

**A THEORY OF CORPORATE SOCIAL ADVOCACY LEGITIMACY:  
PERSPECTIVE CHANGE, SCALE DEVELOPMENT, AND MODEL TESTING**

by

TONG XIE

(Under the Direction of Juan Meng)

**ABSTRACT**

Review of existing research and knowledge suggests the need of viewing the legitimacy of corporate social advocacy (CSA) from a new perspective. However, few previous studies of public relations conceptualize the construct of CSA legitimacy, empirically measure its sub-dimensions, and explore its functions given the fact that organizational advocacy is of growing importance in today's communication and business environment. Therefore, this dissertation research attempts to define the construct of CSA legitimacy, explore and investigate its theoretical sub-dimensions, and establish corresponding measurement items.

This dissertation research is guided by extensive literature review and the following research questions: (1) What are the important dimensions of CSA legitimacy (2) How do antecedent situational factors influence individual's CSA legitimacy assessment? (3) How does individual's CSA legitimacy assessment influence its outcome factors?

To address these research questions, three surveys in a consecutive order are designed and developed to collect the appropriate samples. The first survey involves two steps: 1) the deductive measurement item generation through extensive literature review of existing conceptualization of the key construct, and 2) an exploratory factor analysis to establish the base

of measurement model. The second survey involves model testing and comparison through confirmatory factor analysis. The third survey involves cross-validation of the measurement model through measurement invariance assessment and conducts the structural equation modeling tests of the proposed model.

Based on the research findings, a higher-order model of CSA legitimacy with multi-subdimensions is theoretically and empirically supported by strong evidence. The model achieves good overall goodness of fit, reliability, validity, and applicability. The theoretical model overall provides insights about the relationship of CSA legitimacy with its antecedent situational factors and outcome factors. Therefore, this dissertation research contributes to existing theoretical development of the key construct within public relations research. It also provides potential guidance and practical implications for public relation practice.

**INDEX WORDS:** Corporate social advocacy; Public relations; Legitimacy; Organization communication

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## DEDICATION

Dedicated to my father, Shun Xie (谢舜), and my mother, Ling Zhang (张玲):

This dissertation is inspired by your love and wisdom.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Purpose of the Research**

“The large corporation must become an active agent for social change if it is to make the world safe for democracy, and indeed, for capitalism... As a dominant institution in society, the corporation must assume its rightful place and contribute to the articulation of the public agenda and simply react to policy choices advocated by others. The right of advocacy, however, cannot be taken for granted but must be earned through public trust in corporate intent and faith in corporate promises made in the name of ‘public interest’.” (Sethi & Williams, 2000, p.197)

Individuals are organized around and involved with public issues that affect their lives (Blumer, 1946; Dewey, 1927). Functional modern societies let rise of public opinion through underlying mechanisms and means of mass communication, persuasion and “manufacturing consent” (Lippmann, 1922, p.158). These individuals of mass society are required to consider, evaluate, and sometimes debate on public issues and societal policy decisions. General public is facing the complex, unpredictable and unseen environment due to massive scale, specialization and division of society operation, individuals’ predispositions such as stereotypes, collision of self-centered interest, censored and summarized news media content, and many other complexing factors (Lippmann, 1922). Major social changes within different societal segments manifest themselves as shifts in social norms and processes of legitimization of previously debated actions, policies and claims (Kelman, 2001). In this public opinion debate arena, corporations as one type of the powerful entities in a society, are constantly creating and solving

societal problems, which in turn also influence the existence and operation of the organizations themselves (Gruinig, 1977). From another perspective, these different social entities are debating and recategorizing various public issues, “such that what was previously illegitimate now becomes legitimate” (Kelman, 2001, p. 57). Through this organization-public interaction, better case for “the legitimacy of an institution and its’ control over a share of society’s physical and human resources” are made (Sethi, 1977, p. 18).

In recent years, we have witnessed a surge of leaders of large corporations and well-established brands who are willing to step into the arena of public issues by advocating for and taking a clear stance on various social and political issues. Such issues include but are not limited to minority rights, gender equality, climate change, and gun control (Fingas, 2019; Hydock et al., 2019; Kessel, 2019; Mchugh, 2019; Schuppe, 2016; United for the Paris Agreement, 2019). These actions seem to deviate from the bottom line of traditional corporate social responsibility (CSR) missions due to the sociopolitical nature of the issues and the mutually exclusive consequence to the stakeholders who are involved (Carroll, 1999; Sundaram & Inkpen, 2004). According to some recent research, this kind of corporate social responsibility activity has been referred to as corporate social advocacy (CSA) or political corporate social responsibility (PCS) (Dodd & Supa, 2014; Scherier et al., 2016).

The different reactions toward CSA among the general public were fueled by individuals’ political stances and personal level of issue involvement (Ordabayeva & Fernandes, 2018). Organizations that boldly advocated on these issues have experienced consequences from stakeholders (Fitzgerald & Donovan, 2018; Wettstein & Baur, 2016). For example, Hobby Lobby, as a family-owned and for-profit organization, publicly announced that it refused to provide health insurance coverage to its employees for FDA-approved contraceptive services.

Such a decision is largely based on the religious beliefs of the organization's leadership (Biron, 2020). In comparison with traditional CSR initiatives, CSA does not aim to win the favor of everyone but only those stakeholders who are closely identified with the particular value expressed through the issue advocacy (Dodd & Supa, 2014; Gaither et al., 2018). Accordingly, CSA has posed a great issues management demand on corporations since organizations need to constantly monitor and engage on different emerging issues that arise from different public opinions (Heath & Palenchar, 2008).

The role of legitimacy becomes crucial when assessing the impact of CSA on organizations as organizations take clear stances on these social-political issues. Broadly speaking, legitimacy refers to the sense of "good will," "acceptance or approval," and "taken for granted" of the key public (Prefer & Salancik, 1978; Suchman, 1995). This underlying idea that organizations' operations depend on the public's goodwill and consent is a similar one reflected in public relations research and theories (Boyd, 2000). The study of legitimacy is to examine how organizations gain and maintain the acceptance or approval from the publics, while some lines of classic public relations studies, such as crisis communication, focused more on reestablishing legitimacy (Heath, 1995). When talking about the conceptualization of legitimacy, the unit of analysis of traditional institutional theory is an industry or an organization. However, when an organization advocates for controversial sociopolitical issues, it is fundamentally the specific action or decision, not exactly the organization itself, that might face backlash. In other words, the unit of analysis is not as much about the organization as a whole, but actually it is about the CSA activity the organization has endorsed. Thus, the legitimacy subject is not about the organization. Instead, it should be about the CSA activity.

This shift of focus in CSA research has been documented in some recent studies of organizational legitimacy (Haack, 2012; Suddaby, et al., 2017) and public relations research (Boyd, 2000). As the level of analysis changes from macro (e.g., the institutional level) to micro (e.g., the organizational behavior level), it does not only stimulate a change in theoretical conceptualization but more critically in operationalization (Bitektine & Haack, 2015). For a long period of time, legitimacy has been defined and measured as a *property* or *attribute* of the organization, which is evaluated and granted by the external authorities and especially the publics. Traditional research on the institutional theory tried to use certain proxy data, such as evaluation of institutional raters or experts, positive media exposure, authorities' regulation records, to assess legitimacy (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). However, some recent studies suggested that we shall understand legitimacy as a result of *perception* (Suddaby, et al., 2017) and use psychometric measurements to assess individual stakeholders' perceptions of an organization's overall legitimacy (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019; Chung et al., 2016; Elsbach, 1994; Tost, 2011; Zhang et al., 2020). Such an argument opens a new perspective to investigate legitimacy by focusing on stakeholders' perceptions (Kelman, 2001).

Consequently, recent theoretical development in institutional theory has proposed and attempted to assess legitimacy based on individual perceptions and focus on micro psychometrics analysis (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019; Kelman, 2001; Suddaby, et al., 2017). By following this call, this dissertation research aims at contributing to the understanding of CSA legitimacy from the perspectives of stakeholders and their perceptions. By doing so, this dissertation research is devoted to develop a theory of CSA legitimacy in public relations research by defining the construct of CSA legitimacy, proposing measurable dimensions of CSA legitimacy, and testing the predictive power of CSA legitimacy to facilitating effective public

relations practice. Although there is research dedicated to measure the overall legitimacy of an organization (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019) and the specific legitimacy of the issue itself (Chung et.al., 2016), there is no research directly assessing the legitimacy of CSA, connecting the legitimacy of CSA to effective public relations practice, and elaborating how the legitimacy of CSA can deepen the stakeholder theories in public relations research.

Therefore, this dissertation research offers the unique contributions to CSA legitimacy research in public relations through the following steps: 1) a review of how public relations studies and institutional studies to define the concept of “legitimacy;” 2) a review of the construct of corporate social responsibility and corporate social advocacy; 3) an effort to define, develop, and validate the measurement scale of CSA legitimacy; and 4) an investigation of the construct’s predictive power and an assessment of the relationship between situational factors of stakeholders and legitimacy of CSA.

### **Overview of Research Design**

To develop and test the assessment of CSA legitimacy, this dissertation research follows the theories of measurement building and its proposed methodological procedures (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019; Brown, 2015; Embretson and Reise, 2013; Kline, 2016). The first step includes using the literature review to develop a list of items in order to define the key theoretical construct, legitimacy of CSA. The second step is applying the developed measurement items in survey studies to formalize the theoretical model. To achieve this goal, model comparison and examination through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) are used to test the validity of the proposed dimensions of CSA legitimacy. Then the pruned item scale is tested again through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to examine the validity and reliability of the emerged construct structure/dimension. Finally, the validated assessment of CSA legitimacy is further

tested in terms of its measurement invariance, an important aspect of a reliable measurement model, and predictability on several situational factors when applying the construct in the context of the public relations research.

This study about CSA legitimacy contributes to the existing knowledge in the following areas: 1) theoretical and specifically conceptual clarification between CSA and similar constructs including CSR (corporate social responsibility), PCSR (political corporate social responsibility), CPA (corporate political advocacy); 2) creation and validation of measurement scale of CSA legitimacy; (3) theoretical implications of understanding what specific situational factors are influencing and influenced by CSA legitimacy; (4) practical implications for public relations and organizational communication in terms of better responding and preparing for CSA-related public responses.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Corporate Social Responsibility**

Corporate social responsibility is a multi-faceted concept with more than 60 years of history in practice (Carroll, 1999). Since the early conceptualization effort (Bowen, 1950), there have been many different proposed definitions that tried to capture the nature and essence of corporate social responsibilities (CSR) (Carroll, 1999). The following section reviews the existing theoretical understanding of and definitions for CSR and its relationship with corporate social advocacy (CSA).

#### **Corporate Social Responsibility: An Overview**

The emphasis of the early conceptualization of CSR, such as that of Bowen (1950) and Davis (1960), was put on the element of the responsibility. Business leaders or corporations, as the agents who practiced CSR, were held accountable to “pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society” (Davis, 1960, p.6).

It is considered socially responsible that corporations go beyond the pursuit of narrow economic values or regulative obligations. Organization social responsibilities “refer to the firm’s consideration of, and response to, issues beyond the narrow economic, technical, and legal requirements of the firm. It is the firm’s obligation to evaluate in its decision-making process the effects of its decisions on the external social system in a manner that will accomplish social benefits along with the traditional economic gains which the firm seeks. It means that social

responsibility begins where the law ends. A firm is not being socially responsible if it merely complies with the minimum requirements of the law, because this is what any good citizen would do.” (Davis,1973, p.313). From its early days, the idea of CSR is not just about an organization’s immediate economic and strategic benefit. With certain “intangible” values envisioned, organizations exert their influence in the name of betterment of public interest.

Though in early theoretical development stage the voluntariness was emphasized as an essential part of the CSR nature (Walton, 1967) and CSR was considered to be incompatible with corporate economic performance (Carroll, 1999; Manne & Wallich, 1972), Carroll’s definition (1979) was the first to include and emphasize the corporations’ economic role of the overall CSR evaluation, and considered the profit-making function as the fundamental dimension, supporting three additional identified dimensions, legal, ethical and discretionary expectations. “The social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time” (Carroll, 1979, p. 500).

The definition of CSR has its multi-faceted nature, which is also theorized and conceptualized as the dimensionality of CSR. Earlier dimensional conceptualization efforts of CSR include the concentric circle view of CSR by Committee for Economic Development (1971), which categorized the corporate responsibilities into 3 concentric circles, from basic profit-making responsibility to awareness of outer circle social value and priorities which are still somewhat close to the corporations such as fair employee treatment, and finally to broader improvement of social environment.

It is an important perspective to notice the concurrently evolving nature of the responsibilities concept that with the mutual influence of changing economics, laws, norms, stakeholder’s expectations, culture, and ethics, the content of this CSR theoretical concept will

include and adapt to new environmental elements. One example of this is the introduction of sustainability elements to the definition of socially responsible behavior by the publication of United Nations' Brundtland Report (1987), *Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development*. The report proposed the concept of sustainability of global economy and corporation development. By sustainability, it refers to the "development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs" and it asks corporations to reduce their economic, social, and environmental impact on society (Martínez et.al., 2016; Signitzer & Prexl, 2007; Thomsen, 2013; United Nations 1987).

Another case involves the EU Commission. (2011), which furthered the conceptual refinement by adding more components or dimensions to CSR. They defined CSR as "a process to integrate social, environmental, ethical, human rights and consumer concerns into their business operations and core strategy in close collaboration with their stakeholders" (EU Commission, 2011). Corporations, as a strong social presence, are constantly held accountable for their impact on society and their success is influenced by the surrounding environment (Davis & Blomstrom, 1966; UN, 1987; Dahlsrud, 2008). The new definition refinement had its strong cultural, normative and social color from its generation and enriched the conceptual understanding of CSR.

