or brand equity (Golob et al., 2013).

Business-related outcomes can become levers that can transfer CSR efforts into consumer-related outcomes. For instance, as Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) suggested, when CSR activities constitute companies' identities, publics' reactions to companies largely depend on how similar companies' identities are perceived to their own identities (i.e., perceived identity similarity),

CSR studies have also examined a number of perceptual-based intermediary factors that may have consequences on consumer-related or business-related CSR outcomes. For instance, it has been found that CSR programs can influence publics' perceived corporate hypocrisy (e.g., H. Kim et al., 2015), perceived corporate authenticity (e.g., Alhouti et al., 2016), attribution of corporate motives (e.g., S. Kim & Choi, 2018), consumer-company identification (e.g., Marin et al., 2009), and risk perceptions (Stanaland, et al., 2011). Consumer trust and loyalty also were shown to be influenced by companies' CSR communication and to lead to consumers' behavioral reactions (Martínez et al. 2013).

Research on how companies' CSA influence corporate outcomes and societal outcomes has expanded in recent years. Most outcomes investigated in the CSA context can find their trace in previous CSR research. Within the instrumental approach, the CSA outcomes that have been investigated include publics' attitude change toward companies (e.g., Rim et al., 2022), purchase intention (e.g., Dodd & Supa, 2014), public-company identification (e.g., Xu et al., 2021), brand loyalty (e.g., K. Park & Jiang, 2020), corporate reputation (e.g., Hong & Li, 2020), boycott intention (e.g., Zhou & Dong, 2021), organization-public relationships (e.g., Browning et al., 2020), and perceived corporate motivations for CSA (e.g., Austin et al., 2019).

This dissertation focuses on publics' reactions as the outcomes of companies' CSA initiatives and considers consumers as the main stakeholders. From this perspective, three major CSA outcomes come into view, including consumers' attitude toward the company involved in CSA, political consumption intentions, and extra-role behavioral intentions.

Attitude Toward Companies

People's attitudinal reactions refer to "a summary evaluation of a psychological object captured in such attribute dimensions as good-bad, harmful-beneficial, pleasant-unpleasant, and likable-dislikable" (Ajzen 2001, p. 29), reflecting their overall evaluative judgment of a target object. In studying the effects of corporate communications, publics' attitude toward the target companies is a widely investigated outcome, reflecting their general favorable or unfavorable evaluation of the companies (Gosselt et al., 2019; MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989; Spears & Singh, 2004).

Extending to the CSA context, research has found that if a company's and its publics' stances on controversial socio-political issues are congruent, publics tend to have more favorable attitudes toward the CSA initiative and the company (Dodd & Supa, 2015; O.S.A.C. Bravo & Lee, 2019). According to social identity theory, the pattern of publics' reactions to companies involved in CSA can be explained by the mechanism of perceived identity similarity. Companies' CSA stances provide a platform for publics to form the in-group versus out-group categorization, such that publics' perception of identity similarity can be inferred based on the degree of congruence or incongruence between their own ideological identities and the companies' communicated identities in

CSA. Publics' perceived identity similarity, in turn, can influence publics' favorable or unfavorable attitudinal and behavioral reactions to companies involved in CSA.

Political Consumption Intentions

Focusing on consumers as the key stakeholders, CSR research suggests that many consumers are aware of the social impact of their purchases and intentionally use their consumption behaviors to express their opinions on companies' socially responsible practices (Jacobsen & Dulsrud, 2007; Neilson, 2010). In the CSA context, Dodd and Supa (2015) studied companies' engagement in controversial socio-political issues and found that publics tended to have increased purchase intention when their belief and companies' stances were congruent, whereas publics' purchasing intention decreased when their belief was inconsistent with companies' stances.

In order to get a more comprehensive understanding about the influences of CSA on consumer behaviors, a growing number of studies have started to investigate political consumption behaviors (e.g., Jungblut & Johnen, 2021; Warren, 2021; Xu et al., 2021). Political consumption behaviors are closely related to consumers' views on socio-political issues (Endres & Panagopoulos, 2017; Stanyer, 2005). From the perspective of non-electoral political participation, political consumption behaviors are rooted in the notion that consumers consider not only a product's price and quality, but also the expression of their political beliefs when making purchase decisions (S. Hoffmann et al., 2018). In this sense, the marketplace becomes a site for political actions (Stolle & Hooghe, 2005; Stolle & Micheletti, 2013), and political consumption behaviors are driven by consumers' concerns about the consequences of their private consumption for

the political agenda, society, and other people (Neilson & Paxton, 2010; Newman & Bartels, 2011).

Political consumption behaviors include buycotting and boycotting (Neilson, 2010). When engaging in buycotting or boycotting behaviors, consumers attempt to use their purchasing power to influence the society around them (Stolle et al., 2005). Boycotting is a form of punishment when consumers perceive companies as adopting harmful policies or engaging in unfair business practices (Balabanis, 2013). Corporate stances on socio-political issues are among the key reasons for consumers boycotting companies (Balabanis, 2013). In contrast, when joining buycotts, consumers apply a reward strategy of influencing corporate initiatives by reinforcing companies' favorable actions rather than punishing (Delacote & Montagné-Huck, 2012; S. Hoffmann & Hutter, 2012). Collective buycotting actions are taken usually to support companies' public policies (Micheletti & Stolle, 2014). In general, buycotting is a behavioral reaction showing their approval of corporate stances on socio-political issues, and boycotting is a behavioral reaction demonstrating consumers' disapproval of corporate stances (Jungblut & Johnen, 2021).

In line with social identity theory, publics' perceptions of identity similarity between themselves and companies involved in CSA is also the mechanism underlying their buycotting and boycotting intentions. As a behavioral manifestation of favoring in-group members and derogate out-group members, consumers may intend to buycott companies that share a similar identity and boycott companies whose identities are perceived as dissimilar.

Extra-Role Behavioral Intentions

Consumers express their support for corporate initiatives not only by engaging in in-role behaviors like purchasing products from the company, but also through extra-role behaviors, such as word-of-mouth communication about companies and/or their initiatives (Ahearne et al., 2005; Lii & Lee, 2012) and engagement in initiatives led or sponsored by companies (Hur & Kim, 2017). From consumers' perspective, extra-role behaviors are generally voluntary and discretionary. These behaviors usually do not offer direct reward or financial benefits to consumers (Garma & Bove, 2011; Paulssen et al., 2019).

The concept of consumers' extra-role behaviors originated from research on services marketing. Based on the literature of consumer citizenship behaviors (Groth, 2005), Garma and Bove (2011) defined extra-role behaviors as consumers' voluntary behaviors that can enable companies and employees to improve their service. Consumers' extra-role behaviors are described as "civic virtue," as consumers' support, suggestions, or even complaints can help improve service offerings (Bettencourt, 1997; Burnham, 2020).

In studies on consumers' reactions to CSR, it has been found that when consumers evaluate companies' CSR activities positively, they are likely to reciprocate the benefits gained from companies engaged in CSR (Hur et al., 2020; Lii & Lee, 2012). Tuan (2018) explained this relationship from the social exchange perspective, such that when consumers evaluate a company as a "good" citizen in society, they also engage in reciprocate citizenship behaviors toward it. Researchers also suggested that consumers' extra-role behaviors such as word-of-mouth can amplify the positive outcomes of CSR

activities, because people tend to trust the words or actions of their friends, family, and acquaintances (Chung & Lee, 2022; H. Park & Kim, 2021).

In the CSA context, when companies take certain stances on behalf of a subset of publics, the outcomes of the CSA initiatives may directly influence them, which in turn can make them feel the urge and behave favorably toward the companies. Even if the outcomes of specific socio-political issues are not directly aimed toward certain publics, they may still echo the values, beliefs, and morals of the companies, and as a result, they may return the favor by exhibiting extra-role behavior in response to the valued CSA initiatives of the companies. On the contrary, borrowing the concept of deontic justice in the CSR context (Afridi et al., 2020), when consumers perceive that companies' CSA stances are incongruent with their values and moral judgments, they are likely to consider it injustice. This, in turn, may influence consumers' extra-role behaviors negatively. In this sense, consumers' extra-role behavioral intentions can be greatly influenced by the congruence of their own identities and companies' communicated identities, as well as consumers' perceived identity similarity.

CHAPTER 3

HYPOTHESES

The literature review on companies' CSA initiatives as well as social identity theory and its related empirical research provided a comprehensive understanding of the potential effects of public-company identity congruence in the CSA context. To provide a systematic examination about the link between CSA initiatives and public reactions and add knowledge to the current CSA research, this study developed six sets of hypotheses concerning: (1) the effects of public-company identity congruence and the mediating effects of publics' perceived identity similarity, (2) the moderating effects of the strength of publics' own ideological identities, and (3) the effects of CSA strategies of engaging in multiple socio-political issues on publics' attitudinal and behavioral reactions to CSA initiatives.

Effects of Public-Company Identity Congruence

According to signaling theory, corporate identities can be strategically communicated to publics. Through CSA stances, companies highlight the political aspects of their corporate identities as being "liberal" or "conservative" companies. In this sense, CSA provides a platform for publics to categorize companies as the in-group versus out-group members.

As reviewed in the previous chapter, in line with social identity theory, Previous research has found that as a result of the in-group versus out-group distinction, people tend to have positive in-group attitudes and negative out-group attitudes (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton et al., 1994). This tendency of favoring in-group members over out-group ones can be observed in the interaction between publics and companies and evident

in publics' attitudes and preferences toward companies as in-group or out-group members (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003).

Research has found that if a company and its publics share the same social and political views on controversial issues, it is likely that publics have more positive attitudes toward the CSA initiative and the company (O.S.A.C. Bravo & Lee, 2019; Tuškej et al., 2013). From the social identity theory perspective, it is the congruence between corporate identities communicated through CSA stances and publics' own identities that helps them establish in-group and out-group categorization. Thus, it can be expected that publics' reactions to CSA initiatives and the involved companies would be a function of public-company identity congruence. This, in turn, would influence publics' favorable or unfavorable attitude toward the company involved in CSA.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1a: When a company's identity communicated in its CSA is congruent with publics' identities (i.e., identity congruence), publics will have a more favorable attitude toward the company, than when a company's identity communicated in its CSA is incongruent with publics' identities (i.e., identity incongruence).

According to social identity theory, underlying people's reactions to in-groups and out-groups is their perceptions of identity similarity. When people's group categorization is established, they would start to feel a link to similar others (i.e., the in-group) and simultaneously differentiate themselves from dissimilar others (i.e., the out-group) (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In the CSA context, publics can establish perceptions of identity similarity or dissimilarity between a company and themselves based on to which extent they feel the company's identity overlaps with their own. Identity congruence or incongruence between companies and publics, as situations formed based on companies'

CSA stances and publics' ideological identities, influence publics' perceptual judgment of identity similarity.

Since corporate identities in the CSA context can be inferred based on companies' clear stances on controversial issues, identity congruence or incongruence becomes the basis for publics to perceive identity similarity or dissimilarity between companies and themselves. Specifically, publics are likely to perceive identity similarity when companies' identities communicated by their CSA stances are in line with their own ideological identities, and they are likely to perceive identity dissimilarity when companies' identities communicated by the CSA stances are opposite to their ideological identities. For example, liberals are more likely to find identity similarity with "liberal" companies whereas find dissimilarity with "conservative" companies based on the companies' CSA stances.

Therefore, perceived identity similarity would be a psychological mechanism underlying publics' reactions to CSA, such that publics' perception of identity similarity would be inferred based on the degree of overlap between their own ideological identities and companies' communicated identities. This, in turn, would influence publics' attitude toward companies involved in CSA. The following mediation hypotheses can be proposed:

H2a: Perceived identity similarity will mediate the influences of public-company identity congruence on publics' attitude toward the company.

Focusing on consumers as the key stakeholders, research on CSA has devoted attention to political consumption behaviors, so as to understand the financial consequences of CSA initiatives (e.g., Jungblut & Johnen, 2021; Warren, 2021). Consumers' political consumption behaviors are common behavioral reactions toward

companies involved in socio-political issues, represented by boycotting or boycotting the companies' products and services (Kam & Deichert, 2020). As CSA initiatives are politically charged, political consumption behaviors are important outcomes that reflect how publics' perceptions of identity similarity or dissimilarity can be transferred into financial consequences of CSA initiatives.

Thus, it can be proposed that publics would want to intentionally patronage a company, if they feel that the company's identity communicated by its CSA stance is congruent with their own ideological identities; in contrast, publics would boycott the company if they feel that the company's communicated identity is incongruent with their own ideological identities. In addition, similar to publics' attitudinal reactions to CSA initiatives, perceived identity similarity would also serve as a psychological mechanism underlying publics' political consumption intentions. Thus, the following hypotheses can be proposed:

H1b: When a company's identity communicated in its CSA is congruent with publics' identities (i.e., identity congruence), publics will have a more favorable political consumption intention, than when a company's identity communicated in its CSA is incongruent with publics' identities (i.e., identity incongruence).

H2b: Perceived identity similarity will mediate the influences of public-company stance congruence on publics' political consumption intention.

Furthermore, as reviewed in the previous chapter, consumers express their support or opposition for companies not only by engaging in in-role behaviors like purchasing products from the company (Ahearne et al., 2005), but also through extra-role behaviors, including word-of-mouth communication (Lii & Lee, 2012) and engagement in corporate initiatives (Hur & Kim, 2017). Thus, it can also be expected that public-company identity congruence inferred based on CSA stances would influence consumers' extra-role

behavioral intention, and perceived identity similarity would serve as a mediating mechanism in this relationship. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1c: When a company's identity communicated in its CSA is congruent with publics' identities (i.e., identity congruence), publics will have a more favorable extra-role behavioral intention, than when a company's identity communicated in its CSA is incongruent with publics' identities (i.e., identity incongruence).

H2c: Perceived identity similarity will mediate the influences of public-company stance congruence on publics' extra-role behavioral intention.

Moderation of Individual Identity Strength

Publics' own ideological identity can play an important role in influencing their perceptions and interpretations of corporate identities as well as evaluation of CSA initiatives. On the individual level, besides the direction of ideological identities (i.e., liberals or conservatives), CSA outcomes are also dependent on gradations in the strength of ideological identities (i.e., weak, moderate, or strong).

According to social identity theory, people with stronger ideological identities tend to be more motivated to favor or protect their ideological groups when they react to divided socio-political issues and respond more actively to threats from opposing ideological groups to defend their own groups' values (Huddy, 2001). Thus, it can be expected that strength of individual ideological identities can moderate the relationship between public-company identity congruence and CSA outcomes. Individuals with stronger ideological identity would have heightened tendencies to favor a company if their identities are similar, or to disapprove of a company if their identities are dissimilar. In other words, based on a company's identity inferred based on its CSA stance, strong liberals would have more favorable attitude and behavioral intention toward a "liberal" company than weak liberals, and strong conservatives would have more favorable

attitude and behavioral intention toward a "conservative" company than weak conservatives. Conversely, strong liberals would have more unfavorable attitude and behavioral intention toward a "conservative" company than weak liberals, and strong conservatives would have more unfavorable attitude and behavioral intention toward a "liberal" company than weak conservatives.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3a-c: The strength of individual ideological identities will moderate the relationship between public-company identity congruence and publics' **(a)** attitude toward the company, **(b)** political consumption intention, and **(c)** extra-role behavioral intention. That is, the strength of ideological identity will augment the relationship between public-company identity congruence and the attitudinal and behavioral reactions.

Furthermore, in line with social identity theory and the rationale explained above, it can be expected that publics' perceived similarity would also serve as the psychological mechanism mediating this relationship. The following hypothesis is thus proposed:

H4a-c: Perceived identity similarity will mediate the moderating effects of individual ideological identity on publics' **(a)** attitude toward the company, **(b)** political consumption intention, and **(c)** extra-role behavioral intention.

Interaction of Public-Company Identity Congruence and CSA Strategies

The effects of public-company identity congruence on publics' attitudinal and behavioral outcomes can be dependent on the CSA strategies used. As reviewed in the previous chapter, CSA strategies can involve consistently standing on multiple issues, standing on a single issue, and inconsistently standing on multiple issues. Based on the notion that CSA initiatives can be cues of corporate identity, it can be argued that with different CSA strategies of engaging in multiple socio-political issues, companies can send different identity cues to publics.

First, extending the instrumental perspective on attachments to ideological groups from previous political psychology research (e.g., Ellis & Stimson, 2012; Mason, 2015b) to the CSA context, it can be proposes that standing on multiple issues along a particular ideology can be seen as a company's unequivocal and steadfast attachment to the ideological group with a clear "liberals" or "conservatives" label, whereas standing on a single issue communicates only a company's ideological stance based on its opinions on that specific issue. Thus, consistently standing on multiple issues under one particular ideology can send a stronger identity cue to publics than standing on a single issue.

Meanwhile, any inconsistency among various CSA initiatives can interfere with the signaling process between companies and their publics (Scheidler et al., 2019). This happens when a company demonstrates support for a certain political ideology, but occasionally advocates for the other political ideology on other issues. As reviewed above, such a CSA strategy represents a relatively weak signal of the political aspect of a company's corporate identity, given the vagueness of inconsistent corporate voices (Kline et al., 2008). In this sense, taking inconsistent stances on multiple socio-political issues can be considered an even weaker corporate identity cue than standing on a single issue.

Following this logic, consistently standing on multiple issues, standing on a single issue, and inconsistently standing on multiple issues represent gradations in the strength of corporate identity cues. Consistently standing on multiple issues is a CSA strategy that sends the strongest corporate identity cues, followed by standing on a single issue, and then inconsistently standing on multiple issues. Differences in the strength of corporate identities can influence publics' perceptions and actions toward companies at different

levels. In this sense, it is expected that CSA strategies could interact with public-company identity congruence to influence publics' attitudinal and behavioral reactions. Specifically, for the overall interaction effects, consistently standing on multiple issues would amplify the relationship between public-company identity congruence and CSA outcomes, while inconsistently standing on multiple issues would weaken the relationship between public-company identity congruence and CSA outcomes.

Therefore, the following hypotheses on the interaction effects can be proposed:

H5a-c: Comparing the three CSA strategies, when a company consistently stands on multiple issues, public-company identity congruence will have greater influences on publics' **(a)** attitude toward the company, **(b)** political consumption intention, and **(c)** extra-role behavioral intention, than when a company stands on a single issue. Meanwhile, when a company inconsistently stands on multiple issues, public-company identity congruence will have weaker influences on publics' **(a)** attitude toward the company, **(b)** political consumption intention, and **(c)** extra-role behavioral intention, than when a company stands on a single issue.

In addition, following social identity theory and the rationale explained above, the interaction effects of public-company identity congruence and CSA strategies would also be mediated by publics' perceived identity similarity. Thus, the following hypothesis can be proposed:

H6a-c: Perceived identity similarity will mediate the interaction effects of public-company identity congruence and CSA strategies on publics' **(a)** attitude toward the company, **(b)** political consumption intention, and **(c)** extra-role behavioral intention.

The following chapters present the empirical examinations for the hypotheses. Specifically, Experiment 1 (see Chapter 4) tests H1a-c and H2a-c regarding the main effects of public-company identity congruence on publics' reactions and the mediating effects of perceived identity similarity. Experiment 1 also tests H3a-c and H4a-c, which focus on the moderating effects of the strength of individuals' ideological identities.

Experiment 2 (see Chapter 4) examines H5a-c and H6a-c, which focus on the interaction effects of CSA strategies and public-company identity congruence. A computational analysis (see Chapter 5) of naturalistic social media data is conducted to further test H1a and H3a using real-world CSA events.

CHAPTER 4

EXPERIMENTAL STUDIES

To examine the proposed hypotheses regarding publics' reactions to CSA initiatives, two experimental studies were conducted. Experiment 1 focused on examining the main effects of public-company identity congruence on CSA outcomes (H1a-c), the mediating effects of publics' perceived identity similarity (H2a-c), the moderating effects of the strength of individuals' ideological identities (H3a-c) on publics' reactions to CSA initiatives, and the moderated mediation effects through perceived identity similarity (H4a-c). Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the hypothesized models tested in Experiment 1.