To investigate the dimensionality of CSR's definition in a different way, Dahlsrud (2008) analyzed 37 CSR definitions (from 1980 to 2003) and provided a relatively comprehensive view of each component or dimension. Different from the method of only using literature review or conducting interviews to construct a definition, Dahlsrud (2008) identified 37 different CSR definitions through an extensive literature review. He used a technique called emergent coding to

cluster the phrases into five different groups (five dimensions) and used frequency counts from Google to calculate a dimension ratio to evaluate the relative use and significance of each definition. Finally, he arrived at five dimensions, with a dimension ratio from high to low, including the following: stakeholder dimension (88%), social dimension (88%), economic dimension (86%), voluntariness dimension (80%), and environmental dimension (59%). All the dimensions have a dimension ratio above 50%, indicating that “they are more likely than not to be included in a random definition” (Dahlsrud, 2008). It is necessary to investigate every identified dimension in order to comprehensively understand the definition of CSR. Ninety-seven percent of the times, a random CSR definition will include at least three dimensions. Dahlsrud’s (2008) quantitative content analysis of the CSR definitions presents a relatively congruent conceptual understanding of CSR as a phenomenon.

The research of corporate social responsibility focuses on the investigation and explanation of its influence on various social aspects: economic, politics, social integration, and ethics (Garriga & Melé, 2004). In their systematic review of the CSR theoretical domain, Garriga and Melé (2004) proposed an organization framework to classify the theories of CSR into four groups: instrumental theories, political theories, integrative theories, and ethical theories. This framework and classification provided a clear theoretical typology, though not exhaustive, and a relatively comprehensive inclusion of the existing CSR research approaches.

These identified four groups of CSR theories corresponding to four essential dimensions or, in another sense, emphases of CSR phenomenon, economic, politics, social integration, and ethics. Although not every theoretical approach explicitly mentioned all the dimensions of CSR, and the identified CSR dimensions are not exactly matching with previous findings, theorists intended to consider multiple aspects of the concept and have particular emphasis according to

the context (Dahlsrud, 2008). This typology of theory maps out the theoretical territory of CSR research. It also helps future research to find the boundary of the theoretical development, namely what is or is not CSR research.

Admittedly, there is still a lack of consensus on one universal or “all-embracing” definition (Göbbels, 2002), the CSR theoretical domain has become more clearly defined and congruently theorized in terms of the CSR components. For academic researchers and CSR strategists, it becomes less a top priority to find a universally accepted yet vaguely defined CSR concept, but more about discerning how CSR is socially constructed and how each dimension of it is included in the consideration in a specific academic discussion or a concrete business operation (Dahlsrud, 2008; Galbreath, 2006; Pelozo & Shang, 2011; Van Marrewijk, 2003).

To summarize, the definition and research scope of CSR have focused on differentiating CSR with that which is considered just “doing good business”. Its related discussion mainly presents some important features of CSR. Comparatively, the definition by the European Commission (2011) seems relevant and appropriate: CSR refers to “a practice which corporations undertake to integrate social, environmental, ethical, human rights and consumer concerns into their business operations and core strategy in close collaboration with their stakeholders.” In the essential part, CSR has its economic basis and it is theoretically conducted by for-profit corporations, instead of by charity or non-profit organizations (e.g. Carroll, 1999). At the same time, CSR is a discretionary practice by going beyond legal obligation (Dahlsrud, 2008; Sethi, 1975; Walton, 1967). The aim of CSR is to meet the needs of multiple stakeholders (Walton, 1967). The dimensionality, economic, social, environmental functions, and ethics of CSR help to define the content, clarify the theoretical scope, and determine the detailed components and practical strategies, according to Dahlsrud’s (2008) research.

## Corporate Social Advocacy Research: Status Quo

In recent years, more corporations and CEOs have actively taken clear stances on controversial social issues. Some of examples are included in the Table 2.1. This has created a new issue management problem: whether corporations should step into the controversial issue arena or not (Davis, 2016; Hydock, Paharia & Weber, 2019; Kaeb, 2018)? Mistakes in issue management have already caused serious drawbacks for corporations while valid strategic implementation could really help them gain legitimacy in relating to the issue (Kaeb, 2018).

*Table 2.1.* Recent examples of corporate advocacy and sociopolitical issues

Organization name	Controversial social issues	Stance
Starbucks	LGBTQ rights	Pro
Amazon	LGBTQ rights	Pro
Chi-fil-A	LGBTQ rights	Against
Target	LGBTQ rights	Pro
Hobby Lobby	Women and reproductive rights	Against
Yelp	Women and reproductive rights	Pro
H&M	Women and reproductive rights	Pro
Delta	Gun control	Pro
Apple	Climate change	Pro
HP	Climate change	Pro
GM	Climate change	Pro
Toyota	Climate change	Pro
Delta	Voting law	Against
Coca Cola	Voting law	Against
UPS	Voting law	Against
JPMorgan	Voting law	Against

Based on a thorough literature review, there are three main constructs proposed to describe the phenomenon when organizations are actively engaged with prominent sociopolitical issues or problems (Gelles, 2017; Hydock et al., 2019; Kaeb, 2018; Scherer & Palazzo, 2011).

The first construct is **political corporate social responsibility (PCSR)**, which was proposed by Scherer and Palazzo (2011) to describe activities or situations whereby the organizations become an active political entity by engaging in public discourse and influencing

the societal decisioning and filling the governance gap. By Scherer et al.'s (2016) definition, the political nature of this PCSR involves "public deliberations, collective decisions, and the provision of public goods." This concept captures more about the idea that the corporation runs these CSR activities as a prominent political entity, who is capable of influencing both the public policy and the dynamic relationships between multiple private and public sectors, not necessarily for financial profits but also for the political idea or value it holds (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011; Scherer, et al. 2016). This definition is also characterized by the idea of "public goods," which are non-excludable benefits and consumed in a non-rival way (Scherer et al., 2016). PCSR is an organization's endeavor to fill the governance gap and ensure the availability of the public benefit to all people.

The second construct is **corporate political advocacy (CPA)** proposed by Wettstein and Baur (2016). This refers to organizational actions of "voicing or showing explicit and public support for certain individuals, groups or ideals and values with the aim of convincing and persuading others to do the same" (p. 200). These proactive and deliberative organizational actions are driven by values beyond direct financial interests. Different from the traditional issues of a CSR campaign, such as engaging in environmentally friendly practices or addressing community hunger, and PCSR, the advocated issues of this corporate action are highly divisive and politically controversial (Hydock et al., 2019). There is this difference between philanthropy activities and advocacy (Wettstein & Baur, 2016). While PCSR mainly refers to corporate political to better the provision of and sustainability of non-excludable public goods, in contrast CPA is a proactive and even confrontational promotion of certain values, which might not be appreciated by all (Hoffmann et al., 2020; Hydock et al., 2020; Wettstein & Baur, 2016).

The third construct, **corporate social advocacy (CSA)**, was proposed by Dodd and Supa (2014) as “an organization making a public statement or taking a public stance on social-political issues” (p. 5). The concept of corporate political advocacy (CPA) and corporate social advocacy (CSA) were used interchangeably by some of the studies (Hoffmann et al., 2020; Hydock et al., 2020). The definitions were similar, both focusing on the advocacy part. By calling it advocacy, corporations summon assistance and support to promote certain value (Wettstein & Baur, 2016). There are some nuances between these constructs. Wettstein and Baur (2016) mentioned the inherently political nature of these advocated issues yet many of these corporations’ advocacy actions are happening outside of the narrowly defined political sphere. The target of the advocacy is hence not necessarily the governmental, regulative, or legislative authorities but rather wider publics (Anastasiadis et al., 2018; Hydock et al., 2020; Lux et al., 2010; Wettstein & Baur, 2016). The “political” in CPA definition might cause confusion in that it only refers to the narrower political sphere. Hence, CSA is a more appropriate concept for the study.

Studies tried to follow the line of CSR research to understand and predict how public would response to CSA. The instrumental and strategic perspective of CSR management argued and investigated the financial contribution of CSR activities to more favorable stakeholder’s attitude towards the corporations and supporting behavior. Followed this similar logic and mechanism, Dodd and Supa (2014) built their CSA theoretical construct and investigated individual’s response to companies’ advocacy for controversial social issues. A positive relationship between CSA activities and greater product purchase intention was identified, which is especially the case among activist groups or people who have strong opinions or higher involvement with the issue (Dodd & Supa, 2014).

As more and more organizations have stepped into the public issue arena, it is becoming more necessary to ask an overarching question: how will corporate social advocacy influence individual stakeholders' perceptions and evaluation of the organization legitimacy? (Davis, 2016; Hydock, Paharia & Weber, 2019; Kaeb, 2018). Current research considers it as an important area of study due to the fact that more and more large corporations have taken a public stand on various sociopolitical issues since 2015 (for some examples, please refer to Table 2.1).

### **CSA In Public Relations Research**

Issue management (Heath & Palenchar, 2008) and the situational theory of publics (Grunig, 1997) are two theories that may contribute to a public relational perspective or understanding of CSA. It is beneficial to start from the basic practices of issues management to understand the core idea behind it. As defined by Heath and Palenchar (2008, p.93), the management of an issue is to strategically plan the business while paying attention to the public policy trends, monitor and analyze issues to understand the issue context, communicate in a proper demeanor, and being contingent and adaptive to the changing socio-cultural norms and standards. More specifically, "an issue is a contestable point, a difference of opinion regarding fact, value, or policy, the resolution of which has consequences for the organization's strategic plan and future success or failure" (Heath and Palenchar, 2008, p.93). The contestable nature of these public issues may result in contradicting concerns of self-interests of different key stakeholders, as these debates may be related to different even divisive interpretation of facts, values, and policies about this issue. It is critical for CSA, from the perspective of issues management, to keep monitoring and being adaptive to the changing issue debate and context.

The situational theory of publics is another public relations theory which may help provide insightful suggestions for CSA practices. One shared focus of both issues management

theory and situational theory of publics is their emphasis of defining and identifying the key publics. From the perspective of issue management theory, it is because those key populations with a deeper issue involvement will recognize and work hard to practice advocacy (Berkowitz & Turnmire, 1994). It is also the central argument of the situational theory of publics that public relations practitioners should be aware of the different characteristics, especially communicative action and problem recognition, of various segments of general population (Grunig, 1997). The involvement with different issues characterized segments or groups in population, which lead to different responses to the advocated issues, various communication behaviors to take, and different assessment of the legitimacy of organizations' advocacy (Ordabayeva & Fernandes, 2018).

The divisive nature of CSA often resulted in more favoring one side of the debating public over the other around a certain social controversial issue, which might pose more pressure on public relations management (Dodd & Supa, 2014; Gaither et.al., 2018). It is thus highly recommended for corporations to monitor, predict, and finally accept the potential divisive results and backlash. Some of these follow-up outcomes and consequences include changes in individual attitudes and behavioral intentions. Dodd and Supa (2014) tested people's reactions to various organization's CSA actions, such as health care policies, LGBTQ rights, emergency contraception and women's rights. They found that participants' purchase intentions were greater when there was congruence between the organization's CSA stance and their personal stance. Similar findings by Hydock et al. (2020) indicated that organizations' advocacy may offend substantial numbers of consumers when there is a divided public debate on sociopolitical issues. As a result, consumers are less likely to choose products or services from the organization with opposite issue stance. Whether the organizations' stance on sociopolitical issues align with their

stakeholder and immediate publics seem to be a very important issue to consider when managing the advocacy campaign.

Advocacy by an organization as a form of organizational campaign also triggers individuals' communicative behaviors, such as expressing, engaging and advocating through media (Hoffmann et al., 2020; Park & Jiang, 2020; Rim et al., 2020). Especially when the public opinion about the sociopolitical issue is highly polarized, individuals will interpret and decode the message advocated by the organization differently (Hoffmann et al., 2020; Park & Jiang, 2020). Accordingly, individuals with different issues involvement, and stances were found to boycott and advocating against the organizations' CSA campaign on social media (Heath & Palenchar, 2008, p.91; Rim et al., 2020). After the advocacy campaign, organizations need to continue monitoring the public discussion and information about the issue. This also creates huge demands on solid issues management (Heath & Palenchar, 2008).

### **Legitimacy**

Legitimacy is one of the fundamental concepts of the institutional theory originated from the sociology and the organizational management research. Institution or institutionalization here refers to the process of certain social structure, norms, regulation, practices being accepted, imitated, and rationalized as the authoritative social entities (Scott, 2005). Legitimacy as the result of this process, is a multi-dimensional concept describing the relationship between the source of the legitimacy and the subject of the legitimacy (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). This reflects the proposition that legitimacy is assessed and constructed socially, emerging out of the legitimacy subject's relationship with other social structure, rules, norms, cognitive frameworks, and practices. From the perspective of institutional theory, the idea of legitimacy may contribute to the theoretical development of the CSA practice. The following part reviews literature

concerning definitions of legitimacy, recent theoretical developments, and the potential contribution of PR theories to understand legitimacy and their connections with each other. By bringing the legitimacy and PR theories together, there will be a better understanding of CSA with a perspective focusing on relationship and issues management.

### **Legitimacy In Institutional Theory**

The traditional understanding of legitimacy originated from Max Weber's (1978) discussion about the authority legitimacy. According to Weber, organizational legitimacy results from the organization's conformity with the social norms and formal legal regulation. In 1970s, Meyer and Rowan (1977) conceptualized legitimacy as an organizational survival outcome, which results from operation efficiency and conformity to 'institutionalized myths' or operating norms within the organizational culture. Organizations integrate the rationalized and institutionalized practices and procedures and as a result they will increase their legitimacy and prospective survival chance. This phenomenon is also investigated as the isomorphism (Deephouse, 1996), which describes the organizational tendencies to adapt the most prevailing and efficient procedures. It has been the central proposition that isomorphism will lead to organizational legitimacy (Deephouse, 1996; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

In 1995, a new development from institutionalization theory was a definition of legitimacy by Suchman:

*Legitimacy is a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions (1995, p.574).*

This legitimacy definition has its clarity in its explicit and direct description of legitimacy. From this perspective, an organization and its order are perceived as a valid and

objective social fact. In other words, legitimacy is a property that organizations need to obtain in order to survive and acquire more competitive advantages. Also, legitimacy is a kind of perception or assumption made or accepted by societal entity which could evaluate and eligible to grant legitimacy. Suchman's legitimacy definition is also explicit in its *evaluative* standard. Rather than just simply saying "public acceptance" (Knoke, 1985, p.222), Suchman further defined what may be the potential standard or content for legitimacy evaluation, such as norms (i.e. public acceptance, Knoke, 1985, p.222), values (i.e. pragmatic and instrumental benefit of being consistent to current system, DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), beliefs and definitions, which are highly related to the congruence between the entity and some external social group (Suchman, 1995). He mentioned that all these evaluative contents or standards related to the focal subject's legitimacy status need to be evaluated within a socially constructed system, which inherits some of the legitimacy definition essence from the previous conceptual development, such as the organizational inclination to isomorphism due to the rationality, functionality and utilitarianism of the existing system (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

Further, in Suchman's (1995) review 'Managing legitimacy: Strategic and institutional approaches', he proposed a typology of legitimacy and made legitimacy into several dimensions, including pragmatic legitimacy, moral legitimacy and cognitive legitimacy. "All three types involve a generalized perception or assumption that organizational activities are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (p.577).