Figure 1
Hypothesized Models Tested in Experiment 1

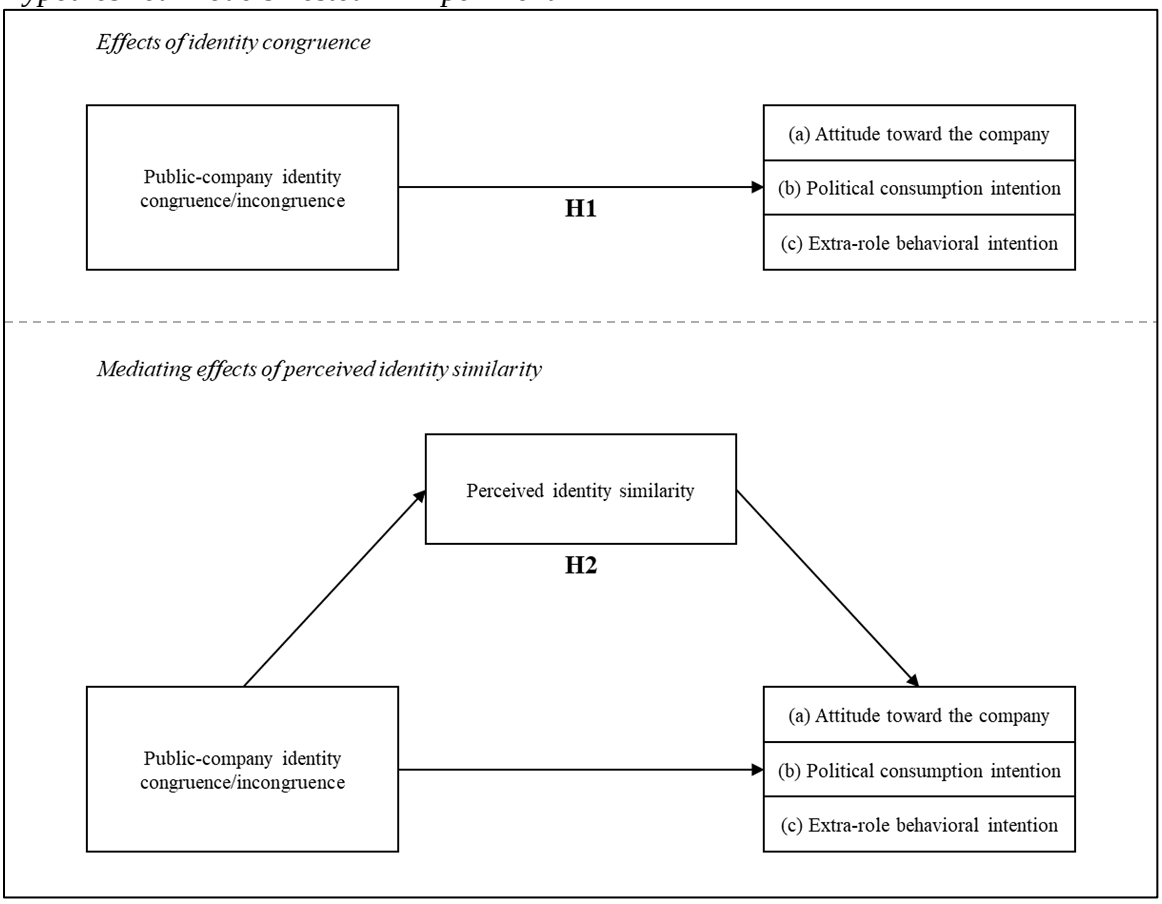
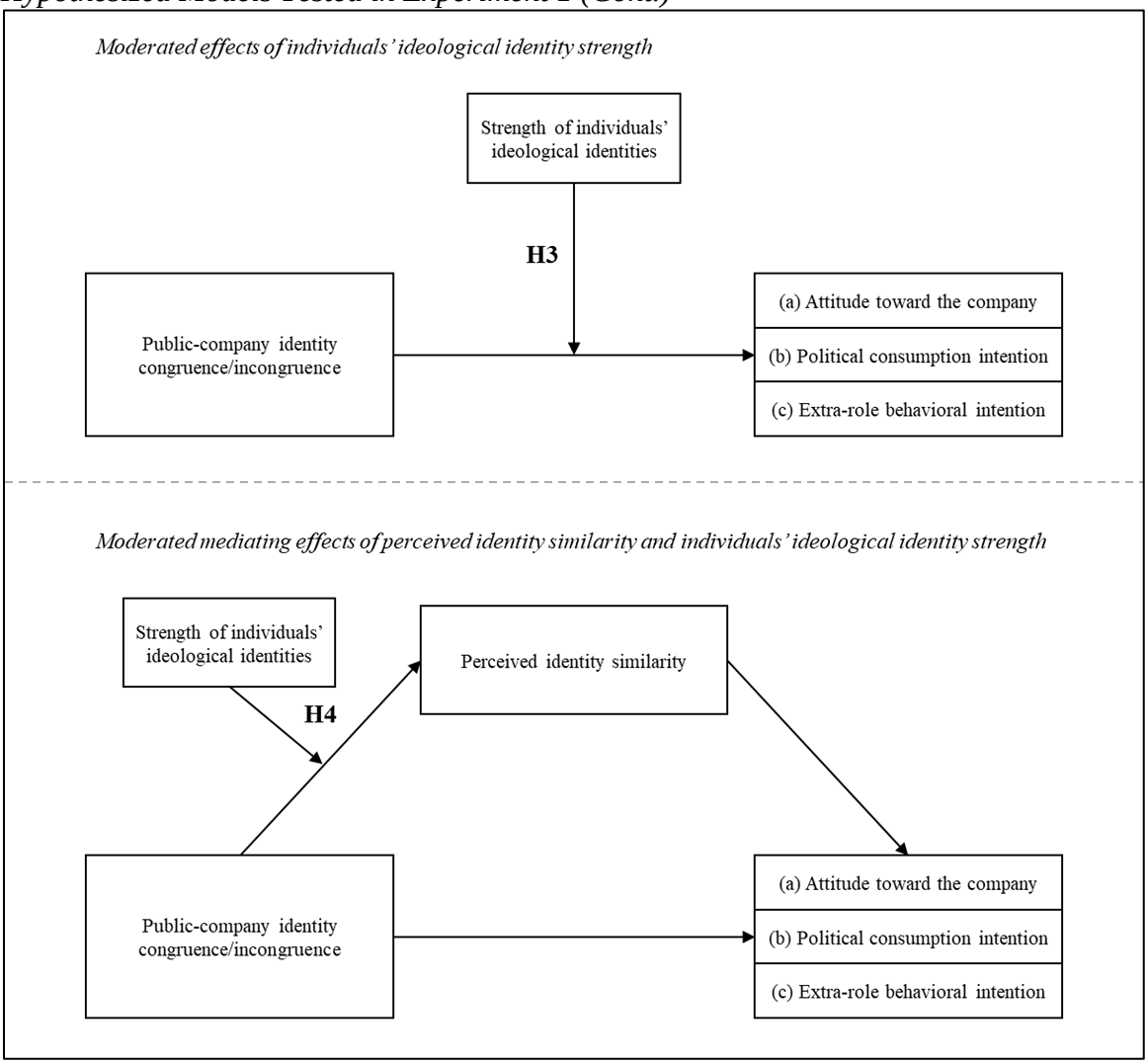
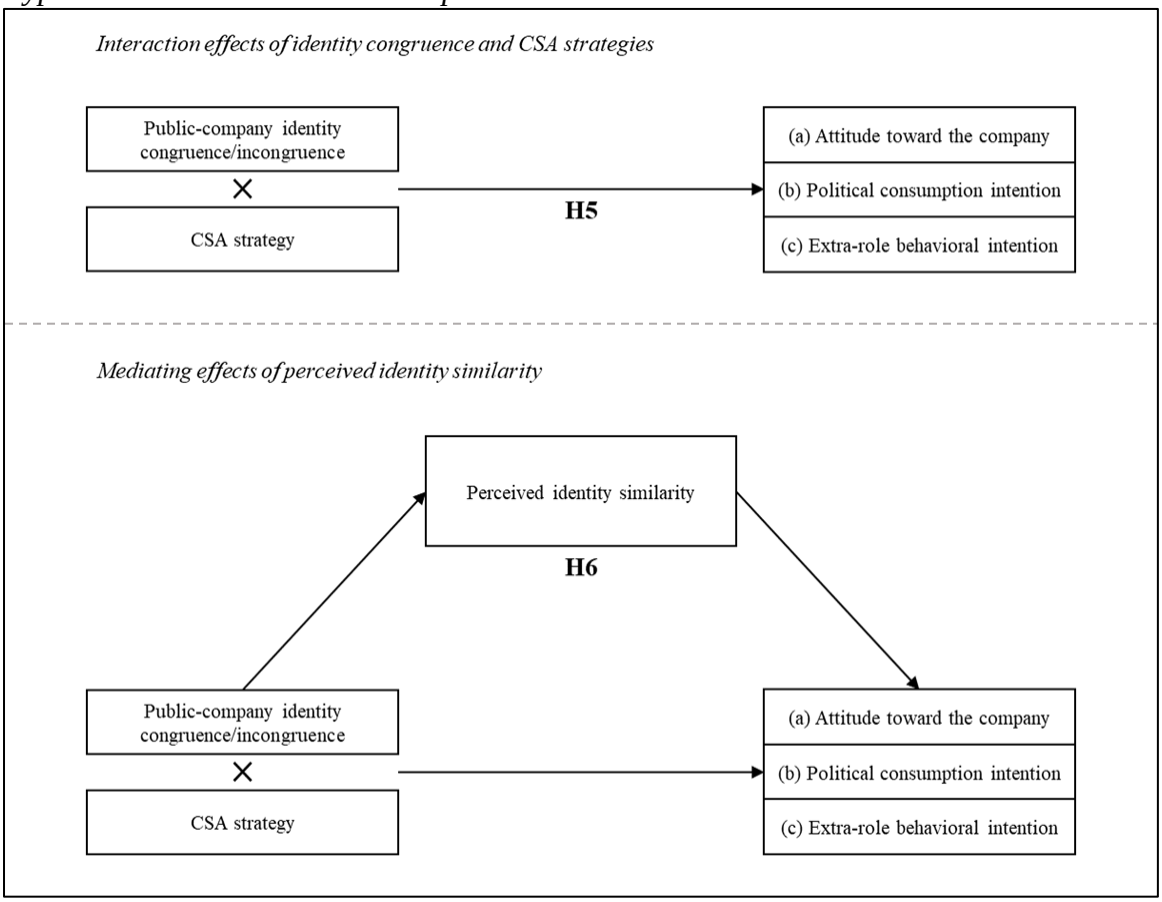


Figure 2
Hypothesized Models Tested in Experiment 1 (Cont.)



Meanwhile, Experiment 2 focused on testing the proposed effects of the interaction of public-company identity congruence and CSA strategies (H5a-c) as well as the mediating effects of publics' perceived identity similarity (H6a-c) on their reactions to CSA initiatives. Figure 3 illustrates the hypothesized models tested in Experiment 2.

Figure 3
Hypothesized Models Tested in Experiment 2



Pretests and Stimuli Development

Experimental studies have the advantage of providing high internal validity, which refers to the control exerted over potential confounding variables to reduce alternative explanations for the tested effects (Dunbar-Jacob, 2018). The various threats to internal validity represent a common set of potential alternative explanations for the tested effects. To enhance internal validity in experiment design, potential confounders should be pretested and ruled out, and the stimuli should generate intended manipulation effects. In this project, to ensure robust experiment design while minimizing potential

threats to internal validity, two pretests were conducted to determine appropriate elements to be included in the stimuli of the main experiments.

Pretest 1

In research related to corporate engagement in social issues, internal validity can be enhanced by controlling both corporate-related and issue-related variables. Thus, Pretest 1 was conducted to (1) select the industry that the fictitious company belonged to in the experimental stimuli and (2) select the socio-political issues that the company took stances on. The selection criteria are detailed in the below sections.

For Pretest 1, a total of 317 participants were recruited through Prolific, given its suitability for recruiting subjects for various social science experiments (Palan & Schitter, 2018). Each participant was paid $0.80 for answering the questionnaire. All the participants were U.S. residents. In order to get a relatively balanced evaluation of the political leaning of industries and the level of controversy of various socio-political issues, the pretest used quota sampling to ensure that about the same number of liberals and conservatives were recruited.

Excluding incomplete responses and those that failed the attention checks left the pretest with 257 responses for analysis. The pretest participants' age ranged from 18 to 77, with an average of 29.05 (SD = 11.76). Of all the participants, 30.7% identified themselves as male (n = 79), 67.7% as female (n = 174), and 1.6% as others (n = 4). The median annual household income fell into $50,000-$74,999. The median education level was an Associate's degree or equivalent. Ethnically, 60.5% of the participants were white, 14.7% were Hispanic or Latino, 14.3% were Asian, 7.6% were black, 1.3% were American Indian or Alaska native, 0.8% were Middle Eastern and North African, and

0.8% were others. Also, 49.0% of the participants indicated themselves as liberals (*n* = 126), 10.5% as moderates (*n* = 27), and 40.5% as conservatives (*n* = 104).

Selection of Industries. Pretest 1 first helped determine the industry that the fictitious company belonged to. The selection criteria for the industry included that (1) the industry should be perceived as politically neutral by publics, and (2) publics do not have an overall negative attitude toward the industry. In the real world, publics may perceive certain industries as leaning toward particular ideologies (e.g., the oil and gas industry's association with conservative politicians, see Båtstrand, 2015). In the stimuli for this project, it should be affirmed that publics' evaluation of the political aspects of corporate identities are inferred based on companies' CSA stances, instead of the industries that the companies belong to. Also, the companies in the stimuli should not belong to stigmatized industries, because stigmatized industry companies tend to have different strategies when they engage in social issues (Grougiou et al., 2016) and may generate different reactions from publics (Austin & Gaither, 2017), as compared to non-stigmatized industry companies. These industry-related confounding factors should be pretested and ruled out.

This pretest asked participants about their perceptions of seven major consumer-facing industries: including consumer goods, airlines, hotels, fast food restaurants, financial services, retailing, and communication services. To measure the perceived political leaning of each industry, participants were asked: "How would you describe the ideological outlook of most companies in the following industry? (1 = strongly liberal, 2 = liberal, 3 = slightly liberal, 4 = moderate/middle of the road, 5 = slightly conservative, 6 = conservative, 7 = strongly conservative, 0 = not sure)." The scale was originally from

the American National Election Studies (ANES, 2021) survey for measuring individuals' ideological identities and adapted to fit the need for measuring companies' ideological identities. After dropping those who answered "not sure" from the analysis, the results showed that among the seven industries, five of them (i.e., consumer goods, airlines, fast food restaurants, retailing, and communication services) were perceived as slightly liberal, one (i.e., financial services) as slightly conservative, and the other one (i.e., hotels) as moderate/middle of the road (see Table 1).

In addition, to measure the general attitude toward each industry, participants were asked to indicate their general attitude toward each of the selected industries (1 = strongly unfavorable, 7 = strongly favorable). The results showed that publics' attitudes toward all the seven industries were not negative (see Table 1).

Table 1
Mean Scores of Perceived Political Leaning of and General Attitude Toward Industries

	Perceived political leaning		General attitude	
Industry	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Consumer goods	3.89	1.50	5.32	1.17
Airlines	3.81	1.61	4.82	1.42
Hotels	4.00	1.48	5.37	1.14
Fast food restaurants	3.83	1.58	4.74	1.57
Financial services	4.75	1.71	4.86	1.44
Retailing	3.76	1.60	5.07	1.31
Communication services	3.62	1.57	5.10	1.32

Note. Perceived political leaning of the industries: 1 = strongly liberal, 2 = liberal, 3 = slightly liberal, 4 = moderate/middle of the road, 5 = slightly conservative, 6 = conservative, 7 = strongly conservative; general attitude: 1 = strongly unfavorable, 7 = strongly favorable.

Based on these results, hotels and consumer goods were selected as the industries that the fictitious companies in the main experiments stimuli belonged to, because these

two industries were perceived as the closest to the middle-of-the-road identity (M = 3.89, SD = 1.50 for consumer goods; M = 4.00, SD = 1.48 for hotels) and publics generally did not have extreme attitudes toward them (M = 5.32, SD = 1.17 for consumer goods; M = 5.37, SD = 1.14 for hotels).

Selection of Socio-Political Issues. Pretest 1 also helped determine the socio-political issues that should be used in the main experiments. The selection criteria for the socio-political issues were that (1) the issues should be perceived as highly controversial, and (2) people generally perceived these issues as important to themselves. By definition, CSA is often concerned about hotly debated controversial issues (Dodd & Supa, 2014). These criteria help ensure that the issues selected for stimuli are controversial in nature and are perceived as salient in people's minds.

First, a list of ten polarized socio-political issues was compiled based on previous academic studies and industry reports (e.g., Bialik, 2020; Pildes, 2021; Schaeffer, 2022), including: healthcare coverage, immigration, gun legislation, racism, gender equality, climate change, abortion rights, LGBTQ rights, voting rights, and COVID-19 response. All the issues have been hot-button topics in the political discussions. The opinions from liberals and conservatives on these issues are highly divided and have demonstrated increasing ideological gaps over the past several years (Pildes, 2021). People also have highly polarized views on corporations' stances on these issues (Bailey & Philips, 2020).

For the initially selected 11 socio-political issues, the pretest assessed people's perceived controversy level and perceived importance of each issue. Perceived issue controversy was measured by asking the participants to rate the extent to which they believed that there was public disagreement about each of the issues (1 = no extent, 7 =

great extent). The results revealed that among the 11 pretested socio-political issues, gun legislation, immigration, and abortion rights were perceived as the most controversial (see Table 2). This is consistent with the findings by Pew Research Center (Bialik, 2020).

Also, perceived issue importance was measured by asking participants about the extent to which they believed that each of the following issues was important to themselves (1 = not at all, 7 = very much). The results showed that all the issues were perceived as moderately important (see Table 2).

Table 2
Mean Scores of Perceived Controversy Level and Perceived Importance of Socio-Political Issues

	Perceived controversy level		Perceived importance	
Socio-political issue	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Healthcare coverage	5.22	1.48	5.95	1.41
Immigration	5.91	1.26	5.44	1.52
Gun legislation	5.92	1.30	5.37	1.68
Racism	5.67	1.46	5.83	1.66
Gender equality	5.06	1.47	5.63	1.84
Climate change	5.25	1.46	5.47	1.95
Abortion rights	5.84	1.36	5.51	1.84
LGBTQ rights	5.31	1.57	5.14	2.17
Voting rights	4.77	1.52	5.94	1.38
COVID-19 response	5.77	1.30	5.73	1.63

Note. Perceived controversy level: 1 = no extent, 7 = great extent; perceived importance: 1 = not at all, 7 = very much.

Thus, the most controversial issue, gun legislation (M = 5.92, SD = 1.30), was selected as the CSA issue in Experiment 1 and the condition of taking a stance on a single issue in Experiment 2. The three most controversial issues, gun legislation (M = 5.92, SD = 1.30), immigration (M = 5.91, SD = 1.26), and abortion rights (M = 5.84, SD = 1.36) were selected to manipulate the conditions of taking different stances on multiple issues

in Experiment 2. The standard deviations of perceived controversy levels of these three issues were also lower than those of most other issues, indicating that participants' perceptions of controversy levels are relatively consistent regarding the selected three issues.

Pretest 2

Pretest 2 was conducted to ensure that the stimuli developed for each experimental condition generated the intended perceptions in terms of the company's ideological identities.

For Pretest 2, a total of 205 participants were recruited through Prolific. Each of them was paid $0.80 for participation. All the participants resided in the U.S. Similar to Pretest 1, a quota sampling method of ideological identities was employed, in order to ensure that the stimuli could be evaluated by a relatively balanced number of liberals and conservatives.

After filtering out the incomplete responses and those failed the attention checks, the sample for Pretest 2 included 170 participants. Of these participants, 32.4% were male (n = 55), 66.5% were female (n = 113), and 1.2% were others (n = 2). Participants' age ranged from 18 to 69, with an average of 28.60 (SD = 11.48). The median annual household income was $50,000-$74,999, and the median education level was an Associate's degree or equivalent. This sample consisted of 57.4% white, 15.5% Asian, 14.2% Hispanic or Latino, 9.7% black, 1.3% Middle Eastern and North African, 0.6% American Indian or Alaska native participants, and 1.3% others. Additionally, 47.6% of the participants reported themselves as liberals (n = 81), 10.6% as moderates (n = 18), and 41.8% as conservatives (n = 71).

Manipulation of Corporate Identities in Experiment 1. Tentative stimuli materials were created to test the manipulation of the company's ideological identities. For Experiment 1, the stimuli took the form of a company's tweets from its official account. For the manipulation, two fictitious tweets from a fictitious hotel chain, "InStyle Hotels," were developed as tentative stimuli. The tweets described the company's stances and actions on the gun control issue.

To manipulate the company's liberal identity, a corporate tweet was created to state its support for gun control and its actions, including prohibiting firearms in all the stores and developing a collaborative program with gun control activists and nonprofits. To manipulate the company's conservative identity, a corporate tweet was created to state that the company planned to continue providing discounts to gun rights advocacy groups, which indicated its stance supporting gun rights. Using fictitious materials could eliminate participants' pre-existing perceptions of real companies that might impact the outcomes under investigation. All the fictitious statements were created by adopting and modifying real-world corporate responses to previous gun control issues. The tweets stated that the company either committed to donating its funds to either support stricter gun control or continued partnership with the National Rifle Association (NRA).

The pretest examined the manipulation for Experiment 1 to ensure that (1) based on the stances indicated in the tweets, participants can perceive the company's ideological identity as intended, and (2) participants perceive the stimuli as realistic.

The manipulation of the company's ideological identity was assessed by asking the participants: "Based on the company's stance, how would you describe its ideological outlook? (1 = strongly liberal, 2 = liberal, 3 = slightly liberal, 4 = moderate/middle of the

road, 5 = slightly conservative, 6 = conservative, 7 = strongly conservative).” A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test showed that there was a significant difference in participants’ perception of the company’s ideological identity ($F(1, 168) = 163.704$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .494$). The company’s tweet indicating its stance supporting stricter gun control was perceived as liberal ($M = 2.53$, $SD = 1.56$), and the company’s tweet indicating its continued partnership with the NRA was perceived as conservative ($M = 5.46$, $SD = 1.42$).

Meanwhile, perceived realness was assessed by a two-item bipolar semantic differential scale adopted from Pouliot and Cowen (2007). Participants were asked the extent to which the message they saw was “(1 =) unrealistic/(7 =) realistic” and “(1 =) fictitious/(7 =) real” (Spearman-Brown coefficient = .80). The results from a one-way ANOVA test showed that participants perceived both of the corporate tweets as generally realistic (liberal corporate tweet: $M = 4.86$, $SD = 1.51$; conservative corporate tweet: $M = 4.61$, $SD = 1.64$). There was no significant difference in perceived realness of the tweets ($F(1, 168) = .901$, $p = .344$, $\eta^2_p = .005$).

Based on these results, the pretested manipulation of corporate tweets was used in Experiment 1, with hotels as the industry the company belonged to and gun control legislation as the CSA issue.

Manipulation of Corporate Identities and CSA Strategies in Experiment 2. Stimuli in Experiment 2 intended to manipulate CSA stances and CSA strategies. Specifically, for Experiment 2, the stimuli took the form of a company’s press releases on its official website. In the manipulation, the press releases were from a fictitious food company, “The United Foods Company.” For the CSA strategies of standing on multiple

issues, the tentative stimuli used the three most controversial socio-political issues identified in Pretest 1: gun control legislation, abortion laws, and immigration. The press releases stated that the company published its annual "Social Impact Report," in which its CSA stance regarding each of the selected socio-political issues were highlighted.

For the strategy of taking consistent stances on multiple issues under one particular ideology, the press release indicated that the company engaged in a number of different issues with either liberal or conservative stances over the past year. To manipulate the condition of a liberal company taking consistent stances on multiple issues, the company's press release stated its support for ban on guns, abortion rights, and more employment of immigrants and refugees over years. For instance, the press release said: "[the company] is donating $80 million to several liberal NGOs, aiming to address a number of issues, including promoting gun control, advocating greenhouse emission reduction, helping pro-choice groups, and supporting government-run health coverage." To manipulate the condition of a conservative company taking consistent stances on multiple issues, the company's press release indicated its support for gun rights, abortion restrictions, and stricter immigration regulations.

For the condition of taking inconsistent stances on multiple issues under different ideologies, the press release indicated the company supporting liberal and conservative stances on multiple different issues. To manipulate the condition of a liberal leaning company taking inconsistent stances on multiple issues, the company's press release expressed its support for ban on guns and abortion rights but said its support for stricter immigration regulations as well. To manipulate the condition of a conservative leaning company taking inconsistent stances on multiple issues, the company's press release

indicated its support for gun rights, abortion restrictions, but said its support for more employment of immigrants and refugees as well.

With regard to the strategy of standing on a single issue, the tentative stimuli used gun control legislation, as it is the most controversial socio-political issue identified in Pretest 1. The press release indicated that the company engaged in a selected issue with either liberal or conservative stance in the past year. In the liberal corporate identity condition, for example, the company stated in its press release: "[the company] is donating $80 million in support of gun control advocacy groups." In the conservative corporate identity condition, the company stated its continued partnership with gun rights advocacy groups in the press release.

The criteria for successful manipulation for Experiment 2 were the same as those for Experiment 1. Participants should perceive the company's ideological identity as intended based on the stances indicated in each press release, and those press releases should be perceived as realistic. The same measures were used to examine participants' perception of the company's ideological identity ("Based on the company's stance, how would you describe its ideological outlook?" 1 = strongly liberal, 2 = liberal, 3 = slightly liberal, 4 = moderate/middle of the road, 5 = slightly conservative, 6 = conservative, 7 = strongly conservative) and their perceived realness of the manipulation ("To which extent do you think the corporate message you saw is: (1 =) unrealistic/(7 =) realistic and (1 =) fictitious/(7 =) real?" (Spearman-Brown coefficient = .86)).