However, each type of legitimacy rests on a somewhat different behavioral dynamic" (1995, p.577). Pragmatic legitimacy is more about whether the organization should be granted legitimacy based on its ability to provide some direct and instrumental benefit or service to the

stakeholder. Moral legitimacy refers to a normative evaluation of the organization, namely whether the organization is behaving according to the norm. He pointed out the cognitive aspect of legitimacy with the feature of ‘taken-for-granted’, which refers to the state that the organization is accepted without any questions. This absence of questioning reflects that the organization’s existence is ‘blended’ so well into the common practice and daily operation of the system that there are no questions challenging the widely shared perception of appropriateness in terms of the organization’s existence and operation. On the contrary, when the take-for-granted status is challenged, it is when this cognitive dimension is becoming more “present”, “apparent”, even “obtrusive” in the context.

Take Microsoft’s Office product line for example, even though there are some alternative software for daily office work, most of the workers will still directly consider the Office products line. This case, to certain degree, features the strong cognitive legitimacy basis of Office product. In other words, it might be a little extreme, but people just could not think about a world without Office. Suchman’s (1995) understanding of the dimensionality of the legitimacy provided great clarity to the definition itself and helped better conceptualize and advance empirical testing (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008).

### **Three Perspectives of Legitimacy**

In addition to the theoretical development of the dimensionality of legitimacy, previous scholarly endeavors investigated legitimacy as three types of constructs by theorizing it as a property, a process, or a socio-cognitive perception (Suddaby et.al. 2017). The early and majority of the institutional theories viewed *legitimacy as a property*, a thing and “operational resource” (Suchman, 1995, p.576) which could be obtained, managed, and measured in quantifiable manner.

In the latter stage of legitimacy theoretical and conceptual development, especially when the social constructivism and rhetoric study came into play, the definition of legitimacy offered by the *legitimacy-as-a-process* tradition provided a different perspective to think about the nature of legitimacy as a “process.” At the same time, an interactive process of social construction and the organizations engages in constant discourse to negotiate and persuade the public by legitimating their existence via rhetorical strategies (Human & Provan, 2000; Powell & Colyvas, 2008).

In comparison with the *legitimacy-as-property-view* and *legitimacy-as-process-view*, the third tradition of the legitimacy research of institutional theory shift the level of analysis from the macro level to the micro and individual-level judgment or assessment of organizational legitimacy (Bitektine & Haack, 2015; Haack, 2012; Suddaby et.al., 2017). The traditional institutionalization theory provided insights about how legitimacy as an asset or a property serves as the aim of the organizational endeavor and how the adaption of organization practice to the norms help them gain the legitimacy. In other words, one could acquire many insights about management and industry level practice and investigate the associations of the antecedent and outcome factors from some macro level between the concept of legitimacy.

However, in recent years, scholars had called a need of transition of how legitimacy should be investigated (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019; Haack, 2012; Tost, 2011). As Gehman, et.al (2017) noted, “the construal of legitimacy as merely a normative concept represents an incomplete understanding relative to prior academic formulations. Rather, legitimacy has been conceptualized as multifaceted, entailing not only a normative dimension, but others as well (for example, cognitive, sociopolitical)” (p. 312). This *legitimacy-as-perception-view* inherited some theoretical establishments from previous traditions, such as treating legitimacy as a property

assessed and judged by stakeholders, and primarily emphasizing that it is the role of every individual to be engaged in the process of creating socially constructed reality and meaning of the legitimacy.

Scholars have been trying to develop micro level or individual person level organizational legitimacy assessment to directly measure the individual's organizational assessment. An early such attempt is Elsbach's (1994) study on organizational legitimacy management in the California cattle industry. She found out that different verbal accounts of the corporate spokespersons could differently manage the organizational legitimacy perception. To directly measure how individual stakeholders would assess the organizational legitimacy of the companies in California's cattle industry, she constructed a 12-item legitimacy scale. Then, she was able to associate the effectiveness of different kinds of spokesperson's verbal accounts with the individual person level organizational legitimacy assessment. One latest similar contribution took place in 2018. This new legitimacy assessment approach focused on the individual organizational level, which, was operationalized as individual level organizational legitimacy measurement scale (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2018). There have been a few similar attempts, one of them being Elsbach's 12-items scale (1994). Some of these empirical studies defined legitimacy as multi-dimensional construct and tested Suchman (1995)'s theoretical conceptualization of legitimacy (Díez-Martín et.al., 2013; Foreman & Whetten, 2002; Humphreys & Latour, 2013; Pollack et.al., 2012). Some of them defined it as unidimensional construct (Chung, et.al., 2016; Elsbach, 1994).

These assessment scales of organizational legitimacy at the individual level are important to move one step further and investigate the "black box" of how individual stakeholders make the assessment of organizational legitimacy (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2018; Tost, 2011). This

perception perspective is less likely to be examined through the usage of content analysis and secondary data analysis at the institutional level (Deephouse, 1996). From the social-psychological perspective, experiment research method serves well to answer research questions especially in this case, such as the individual assessment process and the relationship between organizational legitimacy perception and other related constructs (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2018; Tost, 2011). Hence the shift of organizational legitimacy research from the macro level to micro is not only a change in theoretical framework, but also a change in methodology. Thus, more investigation is needed to test the multidimensional conceptualization of CSA legitimacy, which helps this dissertation develop its first proposition. Related to the first proposition is the first proposed research question as listed below:

- **Proposition 1: CSA legitimacy can be interpreted from three dimensions, including the pragmatic, moral, and cognitive legitimacy assessment of this public relations practice.**
- **RQ1: What are the important dimensions CSA legitimacy?**

### **Legitimacy Definitions in Public Relations Research**

Among the public relations research focused on legitimacy, the majority of them did not offer a formal definition of legitimacy. The interchangeability between the idea of legitimacy and other concepts, such as “justification,” “appropriateness,” “legal,” “acceptable,” and “agreeable,” has been taken for granted. Although public relations scholars did have a general idea of what the definition of “legitimacy” entails: public acceptance or being perceived as appropriate in the eyes of stakeholders, only a few studies used “legitimacy” in a sense similar to the perspective of the institutional theory (Boyd, 2000; Coomb, 1996; Mollada, 2007). This does not mean that institutional theory is the only way to understand legitimacy. However, institutional theory does

provide an overall comprehensive and valid perspective, which is naturally important and relevant to public relations research, as a discipline investigating the appropriate relationship between societal entities.

According to Boyd (2000), the concept of institutional legitimacy, “which requires publics’ consent for corporate existence, forms a basis for many lines of study in public relations. In addition to grounding values advocacy, the idea that corporations depend on the goodwill of their publics (a “consent of the governed” for profit-making enterprises) is reflected in crisis communication studies, image scholarship, and issue management” (p.346).

As noted in this early piece of the public relations article from the *Journal of Public Relation Research*, which was published just five years after the Suchman’s (1995) milestone study on organizational legitimacy, the literature of organizational legitimacy is considered as a very important theoretical import into public relation research from other more mature disciplines, particularly the organization study and management study (Boyd, 2000). Boyd (2000) defined organizational legitimacy as “an institution’s need for publics to recognize its authority to operate and exercise authority in a broader social context” (p.342). Here, Boyd seems to focus on two elements: 1) the necessity of public acceptance and 2) the authority and power as the outcome of legitimacy. When Boyd (2000) discussed legitimacy, he put it in the context of crisis communication, which requires organization to possess legitimacy in order to get its information delivered out and be considered as trustworthy.

According to the differences in their conceptual focus, the definitions of legitimacy in public relations research could be categorized into three groups: **1) legitimacy as a corporate asset, 2) legitimacy as a result of contingency management, and 3) legitimization through conformity to external standard evaluation.** The categorization does not indicate any

theoretical exclusivity between the definitions but only indicate different theoretical emphasis and its different applications in various contexts and situations. Theoretically, these three characteristics contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of legitimacy.

The first group of PR literatures conceptualized *organizational legitimacy as a property or asset*. Gilpin, (2010) studied organizational image construction and stated that “an organization must establish its legitimacy with key stakeholders, both through its material actions and through its communication efforts. Image construction is, therefore, the way in which organizations project aspects of their identity that they believe will contribute to this legitimacy.” Gilpin did not defined legitimacy directly, but he mentioned that legitimacy as a kind of corporate property which could be established through better communication management. In Sommerfeldt’s (2013, p.354) study about online power resource management and activism he mentioned that “Groups reliant on media coverage are thus also likely to be in need of support from other activists and social actors/institutions—they must participate in coalitions to achieve widespread currency and social legitimacy for their issue”. Here, legitimacy is a similar concept as discussed in Coomb’s (1996) understanding of the legitimacy, which serves as a property or asset that could help the organization to voice out. In Uysal’s (2018) study about dialogic communication and corporate social performance, she found out that “stakeholder dialogue can help assess the weight an organization should assign to its economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary responsibilities and help establish societal legitimacy” (p. 109). She did not directly define legitimacy but used this concept to refer to a positive outcome, which results from corporation’s responsibilities fulfillment.

The second group of public relations literature defines *legitimacy as the results of strategic congruence* between the organization itself and its contingent environment. Veil and

Anthony (2017) adapted the classic legitimacy-as-property view and, what's more, the theoretical assumption of contingency from organizational legitimacy study (Suddaby et.al., 2017). Likewise, in Haedrich's (1993) study, he defined this contingency as "constant pressure to justify or legitimate itself toward relevant environmental and intra-corporate systems, so that a dynamic equilibrium between efficiency and legitimation must be maintained" (p. 86). Haedrich (1993) proposed that systematic and consistent management of corporate image is an important marketing strategy to harmonize corporate identity with the various relevant stakeholder groups in the external contingent environment and this harmony would result in organizational legitimacy.

The third group of PR literature adopted a very similar contingency perspective and considered *organizational legitimacy as positive feedback of conforming to certain objective standard*. Chay-Nemeth (2001) mentioned the ability to offer pragmatic benefit and helps to solve the problems. By fulfilling certain utilitarian standards or requirements, an organization would be granted legitimacy. Pieczka (2007) did not explicitly define legitimacy but mentioned two characteristics which would help to portrait a legitimate public relations practitioner: technical proficiency and ethical behavior.

Hu et.al., (2015, p.269) reviewed and discussed the legitimation process of public relations industry in China. In their case, legitimacy was implicitly defined as "not being questioned". This is similar to early institutional theory's understanding and definition of legitimacy (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p.349). The status of "not being questioned" or "being taken for granted" (Suchman, 1995) indicates the cognitive legitimacy of the entity. The legitimized subject is so taken-for-granted and accepted by public to a degree that it is difficult to raise question against it.

To sum up the conceptualization of organizational legitimacy in PR literatures, in comparison with the legitimacy definitions and conceptualization from institutional theory and management theory, public relations scholars focus on the contingency assumption of the organizational legitimacy, the congruence between organization's internal and external characteristics, and the need for organization to act contingently by considering these factors. They treated the organizational legitimacy as property or asset, which could be used strategically for the purposes and objectives of public relations.

### **Legitimacy and Public Relations Theories**

For the measurement of legitimacy from the PR perspective, generally, there are three operationalization approaches, which are qualitative case study and interpretation, content analysis, and Likert-scale measurement. Many of the PR literatures adopted the qualitative method to investigate and especially interpret the organizational legitimacy. When reviewing studies from *Journal of Public Relations Research*, most of them used a qualitative method, such as case study and interpretive analysis. This kind of research could be very insightful about one or a few cases, such as the studies done by Veil and Anthony (2017) and Chay-Nemeth (2001). They used the method of case study to examine the particular challenge that the organization or entity had been facing.

Except for Coombs' (1992) research on issues management, most of the above reviewed studies did not measure organizational legitimacy empirically. The major theoretical measurement development comes from some traditional disciplines, which already have a long research history in organizational legitimacy, such as organization studies, management studies, and business studies.

Coombs' (1992) research about issues management also presents an important research method and measurement tool to study organizational legitimacy. Relying on the media content to capture the public sentiment about an organization or entity operationalized an important dimension of organizational legitimacy, public acceptance (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008; Suddaby et al., 2017) This measurement method has been used by the institutional theorists for decades. Coombs (1992) and Deephouse (1996) both employed the same procedures to code the media content. They collected the media content mainly from some elite newspapers, such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, since they largely reflected the legitimation of the general public in terms of the normative legitimacy but themselves also functioned as a source of legitimacy (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). The basic procedure is to code the frequency of the media reports about the focal subject or organization, in terms of whether these media content challenge or defend the legitimacy. Then, frequency numbers are imported into the formula for the coefficient of media endorsement (Janis & Fadner, 1943), which provides an overall index showing the degree of legitimation from the media. This index, in Coombs (1992) and Deephouse (1996) studies, was further used to calculate or predict its relationship with some other outcome variables or used as indicator or outcome variable predicted by other influential factors, such as the degree of industry isomorphism. Overall, this measurement method or operationalization of the organizational legitimacy has been used by many management and organizational studies as a valid method.