The results showed that the three CSA strategy conditions indicating the company's liberal-leaning CSA practices were all perceived as liberal, and the three CSA strategy conditions indicating the company's conservative-leaning CSA practices were all

perceived as conservative (see Table 3). There was a significant difference between the three liberal conditions combined and the three conservative conditions combined in participants' perception of the company's ideological identity ($F(1, 168) = 137.553$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .450$). Also, the results showed a pattern that among the CSA strategies, taking consistent stances on multiple issues were perceived as the most extreme on the ideological spectrum, while taking inconsistent stances on multiple issues were perceived as the least extreme (see Table 3), which was in line with the expectation.

Meanwhile, the results showed that participants perceived all the corporate press releases as generally realistic (see Table 4). There was no significant difference in perceived realness of the corporate press releases ($F(5, 164) = 1.967$, $p = .086$, $\eta^2_p = .057$).

Therefore, the pretested manipulation of corporate press releases was adopted in Experiment 2, with consumer goods (foods) as the industry the company belonged to and gun control legislation, abortion rights, and immigration as the CSA issues.

Table 3

Mean Scores of Perceived Corporate Identity Across Pretested Conditions

Condition	Perceived corporate identity	
	M	*SD*
Taking consistent stances on multiple issues (liberal leaning)	1.96	1.46
Taking inconsistent stances on multiple issues (liberal leaning)	2.75	1.73
Taking a stance on a single issue (liberal leaning)	2.60	1.71
Taking consistent stances on multiple issues (conservative leaning)	5.91	1.51
Taking inconsistent stances on multiple issues (conservative leaning)	5.11	1.52
Taking a stance on a single issue (conservative leaning)	5.26	1.86

Note. Perceived corporate identity: 1 = strongly liberal, 2 = liberal, 3 = slightly liberal, 4 = moderate/middle of the road, 5 = slightly conservative, 6 = conservative, 7 = strongly conservative.

Table 4

Mean Scores of Perceived Realness Across Pretested Conditions

Condition	Perceived realness	
	M	*SD*
Taking consistent stances on multiple issues (liberal leaning)	5.35	1.34
Taking inconsistent stances on multiple issues (liberal leaning)	4.40	1.77
Taking a stance on a single issue (liberal leaning)	5.48	1.56
Taking consistent stances on multiple issues (conservative leaning)	4.94	1.60
Taking inconsistent stances on multiple issues (conservative leaning)	4.54	1.63
Taking a stance on a single issue (conservative leaning)	4.90	1.52

Note. Perceived realness: mean scores of two items (1 = unrealistic, 7 = realistic; 1 = fictitious, 7 = real).

Stimuli for the Main Experiments

Based on the two pretests and criteria, the stimuli pretested were proceeded to the main experiments. In Experiment 1, a pair of official tweets from a fictitious hotel chain, "InStyle Hotels," were used. Each tweet included a short statement stating either the support for gun control and its actions or continued relationship with gun advocacy groups, showing the company's either liberal or conservative identity (see Appendix A for the stimuli). In Experiment 2, six press releases from a fictitious food company, "The United Foods Company," were included. The press releases stated the company's ideological identities (liberal vs. conservative) based on its issue stances and showed its different CSA strategies (taking consistent stances on multiple issues, vs. taking a stance on a single issue, vs. taking inconsistent stances on multiple issues) (see Appendix B for the stimuli).

With this setting, in both Experiments 1 and 2, the company's ideological identities and the identity strength levels were signaled by its CSA stances and strategies. The manipulation of public-company identity congruence was done by presenting participants a company's CSA stances that are either congruent with or opposite to self-indicated ideological identities. Public-company identity congruence was reached when liberal participants were presented with a company's liberal CSA initiative(s) or when conservative participants were presented with a company's conservative CSA initiative(s). For example, for an individual self-reported as liberal, the congruent condition was presenting the individual with a corporate stance on supporting stricter gun regulations, and the incongruent condition was presenting the individual with a corporate stance on continuing its partnership with the NRA. Meanwhile, public-company identity

incongruence happened when liberal participants were presented with a company's conservative CSA initiative(s) or when conservative participants were presented with a company's liberal CSA initiative(s).

Experiment 1 Design, Procedure, and Measures

Experiment 1 aimed to examine the main effects of public-company identity congruence (H1a-c), the mediating effects of perceived identity similarity (H2a-c), and the moderating effects of individual ideological identity strength (H3a-c). To test this set of hypotheses, a between-subject experiment of public-company identity congruence (congruence vs. incongruence) was implemented, with publics' attitude toward the company, political consumption intentions, and extra-role behavioral intentions as dependent variables.

The experiment was conducted online using Qualtrics. Upon providing the consent, participants were first asked about their ideological identities and the strength of their ideological identities. Each ideological group was randomly assigned to one of the two identity congruence conditions. Participants in each condition were presented with the fictitious tweet announcing a fictitious company's ("InStyle Hotels'") CSA initiative either congruent or incongruent with their own identities. Then, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire including questions measuring their attitude toward the company, attitude toward the CSA, political consumption intention, and extra-role behavioral intention. After this, control variables were measured. Specifically, participants were asked about their involvement in the issue mentioned in the stimuli and general social consciousness. Demographic information, including age, gender, ethnics, education, and income, were also collected at the end of the questionnaire.

The measures used for Experiment 1 were detailed in the following sections. The reliability scores for all the measures were reported in Table 5.

Dependent Variables

Attitude Toward the Company. Participants' attitude reflects their overall evaluation of the company involved in CSA. Participants' attitude toward the company was measured on a seven-point bipolar semantic differential scale adopted from the study by Gosselt et al. (2019). Participants were asked to respond to four items regarding the extent to what they would "(1 =) dislike/(7 =) like" the company and to what extent they thought the company was "(1 =) unfavorable/(7 =) favorable," "(1 =) negative/ (7 =) positive," and "(1 =) socially irresponsible/(7 =) socially responsible".

Political Consumption Intention. Participants' political consumption intention captures their intention to buycott – as a rewarding behavior – and boycott – as a punishing behavior in response to companies' CSA stances. Participants' intention to take political consumption behaviors toward the company involved in CSA was measured on a seven-point bipolar scale, which was adopted from Stolle et al.'s (2005) study. Participants were asked how likely they would be to "(1 =) boycott/(4 =) take no action/(7 =) deliberately buy [the company's] products or services for social, political, or ethical reasons".

Extra-Role Behavioral Intention. Participants' extra-role behavioral intention reflects their intention to take behaviors other than consuming or avoiding consuming, as a means to reciprocate the benefits gained from the companies involved in CSA or to retaliate the companies whose CSA stances contradict their own. Extra-role behaviors include word-of-mouth and other forms of supportive or punishing behaviors. The

measure for participants' extra-role behavioral intention was created by adapting the measurement items from Einwiller's (2019) study into a bipolar scale. In this study, the scale placed supportive intention on one end and retaliatory intention on the other end. Participants were asked to indicate their likelihood to "encourage friends or relatives (1 =) not to buy/ (7 =) to buy products from [the company]," "say (1 =) negative/ (7 =) positive things about [the company] and its products to other people," and "try to (1 =) punish/ (7 =) support [the company] in some way".

Moderator

Strength of Ideological Identity. The questionnaire first asked participants to place themselves on a seven-point liberal-conservative ideology scale used in the ANES survey: extremely liberal, liberal, slightly liberal, moderate, slightly conservative, conservative, and extremely conservative (1 = extremely liberal, 7 = extremely conservative) (American National Election Studies [ANES], 2021). Following Mason's (2015b) approach, extremely liberal, liberal, and slightly liberal were grouped into a category named "liberals," while extremely conservative, conservative, and slightly conservative were grouped into a category named "conservatives."

Based on their self-indicated ideological identities, participants categorized as either "liberals" or "conservatives" were then asked to respond to a four-item scale measuring the strength of their corresponding ideological identities. The scale was adopted from Huddy et al.'s (2015) study. Specifically, participants were asked "How important is being a liberal/conservative to you" (1 = not at all important, 7 = extremely important); "How well does the term 'liberal/conservative' describe you" (1 = not at all, 7 = extremely well); "When talking about liberals/conservatives, how often do you use

'we' instead of 'they'" (1 = never, 7 = all the time); and "To what extent do you think of yourself as being a liberal/conservative?" (1 = to an extremely small extent, 7 = to an extremely large extent).

Mediator

Perceived Identity Similarity. Participants' perceived identity similarity to the company was measured on a seven-point scale with three items, which was adopted from Sirgy et al.'s (1997) study. Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with the following statements: "Being a customer of [the company] is consistent with how I see myself;" "Being a customer of [the company] reflects who I am;" and "People similar to me would be customers of [the company]" (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

Control Variables

General Social Consciousness. General social consciousness refers to individuals' conscious awareness of and responsiveness toward the society as a whole and important social issues (M. Walker & Kent, 2013). Socially conscious publics are driven by "a desire to eliminate any harmful effects and maximize the long-run beneficial impact on society" (Mohr et al. 2001, p. 47). Previous CSR research has found that individuals' own social consciousness differentially influences their attitudinal and behavioral reactions to companies involved in social issues (Russell et al., 2016). Thus, general social consciousness was included as a potential confounding variable. The self-evaluated social consciousness measure was adopted from Lichtenstein et al.'s (2004) study. The seven-point single-item measure asked participants to what extent they agree with the statement: "I consider myself to be a socially conscious person" (1 = not at all, 7 = very much).

Personal Issue Involvement. Personal involvement in the socio-political issue was considered a potential confounding variable. Personal involvement refers to individuals' perceived connection between themselves and the issue and perceived importance of the issue, reflecting a "predisposition to pay attention to and communicate about a topic" (Hallahan, 2001, p. 35). The level of personal involvement in an issue can determine the type of publics an individual is to the company and influence the extent to which the individual is motivated to process corporate communication messages (Dhanesh & Nekmat, 2019), which was found to impact publics' perceptions of and reactions to corporate engagement in social issues (Overton et al., 2020). Participants' issue involvement was assessed using a seven-point Likert scale adopted from Quick and Stephenson (2007). The items included: "I think [the issue] as a great deal;" "[The issue] is a personally relevant topic for me;" "I think about [the issue];" "I find myself bringing up [the issue] in casual conversation;" "[The issue] is important to me;" "[The issue] is a high priority for me;" "I don't care about [the issue]" (reverse-coded); "When [the issue] comes up in conversation I 'tune in';" and "[The issue] is never at the top of my mind" (reverse-coded) (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Experiment 1 used gun legislation as the socio-political issues in the stimuli, so "gun legislation" replaced "[the issue]" in the specific questionnaire statements.

Manipulation Check Measure

Public-company Identity Congruence. The manipulation of identity congruence between self and a company was checked by examining the level of alignment between individuals' self-indicated identity and their perceived corporate identity in each

condition. Since ideologies become the basis for participants to infer identity similarity in this study, identity congruence was measured on the ideological dimension.

Perceived company's ideological identity was measured by asking the participants: "Based on the company's stance, how would you describe its ideological outlook? (1 = strongly liberal, 2 = liberal, 3 = slightly liberal, 4 = moderate/middle of the road, 5 = slightly conservative, 6 = conservative, 7 = strongly conservative)." Then, company-individual identity congruence was calculated as the Euclidean distance between participants' perception of the company's ideological identity and their self-placement on the seven-point liberal-conservative ideology scale adopted from the ANES survey (American National Election Studies [ANES], 2021; see the above "Strength of Ideological Identity" section).

Table 5
Reliability Scores of Measures in Experiments 1 and 2

Measures	α (Experiment 1)	α (Experiment 2)
Attitude toward the company	.98	.98
Political consumption intention	-	-
Extra-role behavioral intention	.96	.96
Strength of ideological identity	.93	.93
Perceived identity similarity	.96	.96
General social consciousness	-	-
Personal issue involvement in gun legislation	.81	.80
Personal issue involvement in abortion rights	-	.83
Personal issue involvement in immigration	-	.83
Public-company identity congruence	-	-

Note. Measures for political consumption intention, general social consciousness, and public-company identity congruence are single-item measures.

Experiment 1 Participants

An a priori power analysis was run using G*Power to estimate the appropriate sample size. Based on the proposed hypotheses, the a priori power analysis was conducted with F-tests and linear multiple regression models for detecting the moderated mediating effects (fixed model, R^2 increase), with two tested variables (the moderator and its related interaction terms), and four predictors (the independent variable, the mediator, and the moderator and its related interaction term) (α err prob = .05, Power (1 - β err prob) = .80). For a small effect size of .02, the estimated sample size would be 485, and for a medium effect size of .15, the estimated sample size would be 68. Based on post-hoc power analyses in previous studies on similar topics (e.g., Rim et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2021), a small-to-medium effect size was expected, and an appropriate sample size would be around 200 participants.

The experiment was posted to CloudResearch (cloudresearch.com), an online crowdsourcing platform linked to Amazon Mechanical Turk that provides additional quality control features (Litman et al., 2017). Experiment 1 applied quota sampling to ensure that about the same number of liberals and conservatives were recruited, so that the CSA tweets could be evaluated by a balanced number of liberal and conservative participants. Participants who indicated their own ideological identity as moderate/middle of the road were excluded from analysis, since this study focuses on the congruence between participants' ideological identities and the company's identities expressed in its liberal or conservative stance.

A total of 227 participants completed the online experiment, and each of them was paid $1.60 for participation. Participants' answers to the attention check questions

were examined, and 31 responses were removed for straight-lining or failing either of the two attention checks.

The final sample included 196 participants. All the participants were U.S. residents. Of these participants, 56.1% were male (n = 110) and 43.9% were female (n = 86). Participants' age ranged from 23 to 72, with an average of 40.23 (SD = 12.28). The median annual household income fell in the $50,000-$74,999 range. The median education level was a Bachelor's degree. Whites accounted for 80.9% of the sample, followed by Black (6.4%), Hispanic or Latino (6.4%), Asian (5.3%), American Indian or Alaska Native (0.5%), and others (0.5%). Additionally, the sample included 104 liberals (53.1%) and 92 conservatives (46.9%).

Experiment 2 Design, Procedure, and Measures

Experiment 2 was conducted using a 2 (public-company identity congruence: congruence vs. incongruence) × 3 (CSA strategy: consistently standing on multiple issues vs. standing on a single issue vs. inconsistently standing on multiple issues) between-subject experiment design. The same dependent variables, mediator, and control variables as those used in Experiment 1 were also employed in Experiment 2.

For the purpose of diversifying the communication channels used for CSA initiative communication to enhance external validity, the experimental stimuli for Experiment 2 took the form of a company's press releases from its official website and was pretested.

Participants were recruited using the quota sampling method of self-reported ideological identities, in order to ensure that the company's press releases could be evaluated by a relatively balanced number of liberals and conservatives, which was

identical to Experiment 1. In Experiment 2, participants in each ideological group were randomly assigned to one of the six experimental conditions. Except for replacing the name of the fictitious company, the overall experimental procedure and measures in Experiment 2 were generally the same as those in Experiment 1. A modification was made on the measure for personal issue involvement. Since three socio-political issues were included in the stimuli, the questionnaire asked participants to respond to the personal issue involvement measure for three times – one for each issue – with "gun legislation," "immigration restriction," and "abortion rights" replacing "[the issue]" in the measure for each issue. Individuals' ideological identity strength, which was measured as a moderator in Experiment 1, was used as a control variable in Experiment 2. The reliability scores of each measure in Experiment 2 were reported in Table 5.

Experiment 2 was also conducted online using Qualtrics. The experiment started with asking participants about their ideological identities and the strength of their ideological identities. Participants then read the fictitious press releases about the company's ("The United Foods Company's") CSA initiatives, and then answered a series of questions, which measured their attitude toward the CSA, political consumption intention, extra-role behavioral intention, involvement in the issues mentioned in the stimuli, and general social consciousness. Participants were also asked about their demographic information at the end of the questionnaire.

Experiment 2 Participants

Similar to Experiment 1, an a priori power analysis was also run using G*Power to estimate the sample size. The a priori power analysis was conducted with F-tests and linear multiple regression models for detecting the mediated interaction effects (fixed

model, R^2 deviation from zero), with and four predictors (the two independent variables, their interaction term, and the mediator) (α err prob = .05, Power (1 - β err prob) = .80). For a small effect size of .02, the estimated sample size would be 602, and for a medium effect size of .15, the estimated sample size would be 85. Thus, referring to post-hoc power analyses in previous studies on the effects of CSA strategies (e.g., Xu, 2021), a small-to-medium effect size was expected, and an appropriate sample size would be around 250 participants.

Experiment 2 also recruited participants using CloudResearch (cloudresearch.com). Like Experiment 1, Experiment 2 also applied quota sampling to recruit about the same number of liberals and conservatives. Also, participants who indicated their own ideological identity as moderate/middle of the road were excluded from analysis, so the public-company identity congruence and incongruence conditions could be formed.

A total of 265 participants completed Experiment 2, and each was paid $1.60 for participation. After removing straight-lining responses and those failed to answer either of the two attention checks, the final sample included 233 participants. All the participants were U.S. residents. Participants' age ranged from 21 to 78, with an average of 41.83 (*SD* = 12.07). Regarding participants' gender, 54.9% were males (*n* = 128); 43.8% were females (*n* = 102); and 1.3% were others (*n* = 3). The median annual household income was $50,000-$75,000. The median education level was a Bachelor's degree. Ethnically, the sample was comprised of 79.5% whites, 9.1% Blacks, 5.9% Asian, 5.0% Hispanic or Latino, and 0.5% others. Of all the participants, 122 were liberals (52.4%) and 111 were conservatives (47.6%).

Experiment 1 Results

Experiment 1 focused on the effects of public-company identity congruence on attitudes and behavioral intentions, the potential mediating effects of publics' perceived identity similarity, and the potential moderating effects of the strength of publics' own ideological identities. The data analysis approaches and results are reported by hypothesis as follows.

Manipulation Check Results

To confirm the success of the manipulation, a one-way ANOVA test was performed with public-company identity congruence conditions as the independent variable and the Euclidean distance between each participant's own ideological identity and the perceptions of the company's ideological identity as the dependent variable. The test showed that participants in the identity congruence condition perceived that the company's identity had a closer distance from their own identity (M = .68, SD = 1.02), compared to participants in the identity incongruence condition (M = 2.94, SD = 2.06) ($F(1, 194) = 95.441$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .330$). In other words, participants in the identity congruence condition indeed perceived the company's identity as more aligned with their own than those in the identity incongruence condition. Therefore, the manipulation of public-company identity congruence was successful.

Randomization Check Results

Randomization checks were conducted for demographic variables (i.e., gender, ethnicity, age, income, and education) and the potential confounding variables (personal involvement in the gun legislation issue and general social consciousness) using chi-square and ANOVA tests. The results showed that there were no significant differences

between the two public-company identity congruence conditions for gender ($\chi^2(1) = .490$, $p = .484$), ethnicity ($\chi^2(5) = 5.904$, p = .316), age ($F(1, 194) = .107$, $p = .743$, $\eta^2_p = .001$), income ($F(1, 194) = .476$, $p = .491$, $\eta^2_p = .002$), or education ($F(1, 194) = .668$, $p = .415$, $\eta^2_p = .003$). Also, there was no significant difference between the conditions for personal involvement in the gun legislation issue ($F(1, 194) = .029$, $p = .866$, $\eta^2_p = .000$) or general social consciousness ($F(1, 194) = .745$, $p = .389$, $\eta^2_p = .004$). Given the non-significant randomization check results, demographic and confounding variables were not included as covariates in the hypothesis testing analyses.

Hypothesis Testing Results

H1a-c: Effects of Public-company Identity Congruence on Attitudes and Behavioral Intentions. H1a-c predicted that the congruence between a company's issue stance and publics' ideological identity would generate more favorable (a) attitude toward the company, (b) political consumption intention, and (c) extra-role behavioral intention. Since the dependent variables (i.e., attitude toward the company, political consumption intention, and extra-role behavioral intention) had significant positive relationships with each other (attitude toward the company and political consumption intention: $r = .81$, $p < .001$; attitude toward the company and extra-role behavioral intention: $r = .78$, $p < .001$; political consumption intention and extra-role behavioral intention: $r = .86$, $p < .001$), a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed. It showed a significant effect of public-company identity congruence on the combined dependent variables, Wilk's $\lambda = .590$, $F(3, 192) = 44.470$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .410$.

With regard to the effect on participants' attitude toward the company (H1a), a one-way ANOVA test was conducted. The results showed that there was a significant effect of public-company identity congruence on participants' attitude toward the company ($F(1, 194) = 130.962$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .403$). Specifically, when there was congruence between the company's and participants' identities, participants would have a more favorable attitude toward the company ($M = 5.68$, $SD = 1.55$), than when there was incongruence between a company's and participants' identities ($M = 3.06$, $SD = 1.65$). Thus, H1a was supported.

Also, for participants' political consumption intention (H1b), the results from a one-way ANOVA test showed a significant effect of public-company identity congruence on participants' political consumption intention ($F(1, 194) = 94.893$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .328$). Specifically, when the company's and participants' identities were congruent, participants would have a more positive political consumption intention ($M = 5.28$, $SD = 1.39$) than when the company's and participants' identities were incongruent ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 1.59$). H1b was supported.

In addition, for participants' extra-role behavioral intention (H1c), a one-way ANOVA test showed a significant effect of public-company identity congruence on participants' extra-role behavioral intention ($F(1, 194) = 74.503$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .277$). When the company's and participants' identities were congruent, participants would have a more positive extra-role behavioral intention ($M = 5.10$, $SD = 1.65$) than when the company's and participants' identities were incongruent ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 1.49$). H1c was supported.

The detailed statistical results are reported in Table 6.

Table 6

One-Way ANOVA for the Effects of Public-company Identity Congruence on Dependent Variables

	Congruence		Incongruence				
Variable	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	$F(1, 194)$	*p*	η^2_p
Attitude toward the company	5.68	1.55	3.06	1.65	130.962	< .001	.403
Political consumption intention	5.28	1.39	3.21	1.59	94.893	< .001	.328
Extra-role behavioral intention	5.10	1.65	3.17	1.49	74.503	< .001	.277

H2a-c: Mediating Effects of Perceived Identity Similarity. H2a-c hypothesized that participants' perceived identity similarity would mediate the influences of public-company congruence on (a) attitude toward the company, (b) political consumption intention, and (c) extra-role behavioral intention. To examine this set of hypotheses, a series of PROCESS analyses with Model 4 were used (bootstrap = 5,000), with public-company identity congruence as the independent variable, participants' attitude toward the company, political consumption intention, or extra-role behavioral intention as the dependent variable, and perceived identity similarity as the mediator.