Another way of operationalizing organizational legitimacy is to directly measure it through quantitative methods by using psychometric measurement scales. This stream of studies aligned with the legitimacy-as-perception perspective (Suddaby et al., 2017). In comparison with the previous method, content analyzing the media content at the macro and institutional level,

this approach is at the micro and individual person level. As mentioned in the literature review section about the theoretical development of institutional theory and organizational legitimacy research, this socio-psychological approach is an attempt to answer some scholarly calls and suggestions about the necessity of more investigation related to the mechanism of legitimacy judgement or evaluation at the individual person level (Haack, 2012; Suddaby et al., 2017; Tost, 2011). Tost (2011) proposed a theoretical framework of individual legitimacy assessment model, which includes several important dimensions of overall legitimacy evaluation, including instrumental, relational, and moral evaluation. This dimensionality of legitimacy evaluation corresponds to the early conceptualization of legitimacy by Suchman (1995) but emphasizes the element closely related to individual evaluation mechanism, such as relational aspect (e.g. showing respect) in any interpersonal communication.

There have been several attempts to develop a measurement scale for organizational legitimacy assessment (Chung et al., 2016; Díez-Martín et al., 2013; Elsbach, 1994; Foreman & Whetten, 2002; Humphreys & Latour, 2013; Pollack et al., 2012). Most of them either tackled their legitimacy concept in a specific context, instead of in a broader context which could be generalized to measurement of legitimacy. In addition, research in this stream did not develop a sufficient number of measurement items to address the comprehensive nature of a legitimacy concept. The latest contribution was the development of organizational legitimacy measurement scale at the individual level by using this new individual organizational legitimacy judgement approach (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019). This perspective is less likely to be examined through the usage of content analysis and secondary data analysis at the institutional level (Deephouse, 1996).

As stated earlier, a main research purpose of this dissertation study is to investigate the phenomenon of CSA as a public relations action of organizations, through the perspective of legitimacy. More specifically, the legitimacy-as-perception perspective advances the investigation of the construct by developing and using psychometric measurements. Later in this dissertation, a measurement model of CSA legitimacy is developed and tested to answer the call of this perspective shift and contribute to the current discussion.

### **Traditional Legitimacy and Actional Legitimacy**

Additionally, Boyd's (2000) research contributed to the understanding of legitimacy assessment of particular individual corporate action or policy, at a micro level analysis. Boyd (2000) differentiated actional legitimacy from traditional organizational legitimacy. By its theoretical definition, organizational legitimacy refers to the level of an organization being congruent with the external social structure. The conceptualizations of which focuses on the organization as a whole entity for public assessment, whether it is accepted for the public that this organization has its right to exist and operate. Actional legitimacy deals with the public approval of a specific organizational policy or action, which proposes a microlevel analysis approach.

Boyd (2000) specifically mentioned a case about Delta Air Lines and their 1994 progressive anti-smoking campaign as the first US major airline company to advocate and implement their value. This might help to differentiate the organizational endeavor to gain legitimacy of its existence as a whole from taking a stance as a single corporation action. As mentioned by Boyd (2000), "sometimes a corporate activity concerns people, but not to the extent that they question the corporation's existence" (p.342). This case may also help differentiate actional legitimation from the traditional approach. As a specific corporate action,

Delta's no-cigarette policy was a proactive move to advocate for a certain value they treasured. The affected stakeholders were evaluating the legitimacy of this specific policy or corporate action rather than questioning the corporation itself. Traditional crisis communication and responsive issue management are communication management practices with a focus on the whole institutional legitimacy, or institution's continued operation, existence and acceptance by publics. Boyd (2000) proposed to use actional legitimacy to more precisely identify and define the legitimacy of the organizational activities. Compared to Suchman's conceptualization of institutional legitimacy (1995), which approached the subject of assessment through pragmatic legitimacy, moral legitimacy and cognitive legitimacy, Boyd (2000) identified two dimensions of actional legitimacy assessment: competence and responsible operation. The first dimension refers to the organization's capabilities to cater to the stakeholders' direct benefits and needs, while the second dimension focuses on the ethical consideration of its daily operation, production and service.

The perspective through actional legitimacy also contributes to a better understanding of CSA practices. Delta's new policy was exclusive in its nature (The New York Times, 1994). As what Dodd and Supa (2014) defined for the CSA activities, Delta was taking a clear stance and initiating a corporate policy which might actually influence the direct benefit and service experience of certain stakeholders, the passengers who smoke. By its nature, a CSA activity or campaign like this was proactive instead of reactive, which might be different from conventional crisis responses or corporate image repairing practices. Instead of focusing on regaining the whole organization's legitimacy or repairing the organization's images, "the central question of actional legitimation studies is, how do corporations gain publics' support for individual policies as useful and responsible?" (Boyd, 2000). CSA practices face actional legitimation challenges, as

they might be illegitimate for a group of stakeholders and impossible to reach consensus among the public.

These are some previous public relations theoretical contributions to this discussion about CSA and legitimacy. In recent theory development, both institutional studies of legitimacy and public relations theory envisioned a shift of focus to the micro-level theorization and operationalization, which help the dissertation develop the following two propositions:

- **Proposition 2: To assess the legitimacy of CSA among different publics, a shift in its theoretical and methodological perspectives is necessary. It means the assessment of CSA legitimacy shall move from the macro (or organizational) level to the micro (or individual perceptual) level of analysis.**
- **Proposition 3: The legitimacy of CSA concerns less about gaining approval for an organization as a whole entity among the public. Instead, it is more about gaining approval from key publics for a specific value-driven decision or action made by the organization.**

In addition to these perspectives about the legitimacy subject, public relations research also contributed to the understanding of situational factors in the external environment and their potential influence during legitimacy assessment. Identifying the key public with different issue involvement, problem recognition and constraint recognition and communicating with them are critical for public relations management (Grunig, 1997). The relationship between the individual assessment of the CSA legitimacy and following situational communicative behaviors might deserve further investigations.

### **The Situational Theory of Publics**

The situational theory of publics (Grunig, 1997) proposed that contingent and situational factors, such as recognition of the problems, constraint and level of involvement, might result in different individual communicative behaviors. Accordingly, public relations practitioners could segment the general population into different key public groups based on these contingent and situational factors and engage with them strategically. Whether a public issue is recognized as a problem to the people is one of the main antecedents of their following attitudes, motivations and behaviors. Monitoring the key publics and recognized problems become a critical part of issue management (Heath & Palenchar, 2008). As more corporations engaged in CSA activities, even became significant political presences in the arena of public issues (Kaeb, 2018; Scherer et al., 2016; Wettstein & Baur, 2016), it is important to investigate these activities from the perspective of public relations, especially how an individual assesses and acts upon the situational factors.

#### **Review of the Situational Theory of Publics**

The situational theory of publics starts with Grunig's discussion of the relationship between rational economic decision making and communication activity (1966). The theory focuses on how a decision maker acquires complete knowledge and copes with the risk and uncertainty while making a decision. When faced with risk and uncertainty during decision making, seeking and processing more information is the basis of the accurate expectation of the developing situation and more rational decisions. One of the important factors or causes to the indeterminant state is the recognition of the uncertainty or problematic situation. The recognized problems and constraints of the difficulty of the situation then predict the need to seek information and engage in more communication (Grunig, 1966, p.77).

One of the main propositions of the situational theory is about the close relationship between a public issue and the key publics. Grunig further developed the situational theory of publics based on Dewey's (1927) and Blumer's (1946) idea of public opinion (Grunig 1966; Grunig, 1997). Publics as defined by these two theorists are individuals organized around and involved with certain issues or problems that affect their lives. Organizations as powerful entities in society creates and solves problems according to various emerging and changing publics, which in turn might also influence the behavior, existence and operation of the organizations (Grunig, 1977). This organization-public interrelationship waxing and waning in the public opinion arena is extremely important for public relations and issue management. To measure public opinion effectively, the situational theory of publics proposed to identify the key publics and predict their communicative action according to the relationship between their own conditions and the issues or the problems.

The situational theory of publics explains when and how an individuals will communicate about the problems and issues based on their assessment of the situation. In addition to problem recognition, there are three more situational perception variables, namely constraint recognition, referent criterion, and level of involvement, which help identify the key publics and predict individual communicative action. Problem recognition refers to the extent that an individuals recognizes problematic situations and issues (Grunig, 1979). The resolution of the issue or problems could lead to conflict in the political and social system (Grunig, 1989). Higher level of problem recognition is assumed to result in stronger inclination to acquire information and actively communication about the situation. The constraint recognition refers to the extent that the individual recognizes situational constraints which will limit and deter individual's communicative and coping behavior. The referent criterion is defined as the preexisting attitude,

belief or value that serves as a guide or rule to help the individual navigate through the problematic situations or resolve the issues. The last variable, level of involvement, refers to the extent that the individual engages with the entities or subjects related to the identified problem (Grunig, 1997).

The situational theory of publics was used to further identify different publics: latent publics, who are not aware of the problem but might face the risk; aware publics, those who recognize the problem; active publics, people who are actively advocating and engaging; and nonpublic, those who are not subject to the problematic conditions or involved with the issues, and pose no substantial influence on the organization's decision (Grunig, 1983; Grunig & Repper, 1992). Accordingly, these different publics showcased distinct communication behaviors, active information seeking, and passive information processing. The segmentation and identification of the public was used to respond to various publics differently (Hallahan, 2001) and maximize the outcomes of issue management and public relations campaign (Grunig, 1983; Grunig, 1989; Kim et al., 2008).

Theoretical development of the situational theory of publics further conceptualized communicative behaviors into proactive and passive actions, to better categorize and understand public with different situational characteristics (Kim et al., 2008; Ni & Kim, 2009). Kim and Grunig (2011) proposed and tested in total six different proactive and passive communication behaviors as the outcomes of situational factors in their model. Depending on the information processing and communication procedures, there are three proactive communication behaviors: information seeking, information forefending, and information forwarding; and three passive communication behaviors: information attending, information permitting, and information sharing.

## **Legitimacy Assessment and Situational Factors**

The situational theory of publics discusses the mediating factors and the interrelationship between these variables. Kim and Grunig (2011) added situational motivation in problem solving into the model. Situational factors, including problem, involvement, and constraint recognition, are treated as perceptual constructs. Which are antecedent factors prior to individuals' motivation to solve the problem. Issue involvement refers to individuals' perception of connections between themselves and the issue (Grunig, 1983; Grunig, 1997; Kim et al., 2008; Sriramesh et al., 2007). This is important when considering how individuals perceive certain CSA campaigns which advocate for social-political issues that have strong connections with individuals (Dodd and Supa, 2014; Hydock et al., 2020; Rim et al., 2020). However, questions such as whether individuals with different level of issue involvement have contrary opinions about the legitimacy of CSA actions remain unanswered. Therefore, the second research question was proposed to address the relationship between individual's involvement with the social-political issue and legitimacy assessment of the corporate advocacy:

### **RQ2: How does issue involvement influence the assessment of CSA legitimacy?**

In addition to the situational theory of publics (Grunig, 1983; Kim & Grunig, 2011), there is another influential factor, trust in the organization, which might interact with individual's assessment of legitimacy. More specifically, when organizations try to actively engage and advocate for certain controversial social-political issues, oftentimes they are facing problems such as differences in basic assumptions, public doubts, skepticism and even hostility (Ehrnström-Fuentes, 2016; Hegner et al, 2016; Sethi, 1978; Sethi & Williams, 2000). Bachmann and Ingenhoff (2017) found that in the context of corporate social responsibility communication, trust in the organization positively predicted overall organizational legitimacy. However,

questions remained that what's the relationship between individual's trust in the organization and his/her legitimacy assessment of organization's decision to take a stance on certain social-political issues. Namely, whether the trustworthiness of the organization will amplify CSA legitimacy should be investigated. Therefore, the third research question was proposed as below:

**RQ3: How does trust in organizations influence the assessment of CSA legitimacy?**

Individuals' existing interest, attention, and knowledge about CSA may influence assessment of CSA legitimacy. These factors are more related to individual differences. Previous study about organizational internal views of CSR programs found that interest towards social responsibility issues were not homogenous but rather ranged from dissident or committed to indifferent (Rodrigo, P., & Arenas, 2008). And different knowledge and awareness levels of organizational CSR initiatives had various effects on individual evaluations of CSR programs (Carlini & Grace, 2021; Kim, 2019). Similarly, under the CSA context, more individual media engagement with the public discussion of social-political issues and the organization's advocacy is related to more individual assessment, such as positive attitudinal results (Park & Jiang, 2020). These engagement activities involve sharing information, being attentive to the discussion, and the ability to bring up discussion about the social-political issues and advocacy in conversation (Kim, 2019). Hence, to investigate some of the antecedent factors of individual CSA legitimacy assessment, personal differences in interest, attention and subjective knowledge about CSA, the fourth research question and its affiliated sub-questions are proposed:

**RQ4: How does individuals' experience with CSA activities affect their perceptions of CSA legitimacy?**

- **RQ4a: What is the relationship between individuals' interest in CSA activities and their perceptions of CSA legitimacy?**

- **RQ4b: What is the relationship between individuals' attention to CSA activities and their perceptions of CSA legitimacy?**
- **RQ4c: What is the relationship between individuals' knowledge of CSA activities and their perceptions of CSA legitimacy?**

In terms of the concept of legitimacy, Suchman originally defined it as a “generalized perception” (1995, p.574). After the advocacy for certain social issues, different publics make legitimacy assessments of this action. Individuals’ legitimacy assessments of the CSA as a perception (Boyd, 2000; Suchman, 1995; Suddaby et al., 2017; Tost, 2011) could be an antecedent factor prior to their communication behaviors (Kim & Grunig, 2011) in the situational theory of publics. As Aldoory and Sha (2007) discussed, more research is needed to investigate what factors predict or interact with the four situational factors, and influence individual’s communication behaviors.

When treated as an individual perception in theoretical model building, the concept of legitimacy as an individual perception is parallel to the four situational factors. Related research on CSA has found that a situational factor, such as an individuals’ issue involvement, may vary with the legitimacy assessment of an organizations’ advocacy regarding sociopolitical issues (Hoffmann et al., 2020; Park & Jiang, 2020). It is expected that the individual assessment of CSA legitimacy will trigger different communicative behaviors (Hoffmann et al., 2020; Rim et al., 2020). Thus, the fifth research question was proposed to test the potential influence:

**RQ5: How does CSA legitimacy influence individuals’ communicative behaviors?**

In both the CSR and CSA literature, purchase intention is an important outcome indicator of individual support of the organization’s public serving decision and social-political advocacy. An organization’s CSR and more public serving activity affected individual’s purchase attention

(Lee et al., 2009; Lee & Shin, 2010). In terms of the effect of CSA, studies found that organizations' decision of taking a stance on various social-political issues may influence individual's willingness and intention to support the organization (Dodd & Supa, 2014; Hydock et al., 2020). Therefore, it leads to the last research question as proposed below:

**RQ6: How does CSA legitimacy influence the individual's purchase intention?**

**Summary of Literature**

To better understand and investigate the phenomenon of companies advocating on social-political issues, this dissertation research proposes to create a measurement model of CSA legitimacy and assess this construct's theoretical relationship with other situational factors. Previous theoretical literature and empirical attempts helped to guide the research process, specifically the shift in theoretical (Boyd, 2000; Deephouse & Suchman, 2008; Suchman, 1995; Suddaby et.al. 2017) and methodological perspectives (Suddaby et.al. 2017; Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019), and contributions from public relations theory (Boyd, 2000; Gruinig, 1977; Kim et al., 2008; Ni & Kim, 2009). This dissertation research attempts to answer the call of previous theoretical explorations and provide a perspective of public relations and organizational communication to understand the phenomenon of CSA.

To summarize, there are three main areas in the literature review that help formalize the research questions for this dissertation. First of all, our understanding of CSA today stems from the corporate social responsibility research (Carroll, 1999; Dodd & Supa, 2014; Hydock et al., 2020). Both constructs of CSR and CSA describe the ever-growing and prominent presence of organizations and their strategic agency in the societies in which they operate. However, two major differences exist between CSR and CSA: the cause or the advocated issue of CSA is less relevant to the organization's core business operation; the divisive and controversial nature of the

CSA issue often leads to alienation of organizational stakeholders and general publics to a certain degree, accordingly putting pressure on the organization's immediate financial interest (Dodd & Supa, 2014; Wettstein & Baur, 2016). On the contrary, there is more common agreement about CSR causes, such as contributing to sustainable development and adherence to ethical procedures. And these initiatives are highly relevant to organization's existing operations. In addition to factors such as consumer' purchase intentions, which leads to immediate financial outcome of CSA actions, this dissertation contributes to existing discussion by bringing in the perspective of public relations and organization communication. It is important to understand how stakeholders assess an organization's CSA actions, and also how the assessment of CSA legitimacy would influence their communicative behaviors.

The second group of literature center around the construct of CSA legitimacy. Traditional understandings such as the institutional theory and organizational research investigate the construct of organizational legitimacy as a result of integration of and conformity to the most appropriate, acceptable and rationalized practices (Deephouse, 1996; Meyer & Rowan 1977). Legitimacy is granted by external authoritative entities, such as industry experts, other prestige organizations and mainstream media. Methodologically, these are also reflected in how legitimacy has been measured conventionally, such as industry level indexes, aggregated regulation records, and through mass media content analysis (Deephouse, 1996). The perspective of organizational research and institutional theory has been changed in terms of how scholars approach the idea of legitimacy, both theoretically and methodologically. Chronologically, there are three types of conceptualizations: legitimacy as property; legitimacy as a process; legitimacy as a socio-cognitive perception (Suddaby et.al., 2017). These theoretical development changes how the essence of legitimacy, the subject of legitimacy assessment, the source of legitimacy,

and the assessment of legitimacy are defined (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008; Suddaby et.al. 2017). There have been several attempts to empirically study and investigate the concept of legitimacy as organizations' public acceptance through psychometric measurements (e.g. Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019; Chung, et.al., 2016; Elsbach,1994; Díez-Martín et.al., 2013; Foreman & Whetten, 2002). One main proposition of this dissertation study argues that the CSA legitimacy can be assessed as a micro-level construct. It may contribute to the current discussion to incorporate the perspective of public relation theory.

The third set of literature reviewed summarizes insights from public relations research. As suggested by Deephouse (2000), there are strong connections between the traditional view of organizational legitimacy and the discipline of mass communication. Previous operationalization of legitimacy involves use of mass media content analysis. As perspective shifted, scholars argued conceptualization of legitimacy as public acceptance and operationalization of it using psychometric measurement (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019; Chung et al., 2016; Elsbach, 1994; Tost, 2011). The theoretical contribution from public relations research differentiates the actional legitimacy, a micro level perspective, from traditional organization legitimacy, the macro level (Boyd, 2000). The legitimacy of CSA is thus understood as an indicator of public approval concerning a specific organizational public relations practice. To empirically assess the construct, this dissertation study proposes to create and validate the measurement model of CSA legitimacy. In addition, public relations theories also help to explain CSA as a factor in public relations practices and its legitimacy within the theoretical structure of various situational factors (Dodd & Supa, 2014; Grunig, 1997; Kim & Grunig, 2011). Based on the existing knowledge, propositions and research questions are proposed and addressed. Although the research questions have been explained in the literature review, they are summarized here as well.

- **RQ1: What are the important dimensions CSA legitimacy?**
- **RQ2: How does issue involvement influence the assessment of CSA legitimacy?**
- **RQ3: How does trust toward organizations influence the assessment of CSA legitimacy?**
- **RQ4: How does individuals' experience with CSA activities affect their perceptions of CSA legitimacy?**
  - **RQ4a: What is the relationship between individuals' interest in CSA activities and their perceptions of CSA legitimacy?**
  - **RQ4b: What is the relationship between individuals' attention to CSA activities and their perceptions of CSA legitimacy?**
  - **RQ4c: What is the relationship between individuals' knowledge of CSA activities and their perceptions of CSA legitimacy?**
- **RQ5: How does CSA legitimacy influence individuals' communicative behaviors?**
- **RQ6: How does CSA legitimacy influence individuals' purchase intentions?**

To empirically test the measurement and structural model of CSA legitimacy, two serial studies are carried out and different models are compared. The following chapter presents and explains the theoretical model of CSA legitimacy and detailed research design of the studies.

## CHAPTER 3

### CSA LEGITIMACY THEORETICAL MODEL

After review of the theoretical background of CSA legitimacy and its related constructs, this chapter first presents a theoretical model of CSA legitimacy, which includes a measurement model of CSA legitimacy, and a structural model that predicts the relationship between CSA legitimacy and several relevant constructs. Second, this chapter discusses and proposes the study's research design. There are two serial studies: The first study aims to answer **RQ1**, which is about the dimensionality and operationalization of the CSA legitimacy. The second study further explores answers to **RQ2, RQ3 and RQ4** (i.e., how are situational factors related to the individual legitimacy assessment of CSA as an organizational public relation practice) and **RQ5 and RQ6** (how does CSA legitimacy assessment influence other factors). The goal of designing two serial studies is to understand both the conceptual and operational definition of CSA legitimacy.

#### The Theoretical Model of CSA Legitimacy

CSA has received much attention from public discussion. However, more theoretical and empirical research on CSA legitimacy is needed. From the perspective of issues and communication management (Grunig, 1997; Heath, 2006), whether, when and how corporations advocate for these contesting social issues needs to be reckoned with as critical questions before action (Hydock et al., 2020; Wettstein & Baur, 2016). Traditionally, scholars approached similar questions from theoretical lenses such as crisis management and issues management. Corporations are passively responding while proactively predicting and preparing for the

negative publicity. These two theories contributed greatly to understanding CSR and CSA.

However, the definition and theoretical understanding of emerging CSA activities requires more nuances and clear elaborations on its assumptions, which should be sustained by shifting paradigms or perspectives. Hence, this dissertation research proposes the following three propositions:

- **Proposition 1: CSA legitimacy can be interpreted from three dimensions, including the pragmatic, moral, and cognitive legitimacy assessment of this public relation practice.**
- **Proposition 2: To assess the legitimacy of CSA among different publics, a shift in its theoretical and methodological perspectives is necessary. It means the assessment of CSA legitimacy shall move from the macro (or organizational) level to the micro (or individual perceptual) level of analysis.**
- **Proposition 3: The legitimacy of CSA concerns less about gaining approval for an organization as a whole entity among the public. Instead, it is more about gaining approval from key publics for a specific value-driven decision or action made by the organization.**

Corporate social advocacy (CSA) has been defined as corporation's proactively voicing out and taking a stance on controversial societal issues, in order to support and promote the organization's inherent values and beliefs (Dodd & Supa, 2014; Hydock et al., 2020; Kaeb, 2018; Wettstein & Baur, 2016). To assess the perceived legitimacy of CSA, one important approach is to measure the construct through using a psychometric scale and capture individual perceptions (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019; Suchman, 1995; Suddaby et al., 2017; Tost, 2011). Even though there are other two main approaches to define and operationalize the concept of

legitimacy (Suddaby et al., 2017), based on previous propositions about the perspective shift, this study proposed the scale development approach to investigate the legitimacy of CSA. Under this context, “Legitimacy is a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions” (Suchman, 1995, p. 574).

Therefore, in this dissertation research, the legitimacy of CSA is defined as:

*The status that it is desirable, appropriate, and acceptable among key stakeholders and publics for organizations to take a clear stance on sociopolitical issues, according to socially constructed and shared pragmatic interests, values, beliefs, and schemas.*

This is also an approach to evaluate the pragmatic, moral, and cognitive legitimacy of the specific CSA actions, proposed by Suchman (1995) as a multi-dimensional construct. The model of CSA legitimacy is proposed to investigate individuals’ perceptions of legitimacy of organizations’ advocacy on topics of sociopolitical issues. It is a response to recent theoretical development of CSA research through the perspective of legitimacy (Suddaby et.al., 2017; Wettstein & Baur, 2016). The purpose of creating, exploring and validating the measurement scale of CSA legitimacy is to fill the research gap in a less developed but much needed area of public relations research (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019; Chung, et.al., 2016; Elsbach, 1994; Díez-Martín et.al., 2013; Foreman & Whetten, 2002; Humphreys & Latour, 2013; Pollack et.al., 2012; Randrianasolo & Arnold, 2020).

The following section addresses two major components of the theoretical model: the measurement model of CSA legitimacy and the structural model of CSA legitimacy. By clearly conceptualizing each dimension of CSA legitimacy, this dissertation attempts to build the theoretical foundation for the empirical testing and validation of corresponding manifest

indicators. In addition, the examination of the situational antecedents and outcome factors of CSA legitimacy helps define this key construct within nomological relationship and offers a check of its predictive validity.

### **CSA Legitimacy Measurement Model**

Based on the review of CSA research, theoretical development of legitimacy, and related research in public relations, the measurement model of CSA legitimacy is proposed to measure individuals' perceptions. Such perceptions focus on investigating whether it is appropriate, moral and expected for organizations to advocate for sociopolitical issues through three proposed dimensions: pragmatic, moral, and cognitive legitimacy of CSA (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019; Boyd, 2000; Dodd & Supa, 2014; Suchman, 1995; Wettstein & Baur, 2016). As reviewed earlier, there are a few attempts to measure legitimacy, legitimacy of the industry, legitimacy of the issue and legitimacy of the organization in general (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019; Chung, et al., 2016; Elsbach, 1994; Díez-Martín et al., 2013; Foreman & Whetten, 2002; Humphreys & Latour, 2013; Pollack et al., 2012; Randrianasolo & Arnold, 2020). However, there is no measurement scale that assesses the latent construct of CSA legitimacy from the perspective of actional legitimacy (Boyd, 2000).

The following section present the definition of three dimensions of CSA legitimacy measurement model. This conceptualization process follows the measure scale building procedure (Brown, 2015; Carpenter, 2018; Hinkin, 1995) and builds the foundation for measurement item generation, empirical testing, interpretation of the results, and final theorization and implications.

### ***Dimension 1: Pragmatic Legitimacy***

In this research, *pragmatic legitimacy of CSA* refers to the individuals' assessment of whether it is desirable, proper, and accepted, under the consideration of the direct and instrumental benefits of the organization's stakeholders, as well as those individuals who are affected by the contesting socio-political issue.

Originally, Suchman defined legitimacy as "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions (1995, p.574)." Pragmatic legitimacy is one of three dimensions of legitimacy. This dimension refers to calculations of self-interests and immediate consequences. When organizations as powerful societal entities take a clear stance on some sociopolitical issues, organizations' stakeholders would consider and evaluate whether it is a pragmatically appropriate decision, since such public and proactive advocacy may face strong consequences, as offending and losing existing customers (Dodd & Supa, 2014; Hydock et al., 2020; Rim et al., 2020). For those people who are directly affected by the sociopolitical issues, it is also an immediate consideration for them to think about the impact of organizations' advocacy on the contesting discourse about the issue and these people's rights and benefit. For example, as Delta Air Lines, Inc and the Coca-Cola Company publicly opposed Georgia's new voting law to restrict voting access, Black executives around the country called for more such supports against the new voting law, since it might hurt the basic rights of Black voters and other less privileged groups the most (Yamanouchi & Kempner, 2021).

Specific CSA actions might influence corporation's immediate stakeholders' interests along with the publics who highly identify with the advocated value-laden issue, such as gun

control, women's rights and LGBTQ rights. Hence, the consideration of the pragmatic side is an important part of CSA legitimacy assessment.

### ***Dimension 2: Moral Legitimacy***

***Moral legitimacy of CSA*** refers to the individuals' assessment of whether an organization's advocacy for sociopolitical issues is lawful in procedures, adhering to external social norms, and whether it is acting genuine in its purpose.

Suchman's (1995, p.579) definition of moral legitimacy rests in the assumption that an activity is morally legitimate not only because of benefiting the evaluator but because that the activity is "the right thing to do", done by the right entity, and in an appropriate manner. The moral legitimacy dimension focuses on the perceived integrity element of organizations' taking a stance on sociopolitical issues and how they carry out these statements. How organizations advocate for the issue, present, and handle the campaign and official statement may also influence public's perception of the organization (Austin et al., 2019; Parcha & Kingsley, 2020). Whether organizations should bandwagon on the sociopolitical issues, or only stand out for certain values and issues that they genuinely believe in? Sometimes the phenomenon of having a great number of organizations endorsing certain sociopolitical issues does not directly imply that all the statements and advocacies are indiscriminately persuasive to the public (Parcha & Kingsley, 2020). This perception of integrity and genuineness can be explained partly by the congruence or fit between organizations and the sociopolitical issues they advocate (Hong & Li, 2020; Lim & Young (2021).