Regarding the effect on participants' attitude toward the company involved in CSA (H2a), the results revealed that the indirect effect of identity congruence on participants' attitude toward the company through their perceived identity similarity was significant (indirect effect (IE) = 1.71, Boot*SE* = .19, 95% CI = [1.339, 2.110]). The path analysis showed that participants whose stance was congruent with the company's stance tended to perceive higher identity similarity ($b = 2.30$, $SE = .22$, $p < .001$) than those whose stance was incongruent with the company's stance, which in turn, led to a more favorable attitude toward the company ($b = .74$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$). Thus, H2a was supported. Meanwhile, there was a significant direct effect of public-company identity congruence on participants' attitude toward the company ($b = .91$, $SE = .20$, $p < .001$).

With regard to participants' political consumption intention (H2b), the results showed that the relationship between public-company identity congruence and participants' attitude toward the company was mediated by their perceived identity similarity (IE = 1.58, Boot*SE* = .19, 95% CI = [1.212, 1.978]). Specifically, participants whose stance was congruent with the company's stance perceived higher identity

similarity with the company (b = 2.30, SE = .22, p < .001) than those whose stance was incongruent with the company's stance. Participants' perceived identity similarity with the company, in turn, were positively related to their favorable political consumption intention (b = .69, SE = .05, p < .001). Thus, H2b was supported. Meanwhile, the direct effect of public-company identity congruence on participants' political consumption intention was significant (b = .50, SE = .18, p = .008).

Similarly, with regard to participants' extra-role behavioral intention (H2c), the results showed that the relationship between public-company identity congruence and participants' extra-role behavioral intention was mediated by their perceived identity similarity (IE = 1.67, BootSE = .20, 95% CI = [1.301, 2.084]). Participants whose stance was congruent with the company's stance perceived higher identity similarity with the company (b = 2.30, SE = .22, p < .001) than those whose stance was incongruent with the company's stance, which in turn, led to their more favorable extra-role behavioral intention (b = .73, SE = .05, p < .001). This supported H2c. No significant direct effect of public-company identity congruence on participants' extra-role behavioral intention was found (b = .26, SE = .19, p = .176).

The statistical results are reported in Table 7.

Table 7

Mediation of Perceived Identity Similarity in the Relationships Between Public-company Identity Congruence and the Dependent Variables

	Mediator	Outcome		
	Perceived similarity	ATT	CONSUM	EXTRA
Predictor	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*
Identity congruence	2.30***	.91***	.50***	.26
Perceived similarity	-	.74***	.69**	.73***
	$F(1, 194) = 105.984$	$F(2, 193) = 244.351$	$F(2, 193) = 201.780$	$F(2, 193) = 185.259$
	$R^2 = .353$	$R^2 = .717$	$R^2 = .677$	$R^2 = .658$

Note. ATT: attitude toward the company; CONSUM: political consumption intention; EXTRA: extra-role behavioral intention

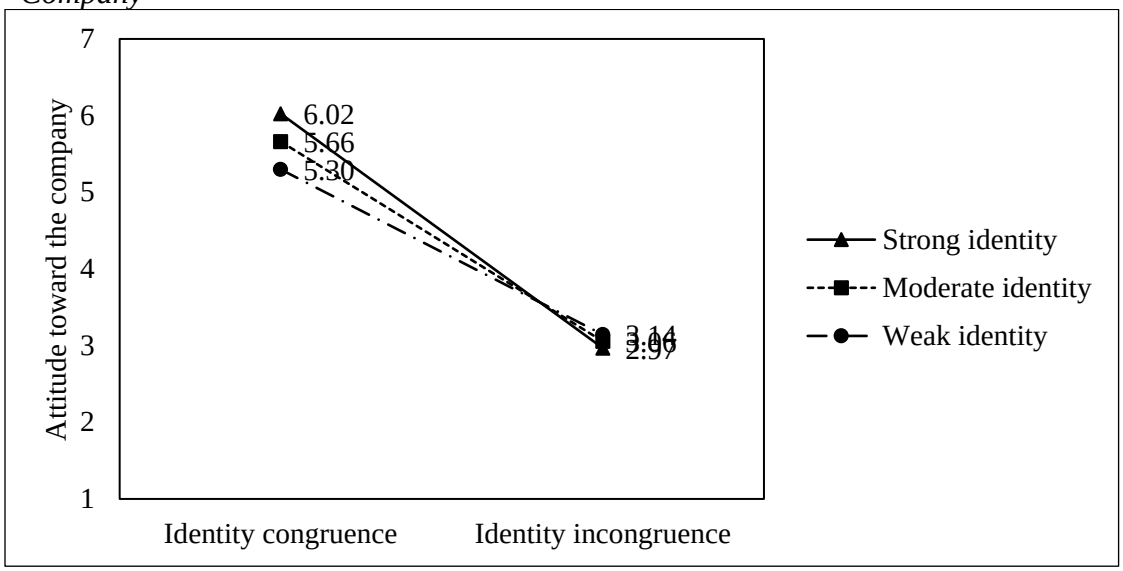
*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

H3a-c: Moderating Effects of the Strength of Individuals' Ideological Identity. H3a-c hypothesized that the strength of individuals' ideological identity would moderate the relationship between public-company identity congruence and (a) attitude toward the company, (b) political consumption intention, and (c) extra-role behavioral intention. To test this set of hypotheses, a series of multiple regression analyses were conducted.

When participants' attitude toward the company was the dependent variable (H3a), the results indicated that the interaction between public-company identity congruence and individuals' ideological identity strength (b = .251, SE = .127, β = .305, t = 1.977, p = .049) was significantly related to participants' attitude toward the company (R^2_{adj} = .421, $F(3, 192) = 46.455$, $p < .001$). Specifically, the relationship between identity congruence and participants' attitude toward the company became stronger when participants' ideological identities were stronger than when their ideological identities were weaker. Thus, H3a was supported. The moderating effect of individuals' ideological identity strength is plotted in Figure 4.

Figure 4

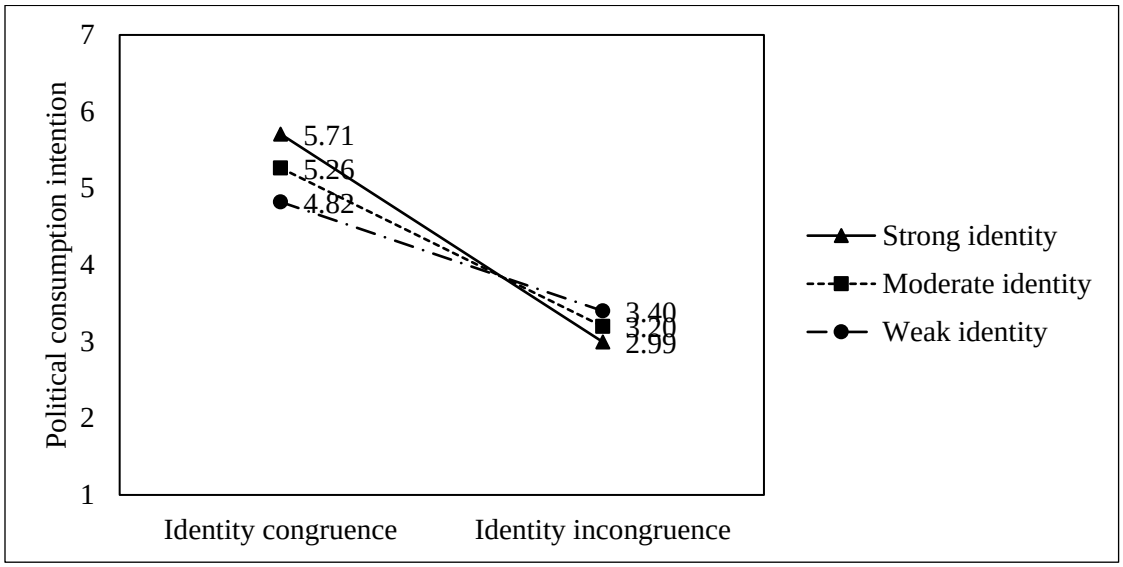
Moderating Effects of Individuals' Identity Strength on the Attitude Toward the Company



For the effect on participants' political consumption intention (H3b), the results showed that the interaction between public-company identity congruence and individuals' ideological identity strength (b = .360, SE = .117, β = .497, t = 3.076, p = .002) was significantly related to participants' political consumption intention (R^2_{adj} = .366, $F(3, 192) = 37.004$, $p < .001$). Specifically, the relationship between identity congruence and participants' political consumption intention was stronger when participants' ideological identities were stronger than when their ideological identities were weaker. Thus, H3b was supported. Thus, H3a was supported. The moderating effect of individuals' ideological identity strength is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Moderating Effects of Individuals' Identity Strength on the Political Consumption Intention



Regarding the effect on participants' extra-role supportive intention (H3c), the results also revealed that the interaction between public-company identity congruence and individuals' ideological identity strength (b = .201, SE = .125, β = .274, t = 1.604, p = .110) was not significantly related to participants' extra-role behavioral intention (R^2_{adj} = .290, $F(3, 192) = 26.164$, $p < .001$). H3c was not supported.

The statistical results for the moderating effects of ideological identity strength are reported in Table 8.

Table 8

Regression Results Testing the Moderating Effect of Individuals' Ideological Identity Strength on Their Attitude Toward Companies in Each CSA Event

Models and predictors	*b*	*SE*	*β*	R^2_{adj}
DV: Attitude toward the company				.421***
Identity congruence	1.555**	.577**	.377**	
Ideological identity strength	-.049	.094	-.043	
Identity congruence × strength	.251*	.127*	.305*	
DV: Political consumption intention				.366***
Identity congruence	.564	.530	.156	
Ideological identity strength	-.113	.086	-.111	
Identity congruence × strength	.360***	.117***	.497***	
DV: Extra-role behavioral intention				.290***
Identity congruence	1.087	.569	.296	
Ideological identity strength	-.051	.093	-.050	
Identity congruence × strength	.201	.125	.274	

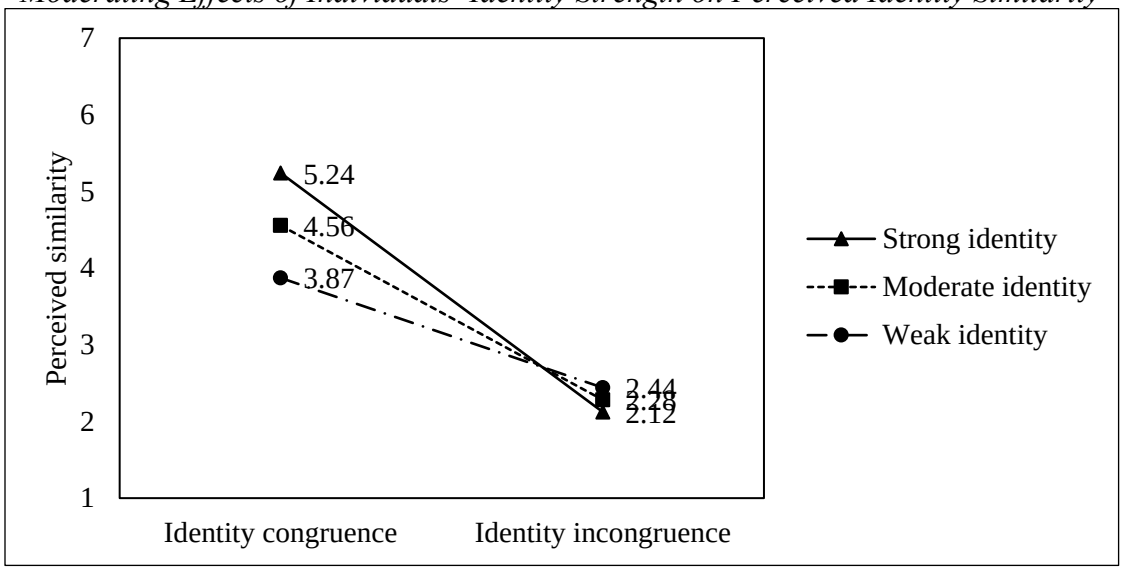
*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

H4a-c: Moderating Effects of the Strength of Individuals' Ideological Identity Through Perceived Identity Similarity. H4a-c hypothesized that perceived identity similarity would mediate the moderating effects of the strength of individuals' ideological identity in the relationship between public-company identity congruence and (a) attitude toward the company, (b) political consumption intention, and (c) extra-role behavioral intention via the mediation of perceived identity similarity. To examine this set of hypotheses, a series of PROCESS analyses with Model 7 were employed (bootstrap = 5,000), with public-company identity congruence as the independent variable, participants' attitude toward the company, political consumption intention, or extra-role behavioral intention as the dependent variable in each round of analyses, perceived identity similarity as the mediator, and the strength of individuals' ideological identity as the moderator.

The results revealed a significant moderating effect of participants' ideological identity strength on the relationship between public-company identity congruence and perceived identity similarity ($b = .47$, $SE = .12$, $p < .001$). As the strength of participants' ideological identity increased, the effects of public-company identity congruence on perceived identity similarity became stronger. Figure 6 shows the effect of public-company identity congruence on participants' perceived identity similarity at different levels (±1 *SD*) of ideological identity strength. All three slopes were positive and statistically significant.

Figure 6

Moderating Effects of Individuals' Identity Strength on Perceived Identity Similarity



When participants' attitude toward the company was the dependent variable (H4a), the results showed that there was a significant partial moderated mediation of participants' ideological identity strength through perceived identity similarity (index = .35, Boot*SE* = .10, 95% CI = [.150, .551]). Specifically, the conditional indirect effect of public-company identity congruence on participants' attitude toward the company via perceived identity similarity was significant when participants' ideological identity strength was at low (-1 *SD*: *b* = 1.06, Boot*SE* = .25, 95% CI = [.579, 1.566]), moderate (Mean: *b* = 1.69, Boot*SE* = .18, 95% CI = [1.339, 2.066]), and high levels (+1 *SD*: *b* = 2.32, Boot*SE* = .26, 95% CI = [1.805, 2.840]). This indicated that the mediation of perceived identity similarity became particularly stronger when the strength of participants' ideological identity gradually increased. Thus, H4a was supported.

Regarding participants' political consumption intention (H4b), the results revealed that there was also a significant partial moderated mediation of participants'

ideological identity strength through perceived identity similarity (index = .32, Boot*SE* = .09, 95% CI = [.139, .506]). The conditional indirect effect of public-company identity congruence on participants' political consumption intention via their perceived identity similarity was significant when participants' ideological identity strength at low (-1 *SD*: *b* = .98, Boot*SE* = .24, 95% CI = [.521, 1.485]), moderate (Mean: *b* = 1.56, Boot*SE* = .19, 95% CI = [1.206, 1.947]), and high levels (+1 *SD*: *b* = 2.14, Boot*SE* = .26, 95% CI = [1.632, 2.658]). This indicated that the mediating effect of participants' perceived identity similarity was amplified when the strength of their ideological identity increased. Thus, H4b was supported.

When it came to the effect on participants' extra-role supportive intention (H4c), the results also revealed a significant partial moderated mediation of participants' ideological identity strength through perceived identity similarity (index = .34, Boot*SE* = .10, 95% CI = [.147, .533]). The conditional indirect effect of public-company identity congruence on participants' extra-role supportive intention via their perceived identity similarity was significant at low (-1 *SD*: *b* = 1.04, Boot*SE* = .26, 95% CI = [.552, 1.590]), moderate (Mean: *b* = 1.66, Boot*SE* = .19, 95% CI = [1.302, 2.058]), and high levels of strength of participants' ideological identity (+1 *SD*: *b* = 2.27, Boot*SE* = .26, 95% CI = [1.781, 2.792]). In other words, the mediating effect of participants' perceived identity similarity was amplified when the strength of their ideological identity increased. Thus, H4c was also supported.

The statistical results for the partial moderated mediation relationships are reported in Table 9.

Table 9

Moderating Effects of Individuals' Identity Strength on the Mediation of Perceived Identity Similarity in the Relationships Between Public-company Identity Congruence and the Dependent Variables

	Mediator	Outcome		
	Perceived similarity	ATT	CONSUM	EXTRA
Predictor	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*
Identity congruence	.31	.91***	.50***	.26
Identity strength	-.09	-	-	-
Identity congruence × identity strength	.47***	-	-	-
Perceived similarity	-	.74***	.69**	.73***
	$F(3, 192) = 47.118$	$F(2, 193) = 244.351$	$F(2, 193) = 201.780$	$F(2, 193) = 185.259$
	$R^2 = .424$	$R^2 = .717$	$R^2 = .677$	$R^2 = .658$

Note. ATT: attitude toward the company; CONSUM: political consumption intention; EXTRA: extra-role behavioral intention

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Experiment 2 Results

Experiment 2 focused on the interaction effects of public-company identity congruence and CSA strategies on publics' attitudes and behavioral intentions and the potential mediating effects of publics' perceived identity similarity. The data analysis approaches and results are reported by hypothesis as follows.

Manipulation Check Results

To confirm the success of the manipulation, a one-way ANOVA test was performed with public-company identity congruence as the independent variable and the Euclidean distance between each participant's own ideological identity and the perceptions of the company's ideological identity as the dependent variable. The results showed that participants in the identity congruence condition perceived that the company's identity had a closer distance from their own identity their own identity (M = .74, SD = .94), compared to participants in the identity incongruence conditions (M = 3.37, SD = 1.91) ($F(1, 231) = 155.916$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .403$). Thus, the manipulation of public-company identity congruence was successful.

Randomization Check Results

Randomization checks were conducted for demographic variables (i.e., gender, ethnicity, age, income, and education) and the potential confounding variables (personal involvement in the gun legislation issue and general social consciousness) using chi-square and ANOVA tests. The results showed that there were no significant differences among the six experimental conditions (2 identity congruence conditions × 3 CSA strategy conditions) for gender ($\chi^2(10) = 8.197$, $p = .610$), ethnicity ($\chi^2(20) = 30.848$, $p = .057$), age ($F(5, 227) = 2.223$, $p = .053$, $\eta^2_p = .047$), income ($F(5, 227) = .835$, $p = .526$,

η^2_p = .018), or education (F(5, 227) = .832, p = .528, η^2_p = .018). Also, there was no significant difference between the conditions for personal involvement in the gun legislation issue (F(5, 227) = .886, p = .491, η^2_p = .019), personal involvement in the abortion rights issue (F(5, 227) = 1.980, p = .082, η^2_p = .042), personal involvement in the immigration legislation issue (F(5, 227) = .630, p = .677, η^2_p = .014), or general social consciousness (F(5, 227) = 1.426, p = .216, η^2_p = .030). Given the non-significant randomization check results, demographic and confounding variables were not included as covariates in the hypothesis testing analyses.

Hypothesis Testing Results

H5a-c: Interaction Effects of Public-company Identity Congruence and CSA Strategies. H5a-c predicted that there was a significant interaction between the effects of public-company identity congruence and CSA strategies on publics' (a) attitude toward the company, (b) political consumption intention, and (c) extra-role behavioral intention. Since the dependent variables (i.e., attitude toward the company, political consumption intention, and extra-role behavioral intention) had significant positive relationships with each other (attitude toward the company and political consumption intention: r = .86, p < .001; attitude toward the company and extra-role behavioral intention: r = .83, p < .001; political consumption intention and extra-role behavioral intention: r = .87, p < .001), a two-way multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was performed, with public-company identity congruence and CSA strategies as the two independent variables and individuals' ideological identity strength as the control variable. The two-way MANCOVA showed that there was a statistically significant interaction effect between

public-company identity congruence and corporate CSA strategies on the combined dependent variables (Wilk's λ = .923, F(6, 450) = 3.034, p = .006; η^2_p = .039).

With regard to the effect on participants' attitude toward the company (H5a), a two-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with individuals' ideological identity strength as the control variable. The results showed that there was a statistically significant interaction between the effects of public-company identity congruence and corporate CSA strategies on participants' attitude toward the company (F(2, 226) = 6.568, p = .002, η^2_p = .055). A following analysis of simple main effects for CSA strategies was performed. There was a significant difference in participants' attitude toward the company for those with a congruent identity with the company across the three CSA strategies (F(2, 226) = 4.298, p = .015, η^2_p = .037), but not for those with an incongruent identity with the company (F(2, 227) = 2.552, p = .080, η^2_p = .022).

The pairwise comparison was run with reported 95% CI and p-values Bonferroni-adjusted within each simple main effect. The results showed that when participants' identity is congruent with the company's identity, taking a stance on a single issue generated a more favorable attitude toward the company than taking inconsistent stances on multiple issues (Mean Difference = 1.083, 95% CI = [.164, 2.003], p = .015). However, there was no significant differences in participants' attitude toward the company between taking consistent stances on multiple issues and taking inconsistent stances on multiple issues (Mean Difference = .735, 95% CI = [-.177, 1.646], p = .159) or between taking consistent stances on multiple issues and taking a stance on a single issue (Mean Difference = -.348, 95% CI = [-1.301, .604], p = 1.000). When participants' identity is incongruent with the company's identity, the differences in participants'

attitude toward the company was not significant between taking consistent stances on multiple issues and taking a stance on a single issue (Mean Difference = -.086, 95% CI = [-.879, .707], p = 1.000), between taking consistent stances on multiple issues and taking inconsistent stances on multiple issues (Mean Difference = -.664, 95% CI = [-1.441, .112], p = .121), or between taking a stance on a single issue and taking inconsistent stances on multiple issues (Mean Difference = -.578, 95% CI = [-1.355, .198], p = .221). The mean scores of their attitude toward the company across the three CSA strategy conditions are reported in Table 10. The results partially supported H5a.

Table 10
Mean Scores of Participants' Attitude Toward the Company as a Function of Public-company Identity Congruence and CSA Strategies

	Attitude toward the company	
	M	*SD*
Public-company identity congruence		
Multiple issues (inconsistent)	4.97	1.50
A single issue	6.05	.83
Multiple issues (consistent)	5.70	1.64
Public-company identity incongruence		
Multiple issues (inconsistent)	3.30	1.64
A single issue	2.73	1.85
Multiple issues (consistent)	2.64	1.59

With regard to the effect on participants' political consumption intention (H5b), a similar two-way ANCOVA test was conducted. The results revealed that there was no significant interaction between the effects of public-company identity congruence and corporate CSA strategies on participants' political consumption intention (F(2, 226) = 1.574, p = .210, η^2_p = .014). In a following analysis of simple main effects for CSA

strategies, there was no significant difference in participants' political consumption intention for those with a congruent identity with the company across the three CSA strategies ($F(2, 226) = 1.052$, $p = .351$, $\eta^2_p = .009$), as for those with an incongruent identity with the company ($F(2, 226) = .745$, $p = .476$, $\eta^2_p = .007$).

Specifically, the pairwise comparisons showed that when participants' identity is congruent with the company's identity, the difference in participants' political consumption intention was not significant between taking consistent stances on multiple issues and taking a stance on a single issue (Mean Difference = -.144, 95% CI = [-1.080, .791], $p = 1.000$), between taking consistent stances on multiple issues and taking inconsistent stances on multiple issues (Mean Difference = .376, 95% CI = [-.520, 1.271], $p = .938$), or between taking a stance on a single issue and taking inconsistent stances on multiple issues (Mean Difference = .520, 95% CI = [-.383, 1.423], $p = .500$). Similarly, when participants' identity is incongruent with the company's identity, no significant difference was found in participants' political consumption intention between taking consistent stances on multiple issues and taking a stance on a single issue (Mean Difference = -.183, 95% CI = [-.962, .596], $p = 1.000$), between taking consistent stances on multiple issues and taking inconsistent stances on multiple issues (Mean Difference = -.386, 95% CI = [-1.148, .377], $p = .672$), or between taking a stance on a single issue and taking inconsistent stances on multiple issues (Mean Difference = -.203, 95% CI = [-.965, .560], $p = 1.000$). The mean scores of their political consumption intention across the CSA strategies and identity congruence conditions are reported in Table 11. The results failed to support H5b.

Table 11
Mean Scores of Participants' Political Consumption Intention as a Function of Public-company Identity Congruence and CSA Strategies

	Political consumption intention	
	M	*SD*
Public-company identity congruence		
Multiple issues (inconsistent)	4.94	1.37
A single issue	5.47	1.17
Multiple issues (consistent)	5.32	1.42
Public-company identity incongruence		
Multiple issues (inconsistent)	3.08	1.65
A single issue	2.89	1.56
Multiple issues (consistent)	2.70	1.68

Regarding the effect on participants' extra-role supportive intention (H5c), a similar two-way ANCOVA test was also conducted. The results showed that there was a statistically significant interaction between the effects of public-company identity congruence and corporate CSA strategies on participants' extra-role supportive intention ($F(2, 226) = 4.208$, $p = .016$, $\eta^2_p = .036$). A following analysis of simple main effects for CSA strategies showed that there was a significant difference in participants' extra-role supportive intention for those with a congruent identity with the company across the three CSA strategies ($F(2, 226) = 3.583$, $p = .029$, $\eta^2_p = .031$), but not for those with an incongruent identity with the company ($F(2, 226) = 1.525$, $p = .220$, $\eta^2_p = .013$).

Specifically, the pairwise comparisons showed that when participants' identity is congruent with the company's identity, taking a stance on a single issue generated a higher extra-role supportive intention than taking inconsistent stances on multiple issues (Mean Difference = .914, 95% CI = [.064, 1.765], $p = .030$). However, there was no significant differences in participants' extra-role supportive intention between taking consistent stances on multiple issues and taking inconsistent stances on multiple issues

(Mean Difference = .624, 95% CI = [-.220, 1.467], p = .228) or between taking consistent stances on multiple issues and taking a stance on a single issue (Mean Difference = -.291, 95% CI = [-1.172, .591], p = 1.000). When participants' identity is incongruent with the company's identity, the differences in participants' extra-role supportive intention was not significant between taking consistent stances on multiple issues and taking a stance on a single issue (Mean Difference = -.290, 95% CI = [-1.023, .444], p = 1.000), between taking consistent stances on multiple issues and taking inconsistent stances on multiple issues (Mean Difference = -.520, 95% CI = [-1.239, .199], p = .247), or between taking a stance on a single issue and taking inconsistent stances on multiple issues (Mean Difference = -.230, 95% CI = [-.949, .488], p = 1.000). The mean scores of their attitude toward the company across the three CSA strategy conditions are reported in Table 12. The results partially supported H5c.

Table 12
Mean Scores of Participants' Extra-Role Behavioral Intention as a Function of Public-company Identity Congruence and CSA Strategies

	Extra-role behavioral intention	
	M	*SD*
Public-company identity congruence		
Multiple issues (inconsistent)	4.76	1.49
A single issue	5.68	1.06
Multiple issues (consistent)	5.39	1.34
Public-company identity incongruence		
Multiple issues (inconsistent)	3.40	1.46
A single issue	3.18	1.54
Multiple issues (consistent)	2.89	1.50

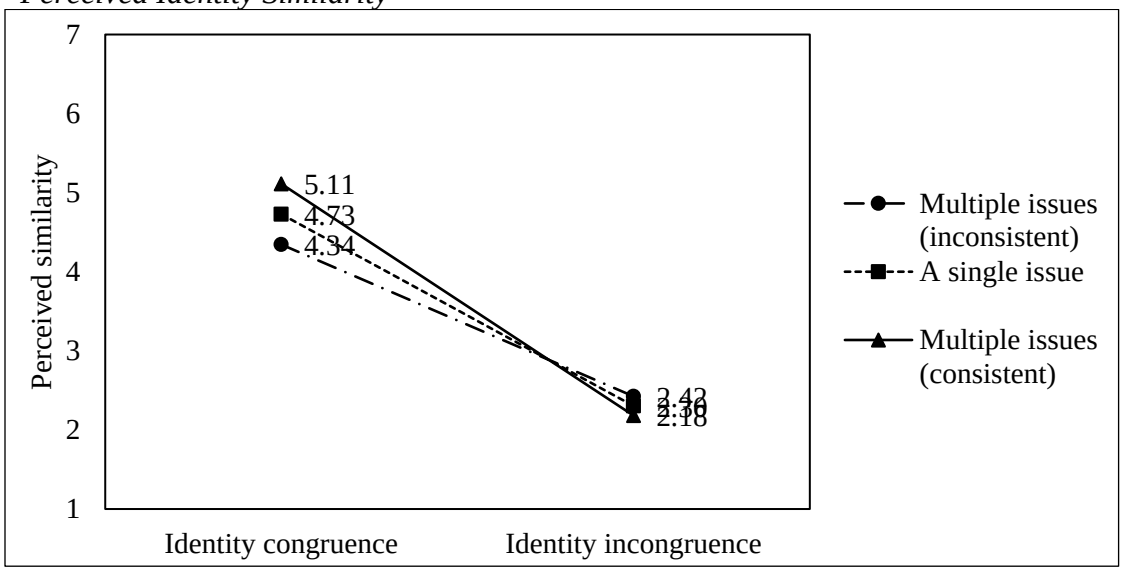
H6a-c: Mediating Effects of Perceived Identity Similarity. H5a-c predicted that partisan identities could mediate the interaction effect between public-company

identity congruence and CSA strategies on publics' (a) attitude toward the company, (b) political consumption intention, and (c) extra-role behavioral intention. To test the hypotheses, a series of PROCESS analyses with Model 7 were used (bootstrap = 5,000), with public-company identity congruence as the independent variable, participants' attitude toward the company, political consumption intention, or extra-role behavioral intention as the dependent variable in each round of analyses, perceived identity similarity as the mediator, CSA strategies as the moderator, and individuals' ideological identity strength as the control variable.

The results revealed a significant interaction effect between public-company identity congruence and corporate CSA strategies on perceived identity similarity (b = .51, SE = .24, p = .039). Specifically, comparing the three CSA strategies, taking consistent stances on multiple issues had a stronger impact on the relationships on participants perceived identity similarity (b = 2.93, SE = .32, p < .001) than taking a stance on a single issue (b = 2.43, SE = .20, p < .001), and taking inconsistent stances on multiple issues (b = 1.92, SE = .31, p < .001) had a weaker impact on the relationships on participants perceived identity similarity than taking a stance on a single issue.

Figure 7 below shows the effect of identity congruence on participants' perceived identity similarity, differed by the three CSA strategies. All three slopes were positive and statistically significant.

Figure 7
Interaction Effects of Public-company Identity Congruence and CSA Strategies on Perceived Identity Similarity



When participants' attitude toward the company was the dependent variable (H6a), the results showed that there was a significant partial moderated mediation of CSA strategies through perceived identity similarity (index = .39, Boot*SE* = .19, 95% CI = [.026, .766]). Specifically, the conditional indirect effect of public-company identity congruence on participants' attitude toward the company via perceived identity similarity was significant when the company took consistent stances on multiple issues (*b* = 2.27, Boot*SE* = .29, 95% CI = [1.719, 2.851]), when the company took a stance on a single issue (*b* = 1.88, Boot*SE* = .19, 95% CI = [1.517, 2.250]), and when the company took inconsistent stances on multiple issues (*b* = 1.49, Boot*SE* = .25, 95% CI = [.991, 1.983]). This indicated that the mediation of perceived identity similarity was the strongest when the company took consistent stances on multiple issues and was the weakest when the company took inconsistent stances on multiple issues. Thus, H6a was supported.

For the effect on participants' political consumption intention (H5b), the results revealed that there was also a significant partial moderated mediation of CSA strategies through perceived identity similarity (index = .38, Boot*SE* = .18, 95% CI = [.027, .734]). The conditional indirect effect of public-company identity congruence on participants' political consumption intention via their perceived identity similarity was significant when participants' ideological identity strength when the company took consistent stances on multiple issues (*b* = 2.19, Boot*SE* = .26, 95% CI = [1.671, 2.699]), when the company took a stance on a single issue (*b* = 1.81, Boot*SE* = .18, 95% CI = [1.460, 2.186]), and when the company took inconsistent stances on multiple issues (*b* = 1.43, Boot*SE* = .25, 95% CI = [.958, 1.929]). In other words, the mediating effect of perceived identity similarity was the strongest when the company took consistent stances on multiple issues and was the weakest when the company took inconsistent stances on multiple issues. This supported H6b.

When it came to the effect on participants' extra-role supportive intention (H6c), the results also revealed a significant partial moderated mediation of CSA strategies through perceived identity similarity (index = .33, Boot*SE* = .16, 95% CI = [.013, .643]). The conditional indirect effect of public-company identity congruence on participants' extra-role supportive intention via their perceived identity similarity was significant when participants' ideological identity strength when the company took consistent stances on multiple issues (*b* = 1.90, Boot*SE* = .24, 95% CI = [1.425, 2.389]), when the company took a stance on a single issue (*b* = 1.58, Boot*SE* = .17, 95% CI = [1.261, 1.918]), and when the company took inconsistent stances on multiple issues (*b* = 1.25, Boot*SE* = .22, 95% CI = [.836, 1.699]). This indicated that the mediating effect of perceived identity

similarity was the strongest when the company took consistent stances on multiple issues and was the weakest when the company took inconsistent stances on multiple issues. Thus, H6c was also supported.

The statistical results for the interaction effects of public-company identity congruence and CSA strategies on the dependent variables through the mediation of perceived identity similarity are reported in Table 13.

Table 13

Interaction Effects of Public-company Identity Congruence and CSA Strategies on the Dependent Variables Through the Mediation of Perceived Identity Similarity

	Mediator		Outcome	
	Perceived similarity	ATT	CONSUM	EXTRA
Predictor	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*
Identity congruence	1.42**	.77***	.51**	.54**
CSA strategies	-.12	-	-	-
Identity congruence × CSA strategies	.51*	-	-	-
Perceived similarity	-	.77***	.65***	.75***
Identity strength	.13*	-.08	-.02	-.06
	$F(4, 228) = 38.357$	$F(3, 229) = 216.097$	$F(3, 229) = 139.754$	$F(3, 229) = 199.611$
	$R^2 = .402$	$R^2 = .739$	$R^2 = .647$	$R^2 = .723$

Note. ATT: attitude toward the company; CONSUM: political consumption intention; EXTRA: extra-role behavioral intention

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Discussion of Experiment Findings

Using two experiments, this dissertation project examined (1) the effects of the congruence between companies' and publics' identities, (2) the effects of the strength of publics' own ideological identity, and (3) the effects of different CSA strategies of engaging in multiple socio-political issues on publics' reactions and the underlying psychological mechanism in the CSA context. The findings reveal important insights on publics' perceptions of identity similarity regarding companies involved in CSA, as well as its consequences on publics' attitudinal and behavioral reactions to the companies.

First, H1a-c were supported by the experiment results. Specifically, when a company's identity signaled by its CSA initiative was congruent with publics' own ideological identities, publics had more favorable attitudinal and behavioral reactions; in contrast, when a company's identity signaled by its CSA initiative was incongruent with publics' identities, publics had more unfavorable attitudinal and behavioral reactions. Furthermore, the experiment results also supported H2a-c, suggesting that publics' perceptions of identity similarity mediated the relationships between public-company identity congruence and publics' reactions. These findings are consistent with the premises of signaling theory and social identity theory. When a company engages in CSA initiatives, publics can establish perceptions of identity similarity and dissimilarity between the company and themselves, based on the extent to which they feel the company's identity signaled by its CSA stance overlaps with their own (K. Park & Jiang, 2020; Xu et al., 2021). Subsequently, publics who perceive high identity similarity with the company are more likely to have positive thoughts and feelings about the company and take supportive behaviors (Currás-Pérez et al., 2009; Lam et al., 2010; Marin & Ruiz,

2007), whereas publics' perception of dissimilarity between the company's identities and their own can lead to negative reactions to the company (Elsbach & Bhattacharya, 2001; Hawkins, 2019). Such identity similarity perceptions, in turn, influence publics' attitude toward the company and behavioral intentions

Second, Experiment 1 found supporting evidence for H3a-b and H4a-c but failed to support H3c. This generally showed that the strength of individuals' ideological identities moderated the relationship between public-company identity congruence and publics' attitudinal and behavioral reactions, and that perceived identity similarity mediated this relationship. These findings are also in line with existing understanding of individuals' social identities, such that people with stronger ideological identities have a greater motivation to favor and support their own ideological groups and respond negatively to opposing ideological groups than do people with weaker ideological identities (Huddy, 2001). In the context of CSA, individuals with stronger ideological identity are likely to show a greater tendency to favor the company involved in CSA if their identities are similar, or to disapprove of the company if their identities are dissimilar. Given the nonsignificant results regarding the moderating effects of ideological identity strength on the extra-role behavioral intention, further research focusing on the differences in the drivers of each behavior is probably needed.

Third, in Experiment 2, while the proposed hypotheses regarding the interaction effects of public-company identity congruence and CSA strategies (H5a-c, H6a-c) were not fully supported, the findings revealed some important patterns in how publics react to different CSA strategies. Specifically, when there was congruence between individuals' identities and companies' identities signaled in CSA, taking a stance on a single issue

generated a more favorable attitude toward the company and a higher extra-role supportive intention than taking inconsistent stances on multiple issues. However, for the comparisons between taking consistent stances on multiple issues and taking inconsistent stances on multiple issues, the expected nuanced effects were not found. Also, such nuanced effects were not observed when there was incongruence between individuals' identities and companies' identities. One reason behind this is possibly rooted in how publics perceive the identity strength of companies involved in CSA. Because engagement in a single issue could be seen as a clear commitment to the issue, while engaging in multiple issues might seem opportunistic, taking a stance on a single issue can signal a relatively stronger corporate identity than other CSA strategies. The comparison is particularly significant between taking a stance on a single issue and taking inconsistent stances on multiple issues, as the latter one sends the vaguest identity signal. Meanwhile, it should be noted that taking a stance on a single issue can be inevitably seen as a signal of the ideological identity of a company, similar to taking consistent stances on multiple issues. Thus, despite earlier discussion suggesting that the CSA strategies can signal a company's ideological identity at different strength levels, it may still be exceedingly difficult to separate these identity signals in publics' perception. Such perceptions can be particularly evident as publics' ideological identities and positions on socio-political issues have come into growing alignment in the past two decades (Mason, 2015b). These possible reasons and their connections to the current socio-political environment are further elaborated in Chapter 6: General Discussion in this dissertation.

CHAPTER 5

COMPUTATIONAL ANALYSIS

A computational research approach was employed to conduct naturalistic testing of H1a (i.e., the influence of public-company identity congruence on publics' attitude toward the company) and H3a (i.e., the moderating effect of ideological identity strength on publics' attitude toward the company) with real-world social media data.

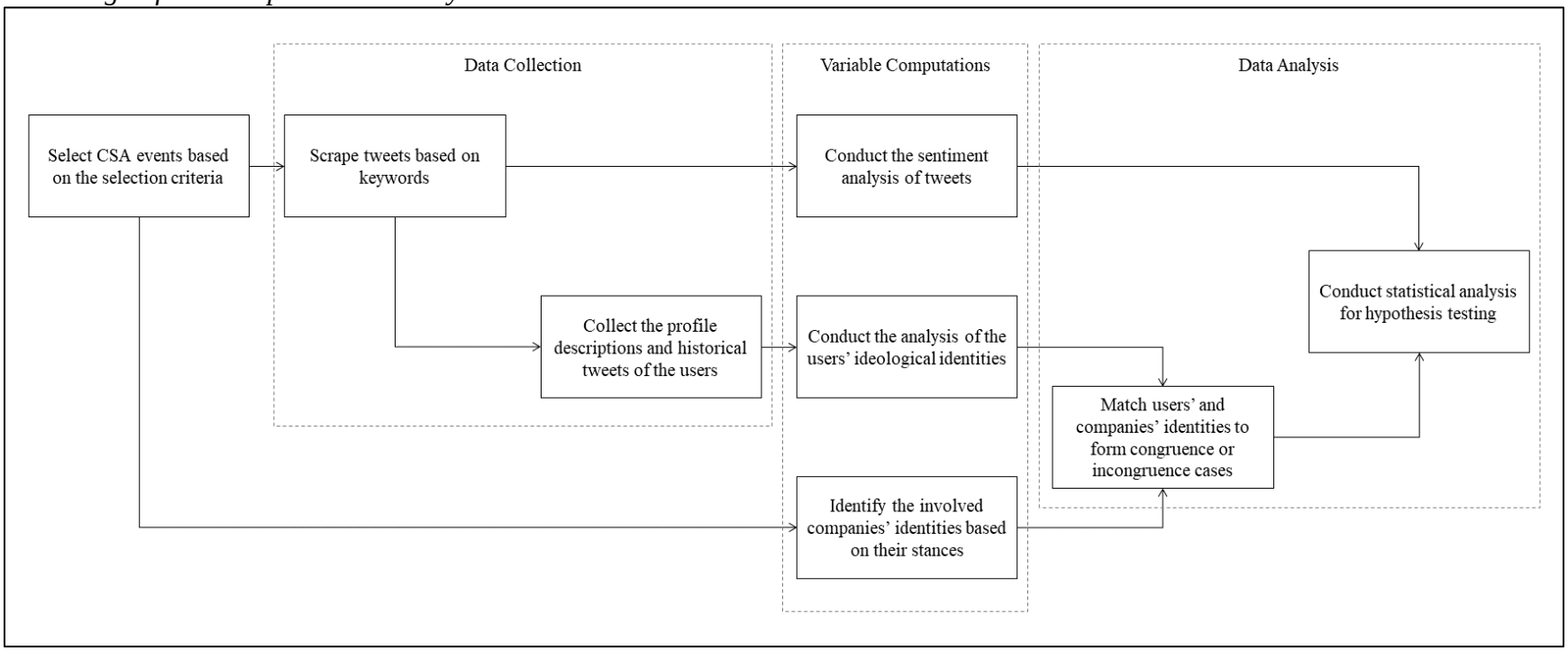
Specifically, focusing on six major CSA events that occurred around different socio-political issues in the past three years, this computational analysis cross-analyzed: (1) the involved companies' stances expressed in their CSA initiatives; (2) sentiment scores of Twitter users' conversations about the CSA initiatives, which captured publics' attitude toward the companies involved in CSA; and (3) Twitter users' profile information data and historical tweets data, which were used to infer the ideological identities of individuals who talked about the selected CSA initiatives.

In this computational analysis, publics' attitude toward the companies involved in CSA was compared between the public-company identity congruence condition and the public-company identity incongruence condition. The identity congruence condition was created by aggregating all the cases where there was a match between the involved companies' stances and individual social media users' ideological identities; and the incongruence condition was created by aggregating all the cases where there was a mismatch between the companies' stances and individual social media users' ideological identities.

The design of this computational analysis is illustrated in Figure 8.

Figure 8

The Design of the Computational Analysis



Selection of CSA Events

In this dissertation project, a CSA event was defined as a situation where one or multiple companies making public statements to explicitly express their stances on a certain socio-political event, especially when the socio-political event was intense. According to this conceptual definition, CSA events were selected based on the following criteria: (1) The socio-political issues should be highly controversial; (2) the socio-political issues should be salient with a sufficient volume of public discussions on social media; and (3) one or multiple companies explicitly expressed a clear stance as being for or against the socio-political issues.

Based on these criteria, six CSA events that happened between 2019 and 2021 were selected for the computational analysis, each on a different socio-political issue. Specifically, the six CSA events included: (1) companies standing against Texas abortion law SB 8 (abortion) (Cutter, 2021; Gelles, 2021); (2) companies issuing an open letter to urge gun control legislation in 2019 (gun rights/gun control) (Sorkin, 2019); (3) companies pushing for citizenship for "Dreamers" (immigration) (Miao, 2021); (4) companies taking a stance on racism after George Floyd's death (racial equality) (Hsu, 2020); (5) Hobby Lobby keeping stores open amid the COVID-19 outbreak (COVID-19 restrictions) (Vigdor, 2020); and (6) companies engaging in COP 26 (climate change) (Corkery & Creswell, 2021; Handley, 2021).

Data Collection

This computational analysis relied mostly on Twitter data. The data collection procedures and the specific types of data collected are detailed as follows.

Public Tweets about the Selected CSA Events

In computational communication studies, topic-based sampling has been used to study the formation and evolution of public opinions around specific themes and topics (e.g., Bruns & Burgess, 2011; Zanouda et al., 2017), to observe communication practices around CSR programs (e.g., Colleoni, 2013) and to assess corporate communication outcomes (e.g., Krüger et al., 2012). The topic-based sampling technique extracts content – usually from social media – based on specifically defined keywords (Bruns & Stieglitz, 2013). The keywords for topic-based sampling should capture the social media conversations around the examined topic or entity as completely as possible (Colleoni, 2013) and are usually defined by researchers based on their domain-specific knowledge (Etter et al., 2018).

Following the topic-based sampling procedure, comprehensive search queries were developed for the selected CSA events. For each CSA event, the query consisted of a set of key-phrases and hashtags related to the involved socio-political issue and a set of names of the major companies that took a CSA stance. To develop the key-phrase sets and to identify the most salient companies involved in the CSA events, this project relied on the reports from large national news outlets in the U.S., such as The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and The Washington Post, as well as major business news outlets, including CNBC and Bloomberg. For example, for the CSA event where companies took a stance against racism after George Floyd's death, major companies involved in this issue included Nike, Starbucks, and Netflix, and some of the key-phrases and hashtags relevant to this event included "#BlackLivesMatter", "#BLM", and "George Floyd". Then, each corporate name (or the abbreviation of the name) and each issue-related phrase or hashtags were paired to form the queries for tweet collection. Taking

companies' engagement in racial justice again as an example, a query would be: "Nike AND #BlackLivesMatter". The query timeframe for each CSA event was from the date of the first news report on the related event till one week after the last related news report, and tweets posted during the defined timeframe were collected for each CSA event (see Table 14 for all the queries and timeframes).