There are some differences between the CSA pragmatic legitimacy and moral legitimacy. Considering the core nature of CSA is the debate, contesting and advocacy for the issue, the CSA action with higher level of pragmatic legitimacy is actually favoring one stakeholder group over

the other (Wettstein & Baur, 2016), so that the benefit of the former, short-term or long-term, could be protected. However, when determining the moral legitimacy of the corporation, there are some nuances. Since the issue is contested, not all publics involved would agree certain solutions are “right”, “appropriate”, and “ethical” according to the norms and ethical code they hold. Accordingly, the “moral” of the “moral legitimacy” here and in our discussed context is not referring to the issue itself. For example, Nike collaborated with Colin Kaepernick and advocated for the Black Lives Matter movement. The moral legitimacy of this specific CSA action is not referring to the norm and ethics of the issue itself but the consideration of whether Nike’s advocacy is ethical and genuine (Hoffmann et al., 2020). On the contrary, the consideration of the issue, its changing condition and support of CSA actions, are more related to the pragmatic legitimacy, which regards to whether Nike’s taking a stance will benefit itself, its stakeholders, and the publics who are concerned by the racial inequality issue.

When building up the measurement scale items of these two dimensions, the wording of pragmatic legitimacy items should focus on CSA contribution to the issue discussion, the related policy making process, the immediate benefit of the stakeholder, perceived long-term influence on issue-relevant publics’ benefit and etc. For the moral legitimacy, the focus should be the appropriateness, perceived genuineness of the corporation-issue alignment, and also whether the corporation is perceived to care about the well-being of the publics.

### ***Dimension 3: Cognitive Legitimacy***

*Cognitive legitimacy* refers to the individuals’ assessment of whether the organization’s advocacy for sociopolitical issues is understood, expected, accepted, and taken for granted without questioning. Suchman’s (1995) original definition of cognitive legitimacy discussed the passive and affirmative side of legitimacy assessment. The evaluator of legitimacy subject

accepts certain entity as necessary and inevitable result. This state of mind is also related to the “comprehensibility” and “taken-for-grantedness” during legitimation process (Suchman, 1995, p.582). When assessing the cognitive legitimacy of CSA, one important aspect should be taken into consideration: to what extent does the public identify or involve with the sociopolitical issue and what is his/her own stance on this issue? When individuals are highly identifying with the issue and the organization is also advocating for it, the behavioral support, such as support the organization and choose the product or service, follows (Hydock, et al., 2020). The pre-existing cultural-cognitive schema and identification may facilitate the legitimation process. Hence, the stance that organizations are talking is comprehensible, expected, accepted and taken for granted.

When considering the cognitive legitimacy of CSA action, it is important to discuss this cognitive readiness and availability, the taken-for-grantedness of the legitimacy assessment subject. The controversial and divisive nature of CSA is mainly caused by inherent values of the social issue. When approaching and understanding different social issues or problems, individuals interpret factual information with certain preexisting values or premises. These are identified as argument structures by Heath and Palenchar (2008, p.54), and as referent criteria, a situational factor, by Grunig (1997). Both similar constructs refer to the already available cognitive resources or premises that influence how individuals evaluate certain information. The contesting stakeholder groups around the social issue or an identified problem have their own different preexisting evaluative premises. Hence when asked to assess the cognitive legitimacy of specific CSA action, stakeholder groups or publics with strong value or higher issue involvement are expected to render higher level of cognitive legitimacy to the subject (Dodd & Supa, 2014; Hydock et al., 2020). Accordingly, the wording of the cognitive legitimacy will focus on capturing the readiness, taken-for-grantedness of the higher level of expectation

towards the CSA. Scale items, such as “the stance and voiced value of this organization are typical of its field” and “organizations voicing out its value is an inevitable step”, are proposed to measure this CSA legitimacy dimension.

The conceptualization of the measurement model should also be discussed within the background of broader nomological and theoretical relationships. This is also a necessary theory building process. The next section addresses the structural model of CSA legitimacy.

Empirically, the measurement model and structural model are also validated in serial steps.

### **CSA Legitimacy Structural Model**

The legitimacy assessment of CSA action is investigated as an individual perception of the appropriateness, integrity, and taken-for-grantedness of the corporate proactive engagement in a debate of social issues. This assessment is not isolated but could influence and be influenced by other situational factors (Grunig, 1997; Kim & Grunig, 2011). The nature of this assessment is a more elaborated “problem recognition” process but with the perspective of legitimacy and at the individual level (Suchman, 1995; Suddaby et al., 2017). The necessity of using legitimacy as a point of view to investigate CSA is related to the idea of actional legitimacy (Boyd, 2000), that CSA is less about traditional PR crisis management but more about proactively establishing and competing for legitimacy of specific corporate action (Dodd & Supa, 2014; Hydock et al., 2019; Wettstein & Baur, 2016). Accordingly, different publics of this issue could be approached through targeted communication and their communicative behavior could be investigated (Kim & Grunig, 2011). This study’s propose is to create and validate a psychometric measurement model of CSA legitimacy within a theoretical structural model. After the scale validation, situational factors and its outcomes are investigated.

### *Situational Factors*

The potentially divisive nature of various social-political issues creates a difficult and complex situation for organizations who are willing to voice and advocate based on their values and stated missions (Fitzgerald & Donovan, 2018; Wettstein & Baur, 2016). Mixed reactions towards CSA among different stakeholders and general publics are influenced by individual's understanding of the issue (Ordabayeva & Fernandes, 2018). One of the important situational factors is the individual's issue involvement level, namely how important and relevant is this issue to the individual's life and immediate presence in the society (Grunig, 1997; Kim et al., 2008; Sriramesh et al., 2007). As a public relations practice, CSA statements and decisions may be viewed differently by individuals with distinct level of issue involvement (Dodd and Supa, 2014; Hydock et al., 2020; Rim et al., 2020).

In addition to issue involvement, trust towards the organization is also an influential factor, which was argued as prerequisite of organizational advocacy (Ehrnström-Fuentes, 2016; Sethi, 1978; Sethi & Williams, 2000). Especially when dealing with controversial social-political issues, corporate advocacies are facing complex environments (Ehrnström-Fuentes, 2016; Sethi, 1978; Sethi & Williams, 2000). Within the context of organizational communication, individual's existing trust towards the organization is a related factor to consider when assessing organizational legitimacy (Bachmann & Ingenhoff, 2017). Even though from a strict perspective, organizational legitimacy is not identical to actional legitimacy of a specific organization decision, it is theoretically plausible to propose the relationship between individual's trust towards the organization and an assessment of CSA legitimacy.

Individuals' interest, attention, and subjective knowledge about CSA will also be included in Study 2. This investigation specifically helps to understand more about the

antecedent factors of individuals' assessment of the legitimacy of CSA. As found out in both CSR and CSA literatures, individual's previous experience with CSA activities, such as interest, awareness, and knowledge about the organizations' CSR or CSA programs, are related to more positive individuals' evaluation and assessment of these initiatives (Carlini & Grace, 2021; Kim, 2019; Park & Jiang, 2020; Rodrigo, P., & Arenas, 2008).

### ***Outcome Factors***

Taking a stance and advocate for a social-political issues, are some of critical decisions an organization need to make when dealing with CSA. Hydock et al. (2020) found out the organizations' public announcement of their stance on specific controversial social-political issue would directly influence individuals' behavioral intention as to whether to use an organizations' products and service or not. As proposed in the previous section, one of the antecedent factors is individual assessment of the CSA legitimacy, the results of which might lead to different reactions from the individual.

Purchase intention is one of the important indicators of public acceptance as individuals are facing the controversy of CSA and making decisions. People view and react differently to organizations taking a stance on publicly divisive issues. Pro-organization behaviors such as purchase intention (Dodd and Supa, 2014), and anti-organization sentiment (Hydock et al., 2020; Rim et al., 2020) emerged when involved publics found that organizations' stance was congruent or not with theirs. However, whether individuals and organizations share the same view and stance towards certain social-political issues only overlaps with the idea of pragmatic legitimacy of CSA at some points. CSA campaigns or statements could directly influence individual's perceived benefit or help to facilitate discussions about the social-political issues and to be considered pragmatically legitimate. But hardly one could say vice versa is sufficiently valid

because pragmatic legitimacy of CSA is not only about the stance taken by organizations as congruent with certain publics' or not (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019; Deephouse & Suchman, 2008; Suchman, 1995; Wettstein and Baur, 2016). Hence, individual's assessment of the CSA legitimacy could be an important predictive factor on individual's purchase intentions.

Communicative behaviors are the result of the situation when individuals feel involved with the social-political issues and have certain assessments of the situation. In situational theory of publics, communicative behaviors refer to an individual's problem solving behaviors in three main communication domains, including information acquisition, selection, and transmission (Grunig, 1997; Kim & Grunig, 2011; Ni & Kim, 2009). And issue involvement refers to individuals' perception of connections between themselves and the issue (Grunig, 1983; Grunig, 1997; Kim et al., 2008; Sriramesh et al., 2007). Previous studies have already investigated and identified the predictive power of issue involvement on communication behaviors. However, questions remained about relationship between individual's issue involvement and CSA legitimacy, and, accordingly, communicative behaviors. In another word, more investigations may be needed to figure out the role of CSA legitimacy perception: whether it is an antecedent factor of individual's communicative behaviors and purchase intention or not. And if it also contributes to the variance of communicative behaviors influenced by issue involvement, as a mediating factor or not. Hence, the structural model of CSA legitimacy is summarized as in Figure 3.1. After the assessment of the validity of the measurement model, SEM analysis is used to investigate the predictivity of CSA legitimacy and the theoretical connection between CSA legitimacy and other constructs.

## **Summary Of Theoretical Model**

The development of the theoretical model of CSA legitimacy is to understand CSA as a public relations practice through the perspective of legitimacy. Due to the controversial nature of various social-political issues, organizations' statements and actions to advocate often lead to contested results, such as facing reactive boycotts and other forms of alienation by stakeholders. For public relations practitioners, it is important to understand how individuals perceive the legitimacy of organization's CSA decision, but it is also crucial to know under what circumstances this legitimacy assessment is influenced by situational factors and may influence other outcomes. This chapter addresses the major components of the theoretical model: the measurement model and the structural model of CSA legitimacy. The following figure presents the whole theoretical model and attempt to 1) integrate the existing literature and key theoretical constructs; 2) conceptualize CSA legitimacy and its dimensionality; 3) define the theoretical foundations for the corresponding measures of each CSA legitimacy dimension; and 4) understand the situational factors and outcomes of CSA legitimacy as a public relations practice. Chapter 4 addresses the overall research design and methodology of this dissertation.

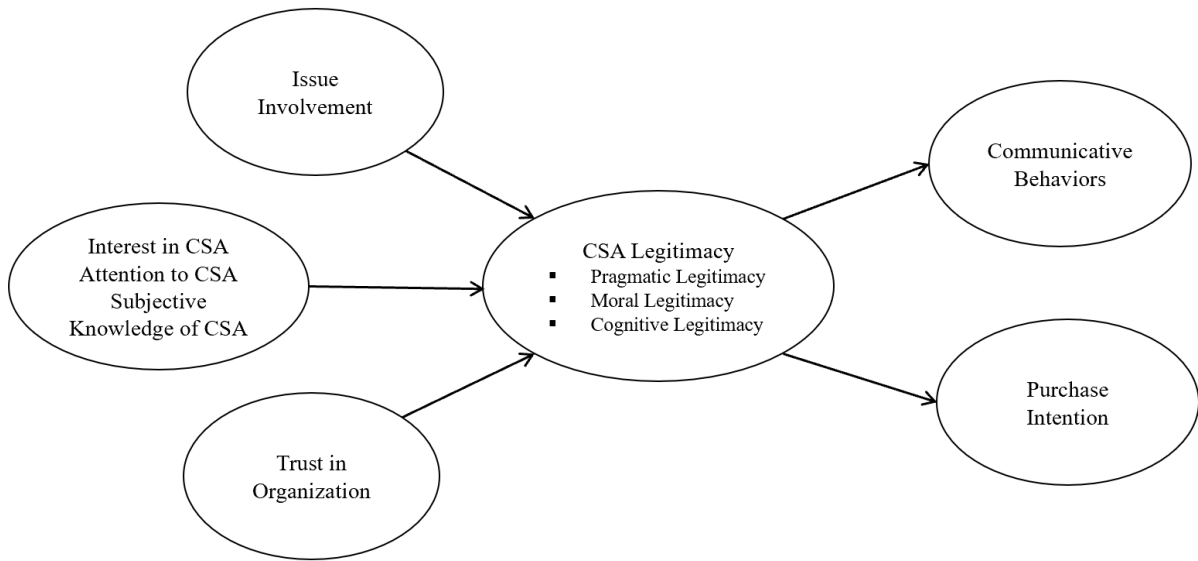


Figure 3.1 The proposed theoretical model of CSA legitimacy

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

Following the discussion of existing literatures and its findings, this chapter presents the overall research design and methodology. To empirically create and validate the theoretical model of CSA legitimacy, two serial studies are conducted. First, a web-based survey was used for data collection. Three sample datasets were collected from different sources. Statistical analyses were further used to different models and offer alternative interpretations. The results are intended to provide a more valid understanding of CSA legitimacy from a public relations perspective. This chapter presents a research design overview and detailed measures of the theoretical model of CSA legitimacy

#### **An Overview of the Research Methods**

Traditionally, legitimacy has been investigated as a “property” or an “asset,” which could be used by the organization as a kind of resource or assessed by stakeholders as a trait of the organization (Suddaby, et al., 2017). This classic institutional theory approach focused its endeavors mainly on the institutional, industrial and organizational level (Deephouse, 1996; Haack, 2012). Certain measurements or indexes used in the studies include the overall annual profit of a certain industry or the accumulated media accounts or reports that challenged the legitimacy of a particular organization (Deephouse, 1996). These previous studies provided great insights related to how organizations and industries gain, maintain and defend their legitimacy for their development and survival (Deephouse, 1996; Elsbach, 1994). However, less focus had been put into the investigation of how individuals in this process make judgement about an

organization's legitimacy (Tost, 2011). The potential antecedents and outcomes of individual, micro-level legitimacy judgements remains as unclear (Haack, 2012). That is why, in recent years, a group of scholars have called for a shift of research focus to view organizational problems with legitimacy from a perspective of both the traditional institutional theory and the sociopsychological study (Haack, 2012; Suddaby et al., 2017).