Table 14

Involved Corporate Names, Issue Key-Phrases, and the Timeframe of Each CSA Event

CSA event	Corporate names	Issue key-phrases	Timeframe
Abortion	Yelp, Lyft, Ben & Jerry's, BenAndJerrys, Ben&Jerrys, Patagonia, Lush, American Airlines, AmericanAirlines, Dell, Exxon, ExxonMobil	abortion, #txabortionfunds, SB8	9/1/2021-9/28/2021
Gun rights/gun control	Uber, LeviStrauss, Levi, Gap, Lyft, Dick's, Dicks, Yelp, Reddit	gun, guns, guncontrol, gunviolence, shootings, #endgunviolence, #BanAssaultWeapons, #GunReformNow	9/9/2019-9/19/2019
Immigration	Amazon, Facebook, FB, General Motors, GM, Marriott, Target, Uber	dreamers bill, dreamer bill, dreamers act, dreamer act, immigration, immigrant	3/2/2021-3/23/2021
Racial equality	Nike, Starbucks, Netflix, Citi, Google	George Floyd, Floyd, Black Lives Matter, BlackLivesMatter, BLM	5/25/2020-6/9/2020
COVID-19 restrictions	Hobby Lobby, HobbyLobby	COVID, COVID-19, coronavirus	3/20/2020-3/28/2020
Climate change	McDonald's, McDonalds, IKEA, Microsoft, Walmart	climate change, global warming, #climatechange, #globalwarming, COP26	10/31/2021-11/20/2021

Note. The CSA events included: (1) abortion – companies standing against Texas abortion law (SB 8); (2) gun rights/gun control – companies issuing an open letter to urge gun control legislation amid mass shootings in 2019; (3) immigration – companies pushing for citizenship for "Dreamers"; (4) racial equality – companies taking a stand on racial justice after the death of George Floyd; (5) COVID-19 restrictions – Hobby Lobby keeping stores open amid the COVID-19 outbreak; and (6) climate change – companies engaging in COP 26.

Public tweets talking about these selected CSA events were collected using an open-source tool, Scweet[1]. This tool can be used to scrape Twitter to collect tweet content and some user metadata based on defined queries. In this project, the web-scraping method was preferred over API-querying methods for the data collection because it helped to circumvent the rate-limitations imposed by Twitter[2].

For the six CSA events, a total of 6,877 English-language tweets posted by 6,179 distinct users were collected. Since the purpose of this project was to understand ordinary publics' reactions to companies involved in CSA, the verified accounts and the tweets posted by them were filtered out, because these accounts are typically owned by organizations or opinion leaders. After the filtering process, the public tweets dataset contained 5,632 users and 6,199 CSA-related tweets posted by them.

Users' Profile Information

Twitter users included in this project's dataset were individual members of publics grouped around the CSA events. To understand these individual users' ideological identities, their Twitter profile descriptions were collected. A Twitter user's profile description is a short "about me" summary (also known as "Twitter bio"), which is publicly displayed under profile pictures and usernames. It has a 160-character limit and is a self-declared field that is a part of the user's metadata. This short biographical field has been found to be clearly indicative of users' ideological identities (Kovacs & Kleinbaum, 2020). The underlying idea is the existence of linguistic homophily along certain personal characteristics. Research has found that social media users with shared

[1] The tool was developed by GitHub user Altimis. The GitHub repository of this tool can be accessed via: https://github.com/Altimis/Scweet

[2] The rate limits of Twitter API are detailed at: https://developer.twitter.com/en/docs/twitter-api/rate-limits

ideological identities tend to have similar textual content in their profile descriptions, including not only similar keywords (e.g., “Vote Red!”) but also similar language styles (Kovacs & Kleinbaum 2020; Y. Yang & Eisenstein 2017).

In this project, the profile descriptions of all the individual users in the public tweets dataset were collected using the Twitter API via the Tweepy interface for Python. Some of the users in the public tweets dataset did not have profile descriptions. After filtering them out, the final dataset proceeded for analysis had 5,702 CSA-related tweets posted by 5,181 distinct users (D_{Final}).

Users’ Historical Tweets

In addition to self-disclosed profile information, posted tweet content is also an important source to infer each individual user’s ideological identities. However, because of the shortness and dynamic nature of tweets, it is unlikely that a single tweet posted by a user is indicative of their ideological identity. Thus, 200 most recent tweets of each individual user included in D_{Final} were collected, with the assumption that at least some of the 200 tweets might be political-related and could provide an indication about the individual user’s ideological identity. The 200 most recent tweets of each individual user in D_{Final} were collected using the Twitter API via Tweepy.

Variable Computations

Based on the data collected, the computations of key variables in this analysis are detailed as follows.

Companies’ Identities Communicated in CSA

Companies’ identities communicated by its CSA stances were inferred based on their public statements or actions and covered in the news reports mentioned above.

Based on the ideological position that its stance was aligned with, each company's identity was categorized as being either liberal (= 1) or conservative (= 0). For instance, if a company co-signed an open letter urging legislation on gun control, the company's communicated identity was categorized as liberal. On the contrary, the identity of Hobby Lobby was considered conservative given its decision to keep stores open amid the COVID-19 outbreak.

Publics' Ideological Identities

As social media are increasingly used as a channel to share opinions and views, it was found that about 33% of the tweets from U.S. adults are political in nature (Pew Research Center, 2022a). This allows for analyzing social media for cues about individuals' political ideologies. In the computational social science field, there has been a growing interest in inferring individual users' ideological identities using social media data, and most methods can be categorized into content-based and network-based approaches. Content-based approaches rely on analysis of tweet content and other textual data to infer users' ideological identities. For example, Conover et al. (2011) used hashtags in tweets to classify users' ideological identities, and Preoţiuc-Pietro et al. (2017) used word embeddings in tweets to infer the directions of users' ideological identities and their identity-based ideological extremity. Network-based approaches leverage the network structure of information diffusion or user-to-user interactions to determine users' ideological identities, based on the idea that users tend to interact more with those who share similar ideological identities. Such network-based approaches can be based on analysis of retweeting (Wong et al., 2016), following (Barberá et al., 2015) or a combination of both. Some recent research has also taken a mixed approach,

combining both content-based and network-based approaches for the detection of ideological identities. For example, Darwish et al. (2020) inferred users' ideological identities based on both textual features, such as the text of the tweets and hashtags, and network interactions, such as retweeted accounts.

This computational analysis took a content-based approach to infer publics' ideological identities for several reasons. First, while the mixed approaches like Retweet-BERT can increase the performance of inferring users' ideological identities (Darwish et al., 2020; Jiang et al., 2022), they need to rely on the use of most connected social media accounts in the networks and analyze the content from these highly connected users. Focusing on the CSA context, the project is to understand the reactions of spontaneous aggregations of publics who quickly grouped around certain CSA events, which means that capturing only highly connected users is insufficient. Also, in D_{Final}, the retweet network, even if generated, would be highly sparse, as most users did not retweet each other during the CSA events, which makes the hybrid approach less applicable. Second, the network-based and mixed approaches rely on explicit connections between users (e.g., retweeting, following) on social media sites (Darwish et al., 2020). However, extracting such information is data- and time-demanding and not always possible due to certain platform-imposed data access restrictions (Cresci et al., 2015), which decreases the applicability of such techniques and hinders large-scale analyses. On the other hand, the content-based approach that uses readily available textual information (e.g., profile descriptions, historical tweets) is preferred in the studied context because it can achieve comparable performance with higher efficiency.

In this project, for the individual Twitter users who talked about the selected CSA events, their ideological identities were assessed based on their profile descriptions and historical tweets. The pre-trained natural language processing (NLP) model BERT (Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers) (Devlin et al., 2018) was fine-tuned and then used to detect publics' ideological identities. BERT leverages an extensive corpus of English-language Wikipedia text passages with 2,500M words and BooksCorpus with 800M words to improve the accuracy of various NLP tasks. It was pre-trained on two tasks: Masked Language Model (MLM) and Next Sentence Prediction (NSP), to learn contextual embeddings for words. After pre-training, BERT can be fine-tuned with fewer computing resources on smaller training datasets to further improve its performance on context-specific NLP tasks. Findings from prior research suggested that BERT can be fine-tuned and used to analyze political-related short texts (e.g., tweets) and can potentially bring great improvement in the performance of such NLP tasks (Maronikolakis et al., 2020).

In this project, the training dataset for developing the political ideology classification model was taken from Preoţiuc-Pietro et al.'s (2017) work, which best fit the need to infer ordinary publics' ideological identities. Preoţiuc-Pietro et al.'s (2017) work included two datasets, one containing a group of ordinary Twitter users labeled by their self-declared ideological identities on a seven-point scale (1 = very conservative; 7 = very liberal) and the other containing a group of popular political figures on Twitter who were labeled on a binary scale (1 = liberal; 0 = conservative) based on their openly declared political opinions. The ordinary users' ideological identities were re-labeled using the binary liberal-conservative scale, and those who identified as "moderate" were

dropped. Then, the two datasets were combined, and the labeled identity categories in the combined dataset were balanced to ensure that an equal number of liberals and conservatives were included. After this, the profile descriptions and historical tweets of all the labeled users were collected, constituting the final training dataset.

As mentioned above, the dataset used in this project included two ideological-identity-related features. The first feature was users' profile descriptions, considering that they can be indicative of ideological identities (Kovacs & Kleinbaum, 2020). The second was each user's ten most recent political tweets in their posting history. For this feature, a self-developed model was used to determine each tweet's likelihood of being political (thereafter, $Model_{P\text{-}NP}$). Specifically, to develop $Model_{P\text{-}NP}$, this project fine-tuned BERT (Devlin et al., 2018) with a training dataset originally adopted from the Twitter Political Corpus (Marchetti-Bowick & Chambers, 2012) and balanced it with other Kaggle datasets (Axelbrooke, 2017; Lolayekar, 2019) for the less represented categories. $Model_{P\text{-}NP}$ achieved an accuracy of 91% and was used to classify each tweet as either "political" or "non-political." $Model_{P\text{-}NP}$ processed the 200 most recent tweets of each individual user in D_{Final}. Then, each user's top ten most political tweets were concatenated based on the probability scores provided by $Model_{P\text{-}NP}$, creating the second feature.

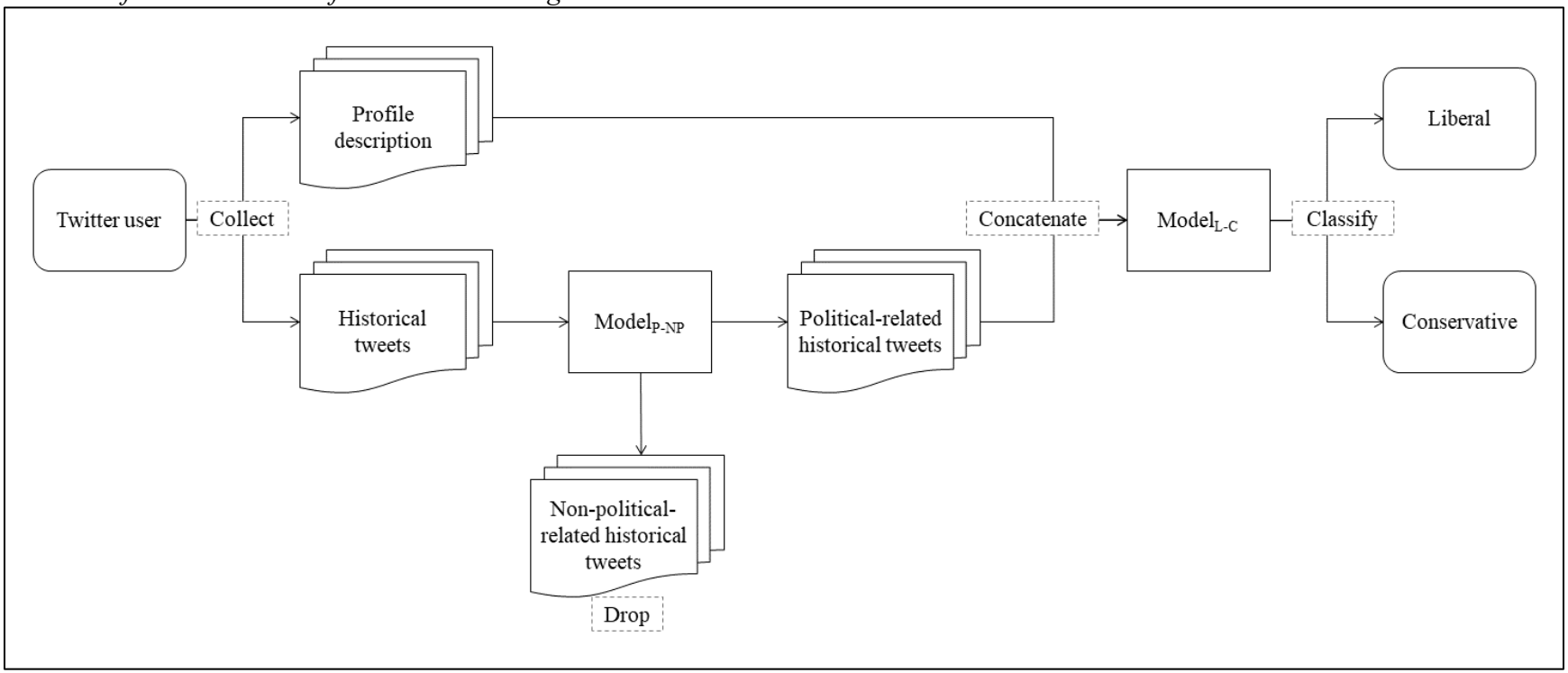
Using the training dataset and the two features to fit BERT, the model for the classification of individuals' ideological identities (thereafter, $Model_{L\text{-}C}$) achieved an accuracy of 71%. After this developing and training process, $Model_{L\text{-}C}$ was used to determine the ideological identity of each individual in D_{Final}. $Model_{L\text{-}C}$ classified each of the Twitter users on a dichotomous ideological identity scale as either "liberal" or

"conservative," based on a probability score ranging from 1 to 0 (1 = liberal; 0 = conservative) with 0.5 as the neutral cutoff score.

The process of using Twitter data to classify the users' ideological identities is illustrated in Figure 9.

Figure 9

The Classification Process of the Users' Ideological Identities



Strength of Publics' Ideological Identities

The probability scores produced by $Model_{L\text{-}C}$ indicating publics' ideological identities were also used to form a proxy measure for the strength of their ideological identities. This measure for ideological identity strength was calculated by folding the liberal-conservative probability scale at 0.5 (the neutral cutoff point). For each user in D_{Final}, this procedure created a continuous measure with values ranging from the weakest level (0) to the strongest level (0.5) of ideological identities.

Attitude Toward Companies

Publics' attitude toward the companies involved in the selected CSA events were assessed by sentiment analysis of public tweets talking about the CSA events. Sentiment analysis is frequently used in computational communication research to evaluate the affective or evaluative valence of texts, determining whether individuals are expressing overall positive or negative opinions toward certain entities or events (Liu, 2010). Sentiment of social media conversations as a proxy measure for publics' attitude toward companies has been adopted in many prior studies (e.g., Colleoni et al., 2011; Rambocas & Pacheco, 2018; J. Yang et al., 2021).

In this dissertation project, a state-of-the-art NLP model developed by Barbieri et al. (2022) was used to compute the sentiment scores. This is an XLM-roBERTa-base model trained on about 198 million tweets and specifically fine-tuned for sentiment analysis (Barbieri et al., 2022). Using this model, each tweet about a particular CSA event was classified as "positive," "neutral," or "negative" based on its sentiment probability score. For the data analysis purposes, "positive" tweets were coded into 3,

"neutral" tweets into 2, and "negative" tweets into 1, forming a continuous sentiment variable reflecting publics' attitude toward the companies involved in CSA.

Computational Analysis Results

Each Twitter user was considered as an individual member of publics and used as the unit of analysis. The analysis was performed with computed variables representing each individual's ideological identity, the strength of his/her ideological identity, the ideological identity of the company he/she talked about, and his/her attitude toward the company. Six separate datasets, one for each CSA event, and a combined dataset aggregating all the CSA events were produced. If a user posted multiple tweets in a CSA event, his/her sentiment scores were averaged in the CSA event-specific dataset. If a user posted multiple tweets in multiple CSA events, one of the units for him/her in the combined dataset was selected randomly and kept. In this sense, each unit in either separate or combined dataset represented a distinct individual.

Descriptive Statistics

Across the six CSA events selected, 22 companies' ideological identities were considered "liberal" based on their issue stances (81.5% of the involved companies), and five companies' identities were considered "conservative" based on their issue stances (18.5% of the involved companies). In terms of individual users' ideological identities, in the combined dataset, 75.2% of the individual members were classified as liberals (n = 3,898) and 24.8% of the individual members were conservatives (n = 1,283). The distribution of publics' ideological identities in this project's dataset is consistent with the generally liberal-leaning nature of the frequent Twitter user population (Pew Research Center, 2020b)

The public-company identity congruence and identity incongruence groups were formed by pairing publics' ideological identities and companies' communicated ideological identities. The public-company identity congruence group was formed by aggregating all the cases where companies' identities matched individual users' ideological identities. The public-company identity incongruence group was formed by aggregating all the cases indicating a mismatch between companies' identities and individual users' ideological identities. This process resulted in 3,628 identity congruence cases (70.0% of the total cases) and 1,553 identity incongruence cases (30.0% of the total cases) in the combined dataset. Table 15 presents the descriptive statistics of ideological identities as well as the identity congruence and incongruence cases in the datasets separated by CSA events.

Table 15

Descriptive Statistics of Individuals' Ideological Identities and Ideological Congruence in Each CSA Event

	Individuals' ideological identities		Ideological congruence	
	Liberal	Conservative	Congruence	Incongruence
CSA events	*n* (%)	*n* (%)	*n* (%)	*n* (%)
Abortion	459 (82.1)	100 (17.9)	381 (68.2)	178 (31.8)
Gun rights/gun control	410 (70.8)	169 (29.2)	410 (70.8)	169 (29.2)
Immigration	32 (72.7)	12 (27.3)	32 (72.7)	12 (27.3)
Racial equality	2634 (74.1)	920 (25.9)	2634 (74.1)	920 (25.9)
COVID-19 restrictions	244 (84.7)	44 (15.3)	44 (15.3)	244 (84.7)
Climate change	163 (80.7)	39 (19.3)	163 (80.7)	39 (19.3)

Hypothesis Testing Results

H1a: Influence of Public-Company Identity Congruence on Publics' Attitude Toward the Companies. H1a predicted that identity congruence between companies involved in CSA and publics would generate a more favorable attitude toward the companies than would identity incongruence. To test this hypothesis, a one-way ANOVA was conducted with the computed variables of ideological identities and publics' attitude toward the companies in the combined dataset, with CSA events and identity congruence/incongruence cases weighted by frequency. The results showed a significant influence of public-company identity congruence on publics' attitude toward the companies ($F(1, 7458) = 37.073$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .005$). Specifically, when publics' ideological identities and the companies' identities communicated in CSA were congruent, publics had a more favorable attitude toward the companies ($M = 1.80$, $SD = .72$) than did those with ideological identities that are incongruent with companies' identities ($M = 1.70$, $SD = .71$). The results supported H1a.

To further test H1a within each CSA event, separate one-way ANOVAs were also performed, with identity congruence/incongruence cases weighted by frequency. The results revealed significant influences of public-company identity congruence on publics' attitude toward the companies in two of the six selected CSA events, including the cases of abortion rights ($F(1, 557) = 23.147$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .040$) and COVID-19 restrictions ($F(1, 286) = 7.090$, $p = .008$, $\eta^2_p = .024$). In these two CSA events, when publics' ideological identities and the companies' communicated identities were congruent, publics had a more favorable attitude toward the companies than when publics' ideological identities were incongruent with the companies' communicated identities (see

Table 16 for the mean scores across the CSA events). However, the results also showed no significant influence of public-company identity congruence on publics' attitude toward the companies in the other four CSA events, including those on gun control legislation ($F(1, 577) = .003$, $p = .957$, $\eta^2_p = .000$), climate change ($F(1, 200) = .974$, $p = .325$, $\eta^2_p = .005$), immigration ($F(1, 42) = 1.086$, $p = .303$, $\eta^2_p = .025$), and racial justice ($F(1, 3551) = .236$, $p = .627$, $\eta^2_p = .000$).

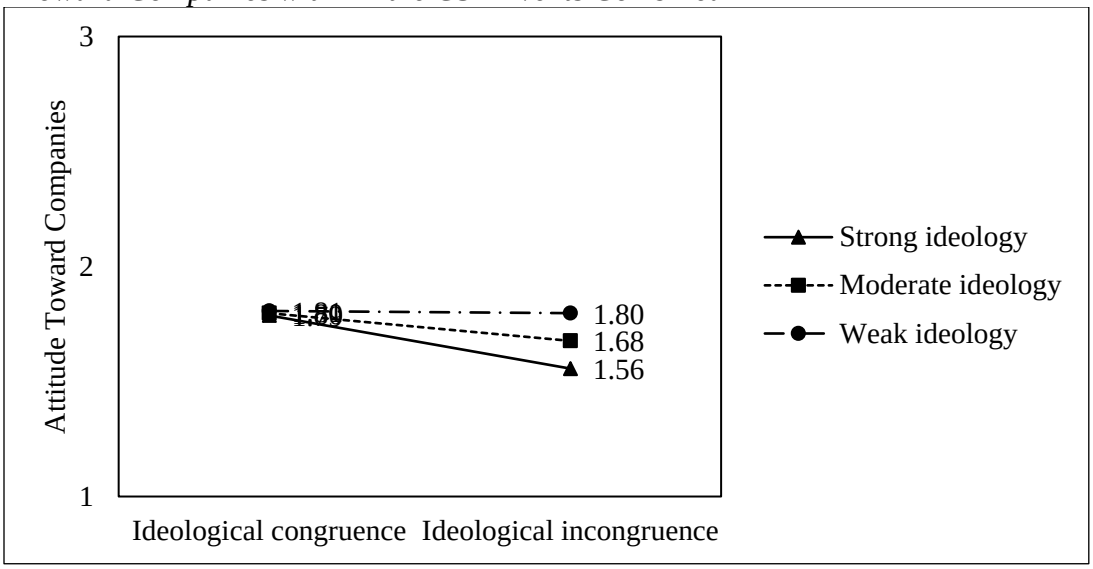
Table 16
Mean Scores of Publics' Attitude Toward Companies by Ideological Congruence in Each CSA Event

	Congruence		Incongruence	
CSA events	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Abortion	1.61	.68	1.34	.54
Gun rights/gun control	1.53	.61	1.53	.64
Immigration	2.12	.65	1.92	.66
Racial equality	1.70	.74	1.69	.72
COVID-19 restrictions	1.58	.57	1.41	.55
Climate change	2.21	.72	2.30	.65

H3a: Moderating Effects of the Strength of Publics' Ideological Identities. H2 hypothesized that the strength of publics' ideological identities would moderate the relationship between public-company identity congruence and publics' attitude toward the companies. To test this hypothesis, a multiple regression analysis was run to assess hypothesized moderating effects in the combined dataset, with CSA events and identity congruence/incongruence cases weighted by frequency. The results indicated that the interaction between public-company identity congruence and ideological identity strength ($b = .884$, $SE = .132$, $\beta = .171$, $t = 6.689$, $p < .001$) was significantly related to publics' attitude toward the companies ($R^2_{adj} = .018$, $F(3, 7457) = 47.679$, $p < .001$). Specifically,

the relationship between public-company identity congruence and publics' attitude toward the companies was stronger when publics' ideological identities were stronger than when publics' ideological identities were weaker. Figure 10 presents the moderating effects of ideological identity strength on publics' attitude toward the companies. The results supported H3a.