The individual-level assessment of legitimacy is less likely to be examined through the usage of content analysis and secondary data analysis on the institutional level (Deephouse, 1996). From the social-psychological perspective, a survey research method serves well to answer research questions, especially in the case, of measuring individual assessment processes (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2018; Tost, 2011).

This research uses online surveys to accomplish the goal of creating and validating the theoretical model of CSA legitimacy. Survey study is a versatile research method which has been used alone or combined with other methods to capture people's beliefs and attitudes toward and behaviors related to certain subjects or entities (Jick, 1979; Kelley et al., 2003). It is specifically an important tool used in public opinion research, and its application in this domain mainly consists of three groups of research: political poll research, market research, and evaluation research (Frey et al., 2000, p.199). All three domains have a similar purpose in using survey research, to know how publics and stakeholders think about and evaluate certain issues, products or organizations. The ability to collect large amount of population representative opinion data is the most important advantage of survey research method.

Take one research study as an example. Rim and Kim (2016) proposed a CSR skepticism measurement scale and used an online survey panel to collect data for testing the model, as well as for conducting exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis. There are some

method-wise important considerations or arguments the authors provide to justify their data collection method. It is clear that the main purpose of this study is to construct and validate a psychometric scale. According to Embretson and Reise, (2013), it is suggested that a large sample size, for example with a total number of participants greater than 500, would better facilitate the scale building and provide more stable estimates of the population parameters. Rim and Kim (2016) did collect a large sample ( $n = 529$ ) through an online panel. There are some debates on whether the online sample is representative and whether it is a good way to estimate the population parameters, which is important for scale development (Baker et.al., 2010; Embretson & Reise, 2013). Rim and Kim (2016) did mention that the survey invitations were deployed according to 2010 census data and they provide some detailed breakdowns of the sample demographics, which showing that their sample “was comparable to US Census figures in terms of gender, age, and race/ethnicity” (p. 256).

As Kruskal and Mosteller (1979) pointed out, this assumption between the “miniature” of sample to population is based on the *transitivity*. In another words, how well the characteristics of the population will be kept in or “transited” to the sample, after breaking it down? Some characteristics of the population in their nature are hard to reflect in a sample, and this could lead to some compromising of the sampling with selective biases (Kruskal & Mosteller (1979)). However, Rim and Kim’s (2016) sample did show certain level of representativeness in terms of the compatibility to census data for some important demographic variable and had a total of 529 participants. So, their sample was evaluated as having good quality for their study objective and the scale was tested to have external validity. In this case, survey research methods aided the researchers acquire representative data with a substantial amount of sample size and validate the new research instrument for building of theoretical model.

This dissertation research used surveys to collect sample data from three different sources. The detailed sampling and demographics of the dataset are presented separately in the study design sections of these two serial studies. The building and validation of the measurement model and the structural model are carried out through these two studies. This section overviews the research methodology. The detailed study designs are addressed later in each study section.

## **Measures**

### **Measurement Model Item Generation**

To develop and validate the measurement model of CSA legitimacy, this study follows the theories of measurement building and its proposed methodological procedures (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019; Baker & Kim, 2017; Carpenter, 2018; Embretson and Reise, 2013; Hinkin, 1995; Kline, 2016; Netemeyer et al., 2003). As suggested by Hinkin (1995, p. 969), there are two approaches to generate the initial item pool for the proposed construct, deductive scale development and inductive scale development. This study follows the former deductive approach, which relies on a comprehensive understanding of the key construct and a thorough literature review. Because there are some previous theories and investigations defining the domain and conceptual differences of every legitimacy dimension (Suchman, 1995). The previous theoretical development help guide the interpretation and conceptual building (Hinkin, 1995; Carpenter, 2018), particularly the item generation. The latter inductive approach of item generation requires less existing theoretical frameworks while focusing more on the emerged patterns and themes from the open-ended responses and unconstrained data information.

Based on the conceptual definitions of CSA legitimacy, and previous attempts to measure various constructs involved the idea of legitimacy, this dissertation proposes the initial

measurement item pool (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019; Chung, et al., 2016; Elsbach, 1994; Díez-Martín et al., 2013; Foreman & Whetten, 2002; Humphreys & Latour, 2013; Pollack et al., 2012; Randrianasolo & Arnold, 2020). The complete list of items of these studies can be found in the Appendix A. All measurement items of CSA legitimacy are 7-point Likert-type scale with “1 = Strongly disagree” and “7 = Strongly agree”.

The items of CSA pragmatic legitimacy mainly focus on the impact of organizations’ CSA actions on stakeholders’ benefits and interests. Table 4.1 summarizes the proposed measurement items for pragmatic legitimacy. These items will be used in the survey questionnaire to measure individuals’ perception of CSA pragmatics legitimacy.

**Table 4.1.** Measurement Items for Pragmatic Legitimacy of CSA

Variable Name	Item
PL1	I personally benefit when companies advocate for a socio-political cause.
PL2	It protects my personal interests when companies take a clear stance on social-political issues
PL3	In general, companies who advocate for a social-political issue or cause have a better understanding of their customer concerns than companies who do not advocate for a socio-political issue of cause.
PL4	The world would be a better place if more companies took a clear stance on social-political issues.
PL5	By advocating for social-political issues, companies empower and support people who are affected by or care about the issues.
PL6	By taking a clear stance on social-political issues, companies help improve the well-being of people who are affected by or care about the issues.
PL7	Social advocacy by company benefits society.
PL8	Social advocacy by companies promotes more discussion about the social-political issues.
PL9	Companies’ social advocacy is a good way to inform general publics about a debated social-political issues.

Conceptualized from previous literature, the items of moral legitimacy of CSA are proposed in Table 4.2. These measurement items are used to assess the individual perception of CSA cognitive legitimacy.

**Table 4.2.** Measurement Items for Moral Legitimacy of CSA

Variable Name	Item
ML1	In general, when companies engage in corporate social advocacy, they are being sincere.
ML2	In general, when companies endorse social-political causes they genuinely care about the people who are at the heart of the cause.
ML3	In general, when companies take a stand on social-political issues they are being consistent with their mission and value.
ML4	The company advocates the social-political issues in an appropriate and moral manner.
ML5	Companies delivered their advocacy message in a morally acceptable way.
ML6	By taking a clear stance on social-political issues, companies are sincerely promoting the value they believe.
ML7	Companies' advocacy for social-political issues is mainly driven by values they believe.

The items of cognitive legitimacy are conceptualized and proposed in Table 4.3 These measurement items are used to assess the individual perception of CSA cognitive legitimacy.

**Table 4.3.** Measurement Items for Cognitive Legitimacy of CSA

Variable Name	Item
CL1	I expect to see companies talking a clear stance on social-political issues.
CL2	I believe that it is necessary for companies to take a stance on social-political issues.
CL3	There are various good reasons for companies to advocate for social-political issues.
CL4	It is very common for companies to take a clear stance on social-political issues.
CL5	I tend to take for granted that companies should advocate for social-political issues.
CL6	I see no problem with companies taking a clear stance on social-political issues.
CL7	It is inevitable that companies will take a stand on major social-political issues.
CL8	It is understandable that companies advocate for social-political issues.
CL9	Taking a clear stance on social-political issues is an acceptable practice for companies.

## Structural Model Measures

After specifying measures of the measurement model, this section presents the measurement items of the structural model. In addition to the key construct, CSA legitimacy, there are three situational antecedents and two outcome factors. Based on the theoretical foundation of the proposed structural relationship, these measures are included in the questionnaire of two serial studies.

### *Antecedents*

The first situational antecedent construct is the individual's trust toward the organization. Measurement items in Table 4.4. will be used in the survey questionnaire to assess the individual trust in the organization. These items are adapted from Paine's (2003) guideline to measure trust in organization, which includes following sub-dimensions: integrity, dependability, competence.

**Table 4.4.** Measurement Items of Trust in Organization.

Trust in organization	Item
TO1	This organization treats people like me fairly and justly.
TO2	Whenever this organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.
TO3	This organization can be relied on to keep its promises.
TO4	I believe that this organization takes the opinions of people like me into making decisions.
TO5	I feel very confident about this organization's competence.
TO6	This organization has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.
TO7	Sound principles seem to guide this organization's behavior.
TO8	This organization does not mislead people like me.
TO9	I am very willing to let this organization make decisions for people like me.
TO10	This organization is known to be successful at the things it tries to do.

\* The items are measured on a 7-point Likert scale with "1 = Strongly disagree", and "7= Strongly agree".

The second situational antecedent is the issue involvement, which measures the extent to which an individual is involved with the social-political issue that is advocated by organizations.

Measurement items in Table 4.5 will be used in the survey questionnaire to assess the individual issue involvement. These items are adapted from two studies by Kim and Grunig (2011), and Kim et al. (2012).

**Table 4.5** Measurement Items of Issue Involvement at the Individual Level

Issue involvement	Item
II1	In your mind, how much of a connection do you see between yourself and this social-political issue?
II2	To what extent do you believe this social-political issue could involve you or someone close to you at some point?
II3	How much do you believe this social-political issue affects or could affect you personally?

\* The items are measured on a 7-point Likert scale with “1 = Strongly disagree”, and “7= Strongly agree”.

The third situational antecedent is a group of three constructs, measuring individuals’ previous experience with CSA as a public relations practice. These are questions related to participants’ interest, attention, and knowledge about CSA activities in general. The measurement scales of these constructs are adapted from previous research and listed in Table 4.6, Table 4.7, and Table 4.8 (Carlini & Grace, 2021; Kim, 2019; Park & Jiang, 2020; Rodrigo, P., & Arenas, 2008).

**Table 4.6.** Measurement Items of Individuals’ Interest in CSA

Individual interest in CSA	Item
CSA-I1	I am personally interested in the social-political issue of corporate social advocacy.
CSA-I2	I have significant interest in companies’ activities related to corporate social advocacy.
CSA-I3	It is interesting to see how companies are taking stances on social-political issue.
CSA-I4	I personally think corporate social advocacy is an interesting business action.

\* The items are measured on a 7-point Likert scale with “1 = Strongly disagree”, and “7= Strongly agree”.

**Table 4.7.** Measurement Items of Individuals' Attention to CSA

Individual attention to CSA	Item
CSA-A1	I often pay attention to companies who engage in social-political issues and respond to the issues. .
CSA-A2	I usually recognize it immediately when companies take a stand on social-political issues.
CSA-A3	I often read news about companies communicating with the public about their viewpoints or positions on social-political issues.
CSA-A4	I often pay attention to the messages companies share with the public about their stance on social-political issue.

\* The items are measured on a 7-point Likert scale with "1 = Strongly disagree", and "7= Strongly agree".

**Table 4.8.** Measurement Items of Individuals' Subject Knowledge about CSA

Individual subject knowledge of CSA	Item
CSA-SK1	Overall, I know a lot about corporate social advocacy.
CSA-SK2	I feel very knowledgeable about corporate social advocacy.
CSA-SK3	Among my circle of friends, I am one of the "experts" in corporate social advocacy.
CSA-SK4	Compared to most other people, I know more about corporate social advocacy.
CSA-SK5	When it comes to corporate social advocacy, I am able to share a lot of my thoughts with others.

\* The items are measured on a 7-point Likert scale with "1 = Strongly disagree", and "7= Strongly agree".

### ***Dependent Variables (Outcomes)***

The first outcome factor is individuals' communicative behavior, which measures to what extent individual will actively bring up the discussion with others about social-political issues which is advocated by organizations. Measurement items in Table 4.9 will be used in the survey questionnaire to assess the individual communicative behavior. These items are adapted from two studies by Kim and Grunig (2011), and Kim et al. (2012).

**Table 4.9.** Measurement Items of Communicative Behaviors

Communicative behaviors	Item
CB1	1. I sometimes find I am engaging in aggressive conversations on this social-political issue.
CB2	2. It is one of my top priorities to share my knowledge and perspective about this social-political issue.
CB3	3. If it is possible, I take time to explain this social-political issue to others.
CB4	4. I look for chances to share my knowledge and thoughts about this social-political issue.
CB5	5. I believe raising this social-political issue is important.
CB6	6. I bring this social-political issue to the attention of people I know

\* The items are measured on a 7-point Likert scale with “1 = Strongly disagree”, and “7= Strongly agree”.

The second outcome factor is the purchase intention, which measures to what extent an individual will purchase the product or service provided by the organization. Measurement items in Table 4.10 will be used in the survey questionnaire to assess individual purchase intention.

These items are adapted from two studies by Lee et al. (2009) and Lee and Shin (2010)

**Table 4.10.** Measurement Items of Purchase Intention

Purchase intention	Item
PI1	1. I would use service of this organization who advocates for social-political issues.
PI2	2. I would pay more money to purchase service from this organization who advocates for social-political issues.
PI3	3. I would purchase service of this organization advocating for social-political issue, even if the service is a little more expansive than one offered by a brand that does not advocate for social-political issue.
PI4	4. I would purchase service of this organization that shows caring for the social-political issue.
PI5	5. If the price and quality of two service programs are the same, I would buy from this organization that has reputation of advocating for social-political issues.

\* The items are measured on a 7-point Likert scale with “1 = Strongly disagree”, and “7= Strongly agree”.