Figure 10
Moderating Effects of Individuals' Ideological Identity Strength on Their Attitude Toward Companies with All the CSA Events Combined



A series of multiple regression analyses were also conducted to further test H3a within each CSA event, with identity congruence/incongruence cases weighted by frequency. However, the hypothesized moderating effect of ideological identity strength on publics' attitude toward the companies was not significant in any of the individual CSA events. The regression results for individual CSA events are presented in Table 17.

Table 17

Regression Results Testing the Moderating Effect of Individuals' Ideological Identity Strength on Their Attitude Toward Companies in Each CSA Event

CSA events and predictors	*b*	*SE*	*β*	R^2_{adj}
Abortion				.035***
Identity congruence	.261	.108	.209*	
Ideological identity strength	-.027	.271	-.006	
Identity congruence × strength	-.043	.415	-.010	
Gun rights/gun control				.007
Identity congruence	.215	.097	.172*	
Ideological identity strength	.659	.357	.130	
Identity congruence × strength	-1.218	.465	-.278**	
Immigration				.076
Identity congruence	-.171	.332	-.133	
Ideological identity strength	-2.513	1.096	-.480*	
Identity congruence × strength	2.180	1.536	.426	
Racial equality				.000
Identity congruence	.001	.046	.001	
Ideological identity strength	-.141	.149	-.024	
Identity congruence × strength	.093	.206	.018	
COVID-19 restrictions				.016
Identity congruence	.247	.139	.219	
Ideological identity strength	.321	.417	.066	
Identity congruence × strength	-.280	.631	-.051	
Climate change				.007
Identity congruence	-.240	.185	-.175	
Ideological identity strength	-1.146	.613	-.221	
Identity congruence × strength	1.090	.812	.246	

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Discussion of Computational Analysis Findings

Using naturalistic social media data generated in six real-world CSA events, this computational analysis examined (1) the effects of the congruence between companies' and publics' identities and (2) the effects of the strength of publics' own ideological identity on publics' attitude toward the companies involved in CSA. The findings revealed several important patterns.

First, the results from the computational analysis confirmed H1a and demonstrated that in the CSA context, publics' attitude toward the involved companies tend to be more favorable if the companies' communicated identities are congruent with their ideological identities than if the companies' identities are incongruent with their ideological identities. This supports the premises that CSA is inherently political. In CSA, by taking explicit stances, companies make the political aspect of their corporate identities salient, and the congruence between companies' and publics' identities becomes the basis for publics to form attitudinal reactions. This finding is consistent with the results revealed by the experimental studies. When a company's CSA stance signals its corporate identities on the political-related aspect, the positive CSA outcomes are likely to be generated only among some subsets of publics who share the same ideological identities with the company but are likely to be perceived negatively by other subsets of publics.

The results also provided supporting evidence for the role of publics' ideological identity strength in amplifying the influence of public-company identity congruence on publics' attitude toward the companies involved in CSA (i.e., H3a). Publics with stronger ideological identities are likely to show a greater tendency to have negative attitudes

toward the companies whose identities are opposite. This pattern is also consistent with the findings from the experimental studies. It echoes existing understanding of individuals' social identities, such that people with stronger ideological identities have a greater motivation to favor and support their own ideological groups and respond more negatively to opposing ideological groups than people with weaker ideological attachments (Huddy, 2001).

It is worth noting that, while both H1a and H3a were supported by the combined data including all the six CSA events, the expected patterns did not emerge in individual case-specific analyses. On one hand, this is consistent with the instrumental perspective of ideological identities, such that individuals' ideological identities are constructed based on their positions on a set of socio-political issues on various topics (Huddy & Bankert, 2017). Hence, when the analysis was conducted with the aggregation of CSA initiatives across different issues, it revealed a clearer pattern, because ideological values on multiple issues were taken into consideration. On the other hand, there may be several reasons underlying the inconsistent patterns across the individual issue CSA cases. First, while the selection of CSA events captured six different socio-political issues rising in recent years, these issues are rooted in different ideological, partisan, social, and religious traditions. Over the past several years, issues like COVID-19 restrictions tend to be more controversial and confrontational with greater ideological gaps (Schaeffer, 2022). In this computational analysis, significant differences across different issues were indeed observed in the influence of public-company identity congruence on CSA outcomes. Also, some issues tend to be more clearly split along the ideological camps, while the others involve more heterogeneous issue positions along the ideological spectrum (Pew

Research Center, 2021; 2022b). These issue-related factors complicate how publics interpret and evaluate companies' CSA stances.

Methodologically, an innovative and unique computational research approach was developed and used to examine publics' ideological identities and their attitude toward companies involved in CSA. In this computational analysis, a total of 5,181 individuals on Twitter were analyzed to test the hypotheses, demonstrating the feasibility of using social media data and computational methods in examining CSA outcomes and influencing factors. Such a large-scale, individual-level analysis cannot be effectively conducted by an analysis of institutional evaluators or marketplace performances, nor is it easily done using traditional social science research methods like surveys that are conducted long after an event takes place. The computational analysis of social media data brings unique contributions to CSA research by providing researchers with a tool to assess publics' reactions at scale in a timely manner, which is particularly important in fluid, dynamic communication environments.

CHAPTER 6

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In today's increasingly polarized political environment, a growing number of companies are taking a stance on controversial socio-political topics or public policy issues that their stakeholders care about. Yet, companies need to be very cautious about when they speak up on such divisive issues. Central to the research on CSA is the triadic relationship among companies, publics, and issues. Publics with opposing ideological identities can show very different reactions to corporate engagement in a variety of contentious issues (e.g., Dodd & Supa, 2014; Hydock et al., 2019). The congruence between companies' communicated identities through CSA and publics' own identities now becomes critical in public-company interactions and can potentially generate impactful consequences to companies.

Focusing on the political nature of CSA and its influences among external publics, this dissertation contributes to the CSA scholarship in several ways. First, the empirical tests provide additional evidence to the extant literature on how corporate engagement in highly divisive issues can influence publics' reactions in the contemporary polarized political climate. Second, publics' perceived identity similarity was examined as a key psychological mechanism underlying CSA outcomes, providing an explanation to how publics react to companies' CSA stances that are congruent or incongruent with their own ideological identities. Further, this dissertation takes into consideration the gradations of identity strength on both corporate and individual levels, which offers more nuanced understanding of publics' reactions to CSA.

In this project, two experiments and a computational analysis were conducted to test the hypotheses, and the findings reveal some important patterns in publics' reactions to companies in the CSA context. This chapter first summarizes the key patterns found from the three studies and then discusses the implications for both theory development and practice. The limitations of this project and directions for future research are also discussed.

Discussion of Key Findings

First, the results from Experiment 1 and the computational analysis provide supporting evidence for the hypothesis that in the CSA context, if publics' own ideological identities are congruent with the companies' communicated identities, they tend to have more positive attitudes, political consumption intentions, and extra-role behavioral intentions toward the involved companies, than if their own ideological identities are incongruent with the companies' communicated identities. As many existing studies have noticed, when companies take stands along clear ideological lines on controversial socio-political issues, it is almost impossible to generate favorable CSA outcomes universally among fragmented publics with contrasting political views (Dodd & Supa, 2014; Rim et al., 2020; Xu et al., 2021). This pattern underscores the pivotal role of public-company identity congruence in influencing publics' attitudinal and/or behavioral reactions to CSA.

Experiment 1 further found that publics' perceived similarity between the companies' and themselves' identities serves as a psychological mechanism underlying publics' attitudinal and behavioral reactions to CSA. This finding is consistent with the two cognitive bases of social identity theory: self-categorization of social groups and

motivations to maintain self's positive social identities (Hogg, 2016). In the CSA context, when publics' ideological identities and the political aspect of corporate identities are made salient, they become the basis of publics' in-group versus out-group categorization. Publics' perceived identity similarity is then formed based on the extent to which the companies' communicated identities are congruent with their own identities and the ideological groups they attach to. Due to the motivation of promoting and protecting their own ideological identities, publics who perceive stronger identity similarity with a company are more likely to have positive reactions to the company because the company helps advance the values of their own ideological groups. On the contrary, perceived identity dissimilarity can lead publics to have negative reactions, as the company's contradicting issue stances can be perceived as an identity threat.

Experiment 1 and the computational analysis also provide further examinations on the moderating role of the strength of publics' own ideological identities on their reactions to companies involved in CSA. The results from both experimental and naturalistic settings showed that the increased strength with which publics identify themselves as liberals or conservatives can magnify their attitudinal and/or behavioral reactions to companies involved in CSA. This pattern is in line with the literature on political identities, such that depending on the extent to which people internalize the norms and values of ideological groups into their own sense of self, they act on their ideological identities differently (Huddy, 2001; Mason, 2015a). Extending these individual-level factors to the CSA context, Experiment 1 adds a nuanced understanding of how the gradations in the strength levels of publics' own ideological identities can influence CSA outcomes. Given that the CSA context can make publics' ideological

identities salient, individual members with stronger ideological identities are more likely to become active publics in CSA. The investigation into individual-level political-related factors offers more comprehensive knowledge to the current CSA literature about how different segments of publics are grouped around and react to CSA initiatives.

While publics' own ideological identities can have profound impacts on CSA outcomes, companies can also strategically communicate their corporate identities to publics, influencing their reactions to CSA. According to Bhattacharya and Sen (2003), corporate identities can be shaped by the company's "mission, structure, processes, and climate and, as do individual identities, represents possibly hierarchical constellations of characteristics or traits" (p. 78; see also S.G. Scott & Lane, 2000; Sen et al., 2016). In line with their conceptualization, this dissertation project draws up signaling theory and argues that corporate identities can contain political aspects, and by engaging in socio-political issues, companies' CSA stances can shape and manifest such political aspects of the corporate identities. Empirically, the findings from this dissertation reflect the premise that companies' CSA stances clearly signal their attachments to certain ideological groups, which can determine publics' interpretations of corporate identities. From the social identity theory perspective, the political aspect of a company's identity enacts a fuller range of characteristics and values in people's self-concept. Publics can constantly interpret corporate identities and are likely to be attracted to a company's identity depending on how similar it is to publics' own identities (i.e., identity similarity).

To further understand how corporate identities can be signaled by CSA initiatives, Experiment 2 focuses on how different levels of strength of corporate identities can be possibly communicated in different CSA strategies of engaging in single or multiple

socio-political issues. The results from Experiment 2 are mixed. It is found that if publics' identities are congruent with companies' identities signaled in the CSA stances, taking a stance on a single issue generates a more favorable attitude and extra-role behavioral intention toward the company than taking inconsistent stances on multiple issues. However, such nuanced effects were not observed in the comparison of other CSA strategies. On one hand, companies taking a clear stance on a single issue could be seen as a steadfast commitment to its CSA, whereas engaging in multiple issues might be perceived as opportunistic. Thus, compared to engaging in multiple issues, engaging in a single issue may signal stronger corporate identities, resulting in differences in publics' attitude and extra-role behavioral intention toward the company. On the other hand, the reason behind the lack of differential effects across other CSA strategies can be the sorting process among American publics. The identity-based sorting suggests that in the current polarized political environment, publics tend to have a growing convergence of their ideological groups and issue positions (Mason, 2015a). In other words, over time people tend to have increasingly consistent issue positions that are in line with their ideological identities. A clear stance on one of these issues may be seen as a reflection of certain ideological identities. In the CSA context, it is possible that publics' perceptions of CSA initiatives have accompanied this sorting process. Thus, the strategy of standing a single issue may be inevitably seen as companies' attachments to certain ideological groups by external publics, similar to the strategy of standing consistently on multiple issues.

In addition to these speculations, Experiment 2 also reveals that the interaction effects of public-company identity congruence and CSA strategies on publics' reactions

to CSA is clearer through the mediation of perceived identity similarity. This pattern further highlights the key role of publics' perceived identity similarity in publics' attitudinal and behavioral reactions to CSA. However, given its inconsistent patterns as compared with the main interaction effects, further studies are needed to illuminate other potential psychological mechanisms that can also influence publics' reactions to CSA.

Discussion of the Multi-Method Approach

This dissertation makes significant contributions to the methodological development in CSA research. First, it suggests a new promising avenue of research to apply the multi-method approach to understand the influences of CSA among external publics. It incorporates experiments, which help establish internal validity and allow for the assessment of psychological factors that are not observable from public behavioral data, as well as the computational method, which can capture people's actual behavioral patterns at scale and address some limitations of the experiments, such as the artificial nature of experimental stimuli and the generalizability of the findings. By cross-validating the findings, this multi-method approach provides enhanced and well-balanced internal and external validity, which can increase the accuracy of empirical evidence for hypothesis testing.

While experimental methods have been used in many existing CSA studies, the computational analysis using naturalistic real-world data is still lacking. For CSA studies, computational methods can bring some key advantages. First, various publics emerge, group, and mutate around socio-political issues (Aldoory & Grunig, 2012). Conversations produced by ordinary social media users provide a chance to identify and understand potential individuals who could be influential around certain issues. Social media data

captures the evaluations made by spontaneous aggregations of publics that express their reactions to certain CSA events. Furthermore, ordinary users' online communicative behaviors can be accessed, assembled, and analyzed and ultimately offer unique insights about individual characteristics, which provides a viable approach to study CSA outcomes across different publics. By adding individuals' ideological identities and the strength of their ideological identities as antecedents of sentiment scores, the computational analysis in this project showed a more comprehensive picture of how CSA outcomes can be influenced by individuals' political factors.

Moreover, the approach of combining computational methods with conventional social science methods opens up new possibilities for researchers to study communication processes at scale and to explore unique questions that have not been properly addressed before. As this dissertation presents, the multi-method approach combining both experiments and the computational analysis can not only capture the competing interests of multiple stakeholders at a large scale, but also test their psychological mechanisms. Both are among the focal concerns in CSA research. Thus, more research is needed to explore the potential of such multi-method approaches in CSA research, especially in light of the increasingly complex company-society relationships and socio-political environment in today's society.

Theoretical Implications

On the basis of signaling theory and social identity theory, this dissertation contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence on how companies' CSA stances on controversial socio-political issues can shape companies' identities and influence publics' reactions in the contemporary polarized political climate.

In particular, by illuminating the mediating role of publics' perceived identity similarity, this dissertation extends the application of social identity theory to the CSA context, suggesting that CSA stances help draw publics' psychological boundary to include or exclude companies as their potential socio-political allies. From the social identity perspective, in-group versus out-group categorization can have profound impacts on people's political life and their interactions with business sectors. For CSA researchers, the psychological mechanism underlying publics' reactions to CSA, such as perceived identity similarity, is an area of research ripe for investigation.

The current society is increasingly characterized by political divides among publics, and CSA has grown against the backdrop of this broad socio-political shift and publics' expectations of companies' engagement in socio-political issues (van der Meer & Jonkman, 2021). As is well documented in political science research, the contracting values schemes underlying liberalism and conservatism has resulted in increasingly opposing positions on multiple issues and accelerated the systematic differences between subpopulations ("identity-based polarization") in the past two decades (Mason, 2015b; van Aelst et al., 2017). However, as most CSA research draws upon previous knowledge on CSR and issues management, the political factors underlying publics' interpretation of CSA have been largely overlooked in the extant literature. In the further development of theories around CSA, it is necessary to recognize how politically fragmented the environment has become. Companies are inherently intertwined with their politically divided surroundings, which can play an increasingly important role determining how companies engage in socio-political issues and how publics' reactions come to be.

In such a polarized political environment, companies' clear stances on socio-political issues may inevitably be seen as support for particular political ideologies, since they promote specific ideological values and speak for certain stakeholder groups over others (Ciszek & Logan, 2018). Considering external publics as the audience of corporate communications, CSA is the material manifestation of corporate identities. Thus, a further discussion is warranted on the political aspects of corporate identities. While companies' identities comprise traits that reflect the companies' core values, they are embodied in companies' stances on controversial issues. In this sense, although corporate identities indeed stream out of companies' missions and values (Tourky et al., 2020) and tend to appeal to broad-based publics, the political aspects of corporate identities are usually adopted as the evaluative lens by external publics when companies engage in socio-political issues. Moreover, companies' subsequent CSA endeavors may more or less be influenced by the corporate identities they establish in prior initiatives. Future research needs to further develop the theoretical underpinnings of corporate identities in the CSA context. More conceptual groundwork is needed to build a better understanding of different aspects of corporate identities. It is also important to further explore how different CSA strategies can reflect corporate socio-political identities, as well as how such corporate identities that emerge from CSA can influence publics' perceptions.

Based on these insights, this dissertation project sheds important light on theory building in public relations. One area where CSA research has a significant impact is in the development of theories around reputation management and stakeholder relations. Drawing upon social identity theory, this dissertation focuses on the effects of CSA on CSA and both individual and corporate factors that influence companies' CSA outcomes.

From the instrumental standpoint of public relations as communication management, the findings point to further discussion about the effectiveness of CSA as an emergent practice of companies' communication efforts in building mutually beneficial relationships with publics. Moreover, this dissertation highlights the importance of considering the social and political contexts in which companies operate when building relationships with their publics. In CSA, socio-political issues become the connection point between companies and their publics. However, although CSA is suggested to have its roots in CSR and values advocacy (Dodd & Supa, 2014; 2015), this dissertation points out that the socio-political issues CSA initiatives act on are politically charged and increasingly complicated in the contemporary social climate. Thus, it becomes important for public relations researchers studying CSA to devote more attention to the nature of the social issues being advocated for in CSA as well as the evolving social and political contexts, because nowadays they bring growing complexity to the relationships between companies and publics. In this sense, research is also needed to advance the understanding of the emergence of active publics around socio-political issues, especially in a polarized environment. As this dissertation suggests, a more granular understanding of different segments of publics in CSA is necessary. In future theory development around the concept of publics, it is critical to understand not only the antecedents of the formation and mutation of active publics around socio-political issues, but also the influence that different segments of publics may exert when companies start to get involved in these issues.

Methodologically, this dissertation project takes an innovative multi-method approach, pairing experimental studies with a computational analysis of real-world social

media data. For future CSA research, the potential is great, as computational tools and processes have become easier to employ (e.g., open-source software, developed algorithms) and as large-scale datasets of digital media content have become more readily attainable (e.g., scraping tweets or websites). Social media conversations produce large-scale data, which allows researchers to directly and reliably capture plural conversations about a company (Etter et al., 2018) or a socio-political issue (Zanouda et al., 2017). Also, as the rise of computational methods in social science is quickly catching up, the deluge of social media data can be turned into increasingly useful insights into individual characteristics. As CSA can generate a multiplicity of conversations that are fragmented along ideological lines, the computational analysis of large-scale social media data can help extrapolate a full picture of how publics evaluate companies involved in CSA. It can be useful in complementing the widely adopted experimental methods in CSA research.

Practical Implications

This project yields some important implications for practices. First, companies should recognize that their CSA initiatives may inevitably be seen as attachments to certain ideological groups. Companies need to be highly cautious when they speak up on controversial socio-political issues, since publics with opposing political ideologies can have very different perceptions (Dodd & Supa, 2014; Hydock et al., 2019). From the proactive issues management perspective, as socio-political issues are divisive in nature, companies' decision on CSA initiatives may nonetheless be tied to the balance between positive returns via support from significant stakeholder groups and potential risks of alienating certain stakeholder groups (Nalick et al., 2016). Practitioners need to be

sensitive to the socio-political atmosphere around them and understand how publics are grouped around issues.

More specifically, as explained above, publics' views on socio-political issues have cumulatively moved into greater alignment with their ideological camps in recent decades. Having a nuanced understanding on publics' ideological identities can help companies better understand which segments of publics would side with corporate initiatives and which might react negatively to corporate positions, and in turn, minimize corporate risks of engaging in controversial issues. In this dissertation project, it is found that CSA can influence a variety of publics' reactions, such as attitudes, consumers' buycotting and boycotting intentions, and word-of-mouth supportive or punishing intentions. Although financial incentives may not be the main driver of CSA (Dodd & Supa, 2014; van der Meer & Jonkman, 2021), the reactions from external publics can bring consequences to the financial bottom line of companies involved in CSA. Practitioners need to not only understand their core publics on the issues, but also mind the potential repercussions when ideological incongruence happens, particularly in their interactions with active issue publics.

In addition, practitioners need to develop a deeper understanding of how corporate identities are established and communicated to external publics based on their CSA stances. Corporate identities are central to the companies, distinctive from other companies, and relatively enduring over time (Albert & Whetten, 1985). In this sense, corporate identities that communicated through CSA stances may influence the companies in the long run. Particularly when companies decide to engage in multiple socio-political issues, it is important for practitioners to be aware that publics'

perceptions of the companies may be additive, rather than mutually independent. It is through this process that companies' identities are continuously reinforced or violated.

Moreover, when engaging in CSA, companies need to use appropriate strategies to address legitimacy gaps, the concerns publics raise, and the criticisms they put forward on social media. This dissertation suggests that in addition to conventional methods, computational research using social media data can help to capture dynamic communication processes and offer more time-sensitive insights. Practitioners can gauge publics' real-time response to CSA initiatives, using appropriate online behavioral data and computational methods. In addition to sentiment analysis, CSA practices in the industry can also benefit from the possibility of a thorough understanding about different segments of publics. In this sense, the methodological approach in this project potentially provides partitioners with a viable solution to understand publics' ideological segments, so as to determine the congruence between publics' ideologies and corporate stances and better justify the use of CSA strategies.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations that should be addressed in future research. First, the experiments used a simplified categorization of issue stances and ideological identities (i.e., liberals vs. conservatives). When creating the ideological congruence and incongruence conditions, the computational analysis also matched this simplified categorization of corporate stances and publics' ideological identities. However, socio-political issues are complex and multifaceted. The discussions on many controversial issues, such as abortion or gun rights/gun control, involve a variety of policies and

positions along the ideological spectrum (Pew Research Center, 2021; 2022b). Therefore, more nuanced understandings about CSA stances and individuals' ideologies are needed.

Second, the experiments focused on the three most polarized issues, gun rights/gun control, abortion, and immigration. Further research can explore other socio-political issues to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Also, in the computational analysis, issue-specific factors were also not included, which limits the explanation that can be offered for the different results observed across issues. In addition, while the computational analysis provides a desirable real-world examination of publics' reactions to CSA, certain confounding factors associated with using naturalistic data, such as the companies' prior reputation and CSA records, were not accounted for. Future studies are highly encouraged to include these issue-related and company-related confounding factors and investigate the boundary conditions of CSA outcomes.

Third, while this dissertation relies on social identity theory and devotes attention to publics' perceived identity similarity as the psychological mechanism, many other factors may also influence or mediate publics' reactions to CSA. For example, consumers' self-congruity motives could influence how they think about CSA, and people's reactions may also be impacted by their skepticism toward corporate engagement in social issues. Future research is warranted to further unpack and delineate the psychological processes of publics' reactions to CSA.

Fourth, while the computational analysis attempted to examine how publics' reactions to CSA events are influenced by public-company identity congruence, the proxy measures of publics' reactions were not optimal due to the data availability issues. Publics' actual buycotting and boycotting as well as extra-role behaviors were not

captured because limited real-world data was available. To fully understand publics' behavioral response patterns in CSA, future research would benefit from exploring other data sources, such as consumer spending data or the traffic data of companies' social media handles.

Finally, the BERT-based model used for the analysis of political ideologies was fine-tuned based on existing training datasets. At the current stage, the model reached a satisfactory accuracy level of 71% but indicates room for further improvement. For the specific application of analyzing ordinary individuals' ideological identities, better training data needs to be developed in future research. The analysis of individuals' political ideologies is the building block of research on communication processes and behaviors in various contexts. With the rapid growth of social media data and computational techniques for data processing, the author believes that there is a critical need for multidisciplinary collaborations between communication researchers and computer scientists to further explore and develop computational social science methodological approaches that are suitable for communication research.

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Appendix A: Experiment 1 Questionnaire (Including Stimuli)

Thank you for your interest in this survey! We want to hear your opinions on a corporate message. **There are no right or wrong answers in this survey**, so please provide your answers with your real opinions.

Your answers are private and will be grouped with those of other participants. Your answers will also be anonymous, and we will never ask for your name.
Click "Next" to begin.
[Next]

Screening Question

0. Do you currently reside in the U.S.?
   (Yes)
   (No) [If the participant selects "no," the survey ends.]

Quota Sampling Question

Ideological Identity

1. Thinking politically and socially, how would you describe your own general outlook?
   (1) Strongly liberal
   (2) Liberal
   (3) Slightly liberal
   (4) Moderate, middle of the road
   (5) Slightly conservative
   (6) Conservative
   (7) Strongly conservative

Moderator

Strength of Ideological Identity

2. How important is being a [liberal/conservative/moderate] to you? (1 = not important at all / 7 = extremely important)

3. How well does the term [liberal/conservative/moderate] describe you? (1 = not at all / 7 = extremely well)

4. When talking about [liberal/conservative/moderate]s, how often do you use "we" instead of "they"? (1 = never / 7 = all of the time)

5. To what extent do you think of yourself as being a [liberal/conservative/moderate]? (1 = not at all / 7 = a great deal)

Control Variables

Personal Involvement in the Issue

6. To what extent do you agree with the following statements (1 = strongly disagree / 7 = strongly agree):

a. I think gun legislation as a great deal.
b. Gun legislation is a personally relevant topic for me.
c. I think about gun legislation.
d. I find myself bringing up gun legislation in casual conversation
e. Gun legislation is important to me.
f. Gun legislation is a high priority for me.
g. I don't care about gun legislation" (reverse-coded).
h. When gun legislation comes up in conversation I "tune in."
i. Gun legislation is never at the top of my mind (reverse-coded).

General Social Consciousness

7. To what extent do you agree with the following statement (1 = not at all / 7 = very much):
   I consider myself to be a socially conscious person.

Stimuli

[Note: Corporate stances are paired with participants' self-reported ideological identities to form identity congruence or incongruence conditions. Based on participants' self-reported ideological identities (Q1), each ideological group was randomly assigned to one of the two identity congruence conditions.]

Next, you will see a tweet from the official account of InStyle Hotels.
InStyle Hotels is a regional hotel chain headquartered in the United States. It operates several different brands in North America.
In this tweet, InStyle Hotels stated their stance on a social issue.
Please carefully read the following statement from InStyle Hotels, and you will be asked questions about this company on the following pages.

[Liberal CSA stance]

[Conservative CSA stance]

Dependent Variables

Attitude Toward the Company

8. In your view, to what extent InStyle Hotels is…
   a. (1) = dislike / (7) = like
   b. (1) = unfavorable / (7) = favorable
   c. (1) = negative / (7) = positive
   d. (1) = socially irresponsible / (7) = socially responsible

Political Consumption Intention

9. Based on the company's initiative, how likely would you take the following behaviors for social, political, or ethical reasons?
   (1) = boycott / (4) = take no action / (7) = deliberately patronage InStyle Hotels

Consumers' Extra-Role Behavioral Intention

10. Based on the company's initiative, how likely would you take the following behaviors for social, political, or ethical reasons?
    a. (1) = encourage friends or relatives to patronage / (7) = encourage friends or relatives not to patronage InStyle Hotels
    b. (1) = say positive things about InStyle Hotels to other people / (7) = say negative things about InStyle Hotels to other people
    c. (1) = try to support InStyle Hotels in some way / (7) = try to punish InStyle Hotels in some way

Mediator

Perceived Similarity to the Company

11. To what extent do you agree with the following statements (1 = strongly disagree / 7 = strongly agree):
    a. Being a customer of InStyle Hotels is consistent with how I see myself.
    b. Being a customer of InStyle Hotels reflects who I am.
    c. People similar to me would be customers of InStyle Hotels.

Manipulation Check Question

Perceived Corporate Identity

12. Based on InStyle Hotels' stance, how would you describe its ideological outlook?
    (1) Strongly liberal
    (2) Liberal
    (3) Slightly liberal
    (4) Moderate/middle of the road
    (5) Slightly conservative
    (6) Conservative
    (7) Strongly conservative

Demographic Questions

13. What is your age? ____

14. What is your gender
    (1) Female
    (2) Male
    (3) Other or prefer not to answer

15. Which of the following best represents your racial or ethnic heritage?
    (1) Asian/Asian American
    (2) Black/African American
    (3) Hispanic/Latino
    (4) Native American
    (5) Pacific Islander
    (6) White
    (7) Other _____

16. What is your annual household income?
    (1) Below $10,000
    (2) $10,000 - $24,999
    (3) $25,000 - $49,999
    (4) $50,000 - $74,999
    (5) $75,000 - $99,999
    (6) $100,000 - $124,999
    (7) Above $125,000

17. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
    (1) Less than high school
    (2) High school graduate

(3) Some college
(4) 2-year degree
(5) 4-year degree
(6) Graduate degree

--- Debrief and Exit ---

Appendix B: Experiment 2 Questionnaire (Including Stimuli)

Thank you for your interest in this survey! We want to hear your opinions on a corporate message. **There are no right or wrong answers in this survey**, so please provide your answers with your real opinions.

Your answers are private and will be grouped with those of other participants. Your answers will also be anonymous, and we will never ask for your name.
Click "Next" to begin.
[Next]

Screening Question

0. Do you currently reside in the U.S.?
   (Yes)
   (No) [If the participant selects "no," the survey ends.]

Quota Sampling Question

Ideological Identity

1. Thinking politically and socially, how would you describe your own general outlook?
   (1) Strongly liberal
   (2) Liberal
   (3) Slightly liberal
   (4) Moderate, middle of the road
   (5) Slightly conservative
   (6) Conservative
   (7) Strongly conservative

Control Variables

Strength of Ideological Identity

2. How important is being a [liberal/conservative/moderate] to you? (1 = not important at all / 7 = extremely important)

3. How well does the term [liberal/conservative/moderate] describe you? (1 = not at all / 7 = extremely well)

4. When talking about [liberal/conservative/moderate]s, how often do you use "we" instead of "they"? (1 = never / 7 = all of the time)

5. To what extent do you think of yourself as being a [liberal/conservative/moderate]? (1 = not at all / 7 = a great deal)

Personal Involvement in the Issue

6. To what extent do you agree with the following statements (1 = strongly disagree / 7 = strongly agree):
   a. I think gun legislation as a great deal.

b. Gun legislation is a personally relevant topic for me.
c. I think about gun legislation.
d. I find myself bringing up gun legislation in casual conversation
e. Gun legislation is important to me.
f. Gun legislation is a high priority for me.
g. I don't care about gun legislation" (reverse-coded).
h. When gun legislation comes up in conversation I "tune in."
i. Gun legislation is never at the top of my mind (reverse-coded).

7. To what extent do you agree with the following statements (1 = strongly disagree / 7 = strongly agree):
   a. I think abortion legislation as a great deal.
   b. Abortion legislation is a personally relevant topic for me.
   c. I think about abortion legislation.
   d. I find myself bringing up abortion legislation in casual conversation
   e. Abortion legislation is important to me.
   f. Abortion legislation is a high priority for me.
   g. I don't care about abortion legislation" (reverse-coded).
   h. When abortion legislation comes up in conversation I "tune in."
   i. Abortion legislation is never at the top of my mind (reverse-coded).

8. To what extent do you agree with the following statements (1 = strongly disagree / 7 = strongly agree):
   a. I think immigration regulations as a great deal.
   b. Immigration regulations is a personally relevant topic for me.
   c. I think about immigration regulations.
   d. I find myself bringing up immigration regulations in casual conversation
   e. Immigration regulations is important to me.
   f. Immigration regulations is a high priority for me.
   g. I don't care about immigration regulations (reverse-coded).
   h. When immigration regulations come up in conversation I "tune in."
   i. Immigration regulations is never at the top of my mind (reverse-coded).

General Social Consciousness

9. To what extent do you agree with the following statement (1 = not at all / 7 = very much):
   I consider myself to be a socially conscious person.

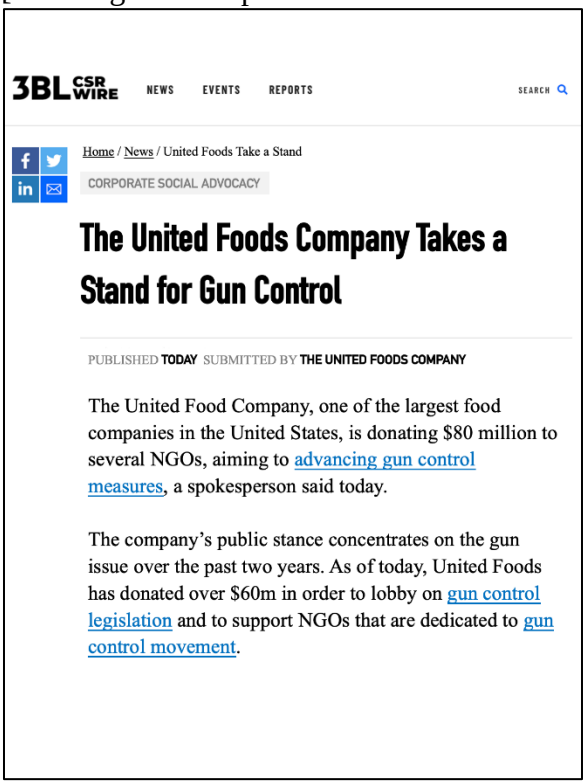
Stimuli

[Note: Corporate stances are paired with participants' self-reported ideological identities to form identity congruence or incongruence conditions. Based on participants' self-reported ideological identities (Q1), each ideological group was randomly assigned to one of the two identity congruence conditions.]

Next, you will see a news release from The United Foods Company.

The United Foods Company is a multinational food and drink company headquartered in the United States. The United Foods Company's products include bottled water, breakfast cereals, coffee and tea, confectionery, dairy products, ice cream, frozen food, pet foods, and snacks.
In this press release, The United Foods Company stated their stances on social issues. **Please carefully read the following press release from the United Foods Company**, and you will be asked questions about this company on the following pages.

[Standing on multiple liberal issues consistently]



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CORPORATE SOCIAL ADVOCACY

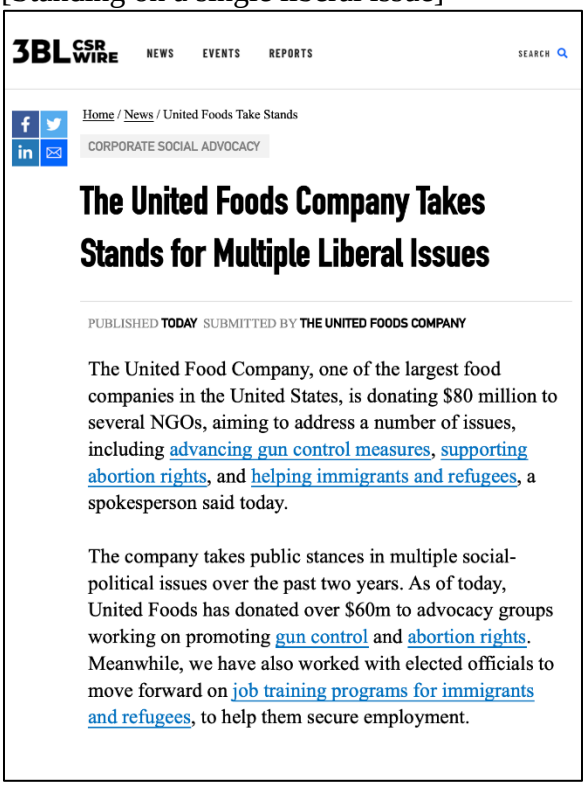
The United Foods Company Takes a Stand for Gun Control

PUBLISHED TODAY SUBMITTED BY THE UNITED FOODS COMPANY

The United Food Company, one of the largest food companies in the United States, is donating $80 million to several NGOs, aiming to advancing gun control measures, a spokesperson said today.

The company's public stance concentrates on the gun issue over the past two years. As of today, United Foods has donated over $60m in order to lobby on gun control legislation and to support NGOs that are dedicated to gun control movement.

[Standing on a single liberal issue]



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CORPORATE SOCIAL ADVOCACY

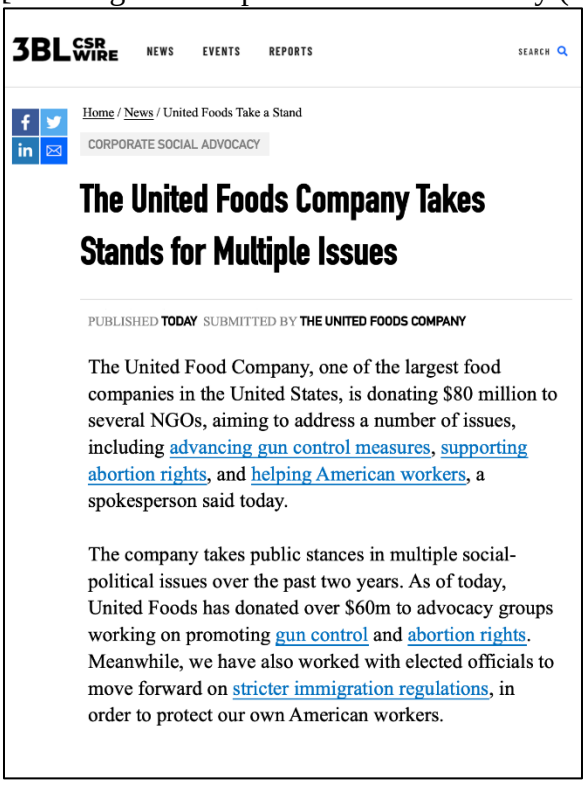
The United Foods Company Takes Stands for Multiple Liberal Issues

PUBLISHED TODAY SUBMITTED BY THE UNITED FOODS COMPANY

The United Food Company, one of the largest food companies in the United States, is donating $80 million to several NGOs, aiming to address a number of issues, including advancing gun control measures, supporting abortion rights, and helping immigrants and refugees, a spokesperson said today.

The company takes public stances in multiple social-political issues over the past two years. As of today, United Foods has donated over $60m to advocacy groups working on promoting gun control and abortion rights. Meanwhile, we have also worked with elected officials to move forward on job training programs for immigrants and refugees, to help them secure employment.

[Standing on multiple issues inconsistently (leaning liberal)]



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CORPORATE SOCIAL ADVOCACY

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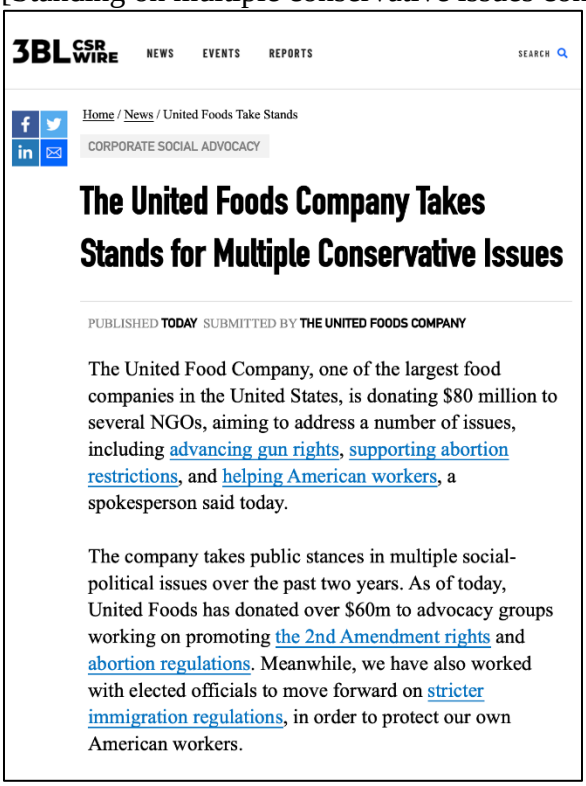
[Standing on multiple conservative issues consistently]



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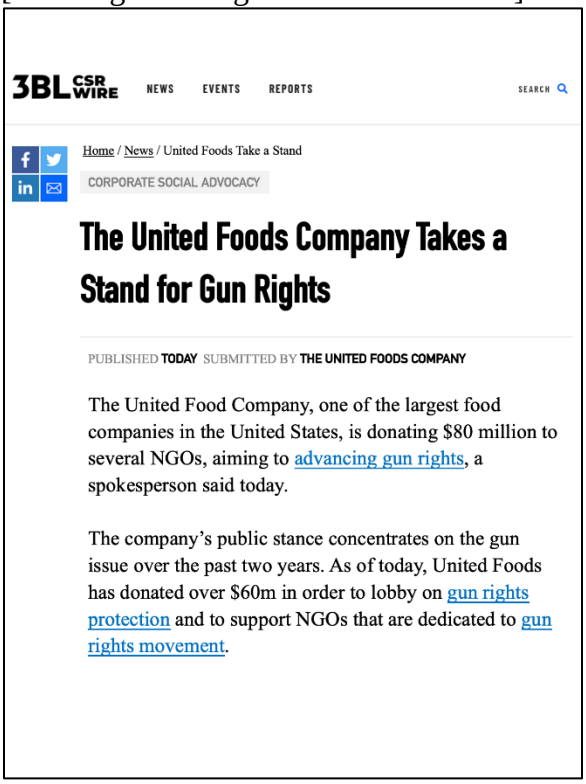
[Standing on a single conservative issue]



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CORPORATE SOCIAL ADVOCACY

The United Foods Company Takes a Stand for Gun Rights

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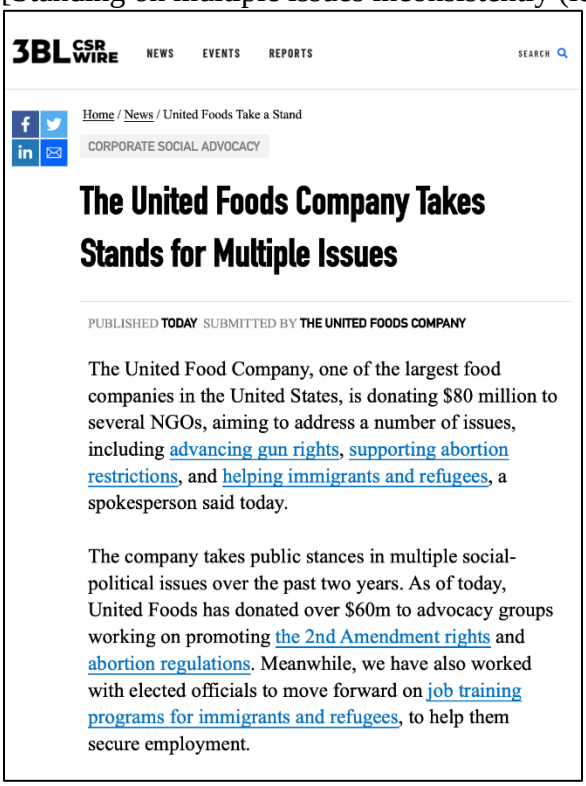
[Standing on multiple issues inconsistently (leaning conservative)]



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Dependent Variables

Attitude Toward the Company

10. In your view, to what extent The United Foods Company is…
    a. (1) = dislike / (7) = like
    b. (1) = unfavorable / (7) = favorable
    c. (1) = negative / (7) = positive
    d. (1) = socially irresponsible / (7) = socially responsible

Political Consumption Intention

11. Based on the company's initiative, how likely would you take the following behaviors for social, political, or ethical reasons?
    (1) = boycott / (4) = take no action / (7) = deliberately patronage The United Foods Company

Consumers' Extra-Role Behavioral Intention

12. Based on the company's initiative, how likely would you take the following behaviors for social, political, or ethical reasons?
    a. (1) = encourage friends or relatives to buy / (7) = encourage friends or relatives not to buy products from The United Foods Company
    b. (1) = say positive things about The United Foods Company to other people / (7) = say negative things about The United Foods Company to other people
    c. (1) = try to support The United Foods Company in some way / (7) = try to punish The United Foods Company in some way

Mediator

Perceived Similarity to the Company

13. To what extent do you agree with the following statements (1 = strongly disagree / 7 = strongly agree):
    a. Being a customer of The United Foods Company is consistent with how I see myself.
    b. Being a customer of The United Foods Company reflects who I am.
    c. People similar to me would be customers of The United Foods Company.

Manipulation Check Question

Perceived Corporate Identity

14. Based on The United Foods Company's stance, how would you describe its ideological outlook?
    (1) Strongly liberal
    (2) Liberal
    (3) Slightly liberal
    (4) Moderate/middle of the road
    (5) Slightly conservative
    (6) Conservative
    (7) Strongly conservative

Demographic Questions

15. What is your age? ____

16. What is your gender
    (1) Female
    (2) Male
    (3) Other or prefer not to answer

17. Which of the following best represents your racial or ethnic heritage?
    (1) Asian/Asian American
    (2) Black/African American
    (3) Hispanic/Latino
    (4) Native American
    (5) Pacific Islander
    (6) White
    (7) Other _____

18. What is your annual household income?
    (1) Below $10,000
    (2) $10,000 - $24,999
    (3) $25,000 - $49,999
    (4) $50,000 - $74,999
    (5) $75,000 - $99,999
    (6) $100,000 - $124,999

(7) Above $125,000

19. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
    (1) Less than high school
    (2) High school graduate
    (3) Some college
    (4) 2-year degree
    (5) 4-year degree
    (6) Graduate degree

--- Debrief and Exit ---