## Summary of Research Design

To develop this measurement scale, four suggested steps were followed. Step 1: defining the theoretical construct. Step 2: generating the initial item pool. Step 3: refining the measurement scale. Step 4: validating the measurement scale (Carpenter, 2018; Hinkin, 1995; Netemeyer et al., 2003). After the initial item generation process, based on previous attempts to measure legitimacy, the item scales are used in the survey questionnaire to explore and further validate the item scale. To complete this process and address research questions, two studies were conducted. The first study tests the initial CSA legitimacy item pool. The focus is on the proposed dimensionality and internal validity of the construct. There are comparisons and examinations between the EFA results and the proposed 3-dimensional structure of the latent construct, to see if it is possible to also assess the legitimacy of CSA through the consideration of three dimensions. Then the pruned items are tested through CFA to examine the validity and reliability of the emerged construct structure/dimension.

In the second study, the main focus is to replicate and validate the CSA legitimacy measurement model acquired through EFA and CFA analyses in first study. This is addressed in following two steps: (1) assessment of the measurement invariance of the measurement model, and (2) assessment of nomological validity and predictability of the measurement model within the proposed theoretical structure. These are two indicators of achieving a reliable and valid measurement scale (Brown, 2015; Kline, 2016). If a measurement model is designed to test the same theoretical construct in a heterogeneous population, the observed measurement properties, such as factor patterns, should be equivalent in all subgroups of the population. If measurement invariance is not achieved, potential test bias may render the comparison of the theoretical construct between the subgroups invalid. The assessment of nomological and predictive validity

are carried out in the analysis of the structural model, especially through the structural equation model.

Overall, Chapter 4 provides an overview of the research methodology and presents research instruments, which are used in testing and validation of CSA legitimacy theoretical model. Chapter 5 and 6 present the detailed study design, sampling, analysis results and discussion of these two serial studies.

## CHAPTER 5

### STUDY 1: TESTING OF MEASUREMENT MODEL

Chapter 5 presents the first study, the purpose of which is to develop the CSA legitimacy measurement model. Study 1 attempts to address **RQ1: What are the important dimensions CSA legitimacy?** The literature reviews and theoretical model discussions in previous chapters only partially address the RQ1 by conceptualizing the theoretical definitions and dimensions of CSA legitimacy. It is also necessary to empirically test and validate the proposed theoretical model. This chapter presents the study procedures, sampling, result analysis and discussion in the following sections.

#### Study 1 Research Overview

To create and refine the measurement scale of the proposed construct dimensions of CSA legitimacy, Study 1 uses a web-based survey for factor analyses and model comparisons. More specifically, scale development requires detailed empirical analyses of the observed relationship between each manifest indicator and proposed theoretical latent constructs (Brown, 2015; Kline, 2016). The strength of this relationship can be interpreted through the examination of factor loadings. The assumption behind this factor analysis procedure is the understanding of *common factor model* (Brown, 2015, p.11). In this sense, the latent variables and the corresponding items explain two parts of the observed variance in the data, common variance, and unique variance. For example, when theorizing the dimensionality of CSA legitimacy, it is argued that there are three latent variables or dimension of the construct, and each dimension is empirically measured by several indicators. Based on the common factor model, the observed variance in the data

could be explained by the influence from the latent dimension (common variance) and the individual item with random error or residual (unique variance).

Two main analyses based on common factor model, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), are conducted to identify the observed relationship patterns between the proposed latent construct (i.e. CSA legitimacy, CSA pragmatic legitimacy, moral legitimacy, and cognitive legitimacy) and corresponding manifest indicators. EFA is used as the initial factor analysis of the item pool, to examine the feasibility of the proposed theoretical dimension of the CSA legitimacy (Carpenter, 2018). In another words, EFA is a “data-driven approach,” which helps first explore the individual responses and identify the most reasonable interpretation of the construct dimensionality (Brown, 2015, p.11). However, the EFA analysis in study 1 is not completely “exploratory” because there are previous guiding theories about the theoretical structure of legitimacy assessment (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019; Deephouse & Suchman, 2008; Suchman, 1995). As suggested by Kline (2016, p.197), there are some situations when “more confirmatory modes in EFA” are necessary, such as prespecify the number of factors based on previous theories.

After the initial EFA analyses of the measurement items, CFA analyses are conducted to further investigate the construct dimensionality and compare different alternative models. Compared to EFA, CFA is more prespecified and restrictive in terms of the model since its purpose is to confirm whether the hypothesized and predefined model is fitting to the data observation. In CFA, the number of factors and indicators are defined based on the EFA analysis results and existing theories. Model fit statistics including Chi-square statistic, SRMR, RMSEA, CFI and NFI are evaluated (Brown, 2015). After these EFA and CFA analyses, the measurement model are examined based on the scale reliability and discriminant validity.

## Survey Questionnaire Design and Structure

The study 1 survey questionnaire consists of three main sections: participants' previous experience with CSA activities, demographics, and participants' perceptions of CSA legitimacy. In the first section, there are questions related to participants' interest, attention, and knowledge about CSA activities in general, and how impactful CSA activities are in their personal life. The measurement scales of these constructs are adapted from previous research and listed in table 4.6, table 4.7, and table 4.8 (Carlini & Grace, 2021; Kim, 2019; Park & Jiang, 2020; Rodrigo, P., & Arenas, 2008). Participants are also asked to recall any CSA activities they remember. There are two open-ended questions, where participants could provide a brief summarization of any organizations and the prominent social issues on which they have taken an active role or made a statement. The purpose of these two open-end questions is to get a qualitative understanding of participants' existing experience with CSA.

The second section is the proposed measurement scale for CSA legitimacy with three dimensions, namely pragmatic legitimacy, moral legitimacy and cognitive legitimacy. There are nine items related to the latent dimension of pragmatic legitimacy, seven items related to moral legitimacy, and nine items related to cognitive legitimacy. Participants are asked to indicate to what extent they agree on these items describing CSA legitimacy.

The third section will ask some basic demographic questions. Previous studies showed that age might be an influential factor, as millennials reacted more favorably to organizations with CSR endeavors (Anderson et al., 2018; McGlone et al., 2011; Reavis, et.al., 2017). However, more research is also needed to investigate the impact of demographic factors, such as age, gender, and ethnicity, on individuals' perception of CSA legitimacy. In addition, conflicting political views of liberals and conservatives may influence how people interpret and decode the

message of CSA (Hoffmann et al., 2020). And how partisanship may affect people's perception of CSA legitimacy still requires more investigation (Hydock, et al., 2019). The complete survey questionnaire for Study 1 could be found in the Appendix B.

### **Study 1 Sampling**

#### **Sample 1: Student Sample for EFA**

The EFA and CFA analyses in study 1 are conducted based on two separate datasets. The first dataset for EFA is a student sample collected from two introductory theory and practices courses of advertising and public relations, in a southeastern public state university. The survey questionnaire is distributed through Qualtrics platform. Student sample has been used widely among mass communication research and related social science fields such as consumer research and psychology (Peterson, 2001). The relatively homogeneous nature of student sample data is suggested as positive for theory building and testing, since extraneous variations that might influence statistical validity is minimized (Calder et al., 1981). However, there are some criticisms and concerns about the generalizability of the student sample data (Peterson, 2001). To balance out possible drawbacks, after the factor analysis, the measurement model of EFA analysis results is further tested in the second non-student sample dataset through CFA analyses. The detailed demographic of the student sample data is presented in Table 5.1.

This is a student sample, with an average age of 20.54 and college level education, 70.5% of participants are female and 29.5% are male. There are 77.6% White/Caucasian, 6.6% Black/African American, 3.8% Spanish/Hispanic/Latino, and 10.9% Asian/Asian American. In terms of the political party identification, 39.3% of participants identified themselves as Democrats, 37.7% as Republicans, 10.9% as Independent, and 12.0% preferred to not answer.

*Table 5.1.* Student sample data demographics

Demographic variables	Pretest student sample (N=183, missing data 30)	
	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	54	29.5%
Female	129	70.5%
<b>Education</b>		
High school graduate or equivalent	38	20.8%
Some college	111	60.7%
Associate degree	7	3.8%
Bachelor's degree	22	12.0%
Master's degree	5	2.7%
Doctoral degree	0	0%
Law degree	0	0%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White/Caucasian	142	77.6%
Black/African American	12	6.6%
Spanish/Hispanic/Latino	7	3.8%
Asian/Asian American	21	10.9%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0	0%
Other	1	1.1%
<b>Political party identification</b>		
Liberal Democrats	33	18.0%
Moderate Democrats	33	18.0%
Conservative Democrats	6	3.3%
Liberal Republican	19	10.4%
Moderate Republican	30	16.4%
Conservative Republican	20	10.9%
Independent	20	10.9%
Other or prefer not to answer	22	12.0%

More specifically, in terms of the liberal/conservative identification, slightly more participants identified themselves as more liberal. When considering economic issues, participants reported a more conservative attitude, with a mean value of 4.29. For social issues, participants reported a more liberal attitude, with a mean value of 3.15.

## **Sample 2: Amazon MTurk Sample for CFA**

The second dataset for CFA is an Amazon MTurk sample, which is an online tasking service platform. MTurk participants received the same survey questionnaire as the one distributed to student sample. The data quality of the Amazon MTurk is found to be not inferior to data collected from professional survey panel and student sample, and it has been used for theory building studies in mass communication and psychology (Cheung et al., 2017; Kees et al., 2017; Park & Jiang, 2020). Some of setups such as the attention checks and Qualtrics ballot stuffing prevention could also help ensure the data quality. Additional qualifications settings, such as “90% past approval rate” and “number of approved task greater than 1000,” are setup to further ensure the response quality.

Following the same procedures, participants shared their opinion and responses about their previous interest, attention and subjective knowledge of CSA in general. They recalled and gave responses to two open-ended questions about one organization which engaged in CSA and one social-political issue advocated by organizations. 25 CSA legitimacy items are presented to participants. After completion of the survey, participants received monetary incentives. The detailed demographic of this non-student sample Amazon MTurk data is summarized in Table 5.2.

There were 179 participants after case-wise cleaning all the missing data. The average age of this sample is 36.34. 34.6% of the participants are female. There are 71.5% White/Caucasian, 10.1% Black/African American, 1.7% Spanish/Hispanic/Latino, and 15.1% Asian/Asian American. Over 80% of participants have college level education. Geographically, participants of this Amazon MTurk CFA sample reside in 35 different states in US. 21.2% of them are in California, followed by 9.5% in Indiana, 6.7% in Texas, 6.1% in Florida, 5.0% in

New York. There are more politically democratic and ideologically liberal participants, according to the question about political party identification and two questions about economic and social issues.

**Table 5.2.** Non-student sample Amazon MTurk data demographics

Demographic variables	Pretest student sample (N=179, missing data 28)	
	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	62	34.6%
Male	116	64.8%
<b>Education</b>		
High school graduate or equivalent	3	1.7%
Some college	6	3.4%
Associate degree	9	5.0%
Bachelor's degree	108	60.3%
Master's degree	51	28.5%
Doctoral degree	1	0.6%
Law degree	1	0.6%
<b>Household income</b>		
Less than \$15,000	14	7.8%
\$15,001-\$30,000	19	10.6%
\$30,000-\$45,000	25	14.0%
\$45,000-\$50,000	29	16.2%
\$50,001-\$75,000	51	28.5%
\$75,000-\$80,000	21	11.7%
\$80,000-\$100,000	14	7.8%
\$115,000 +	3	1.7%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White/Caucasian	128	71.5%
Black/African American	18	10.1%
Spanish/Hispanic/Latino	3	1.7%
Asian/Asian American	27	15.1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	0.6%
Other	2	1.1%
<b>Political party identification</b>		
Liberal Democrats	55	30.7%
Moderate Democrats	35	19.6%
Conservative Democrats	19	10.6%
Liberal Republican	14	7.8%
Moderate Republican	18	10.1%
Conservative Republican	22	12.3%
Independent	14	7.8%
Other or prefer not to answer	2	1.1%

## EFA analyses

### Descriptive Statistics and Statistics Assumption

To ensure the sample data quality, there are six questions to validate the participants response. These include one question about participants' overall familiarity of the CSA, one four-items question about participants' individual interest and attention, one five-items question about subjective knowledge about CSA, and two open-ended questions about one organization and CSA social-political issue they could recall. The primary consideration is the consistency between results of these questions. Overall, participants are less familiar with the idea of CSA before they participated the study. Participants reported a mean value of 3.44 and a median value of 3.00. Participants reported high level of individual interest (mean = 5.00, SD = 1.21) and attention (mean = 4.70, SD = 1.23) to CSA. However, participants reported a relatively low level of subjective knowledge about CSA (mean = 3.46, SD = 1.31). The descriptive statistics of individual's experiences with CSA is summarized in Table 5.3. The result of a correlation analysis found that the single item participants' general familiarity of CSA and the five-items subjective knowledge question are correlated at a higher level. Participants of this pretest sample are generally less familiar with CSA, and they reported a lower level of subjective knowledge about CSA accordingly.

**Table 5.3.** Descriptive statistics of individual's experiences with CSA

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. CSA familiarity	3.44	1.78	1			
2. CSA interest	5.00	1.21	.263**	1		
3. CSA attention	4.70	1.23	.208**	.547**	1	
4. CSA knowledge	3.46	1.31	.477**	.347**	.515**	1

To examine the EFA student sample dataset further, these descriptive questions about participants' personal experience or perception about CSA are analyzed correspondingly with the two open-end questions, which ask participants to recall one organization who advocates for social-political issues and that particular issue or issues. Thirty-one-point seven percent of the participants ( $n = 58$ ) failed to recall an organization that advocate for a social-political issue. Thirty-two-point eight of the participants ( $n = 60$ ) failed to recall a social-political issue that is advocated by an organization. These two results from the open-ended questions corresponded to the previous two descriptive questions, participants general familiarity with the CSA and participants subjective knowledge about the CSA. 35% of the participants are not familiar with the idea or concept of CSA. About 41.0% of the participants gave a score lower than 3.00 on the question about CSA subjective knowledge.

To examine participants' recalled perceptions about the organization and CSA campaign, two open-ended questions are coded and descriptively summarized. Among all organizations, Ben & Jerry's stood out as the most recalled organization. Ben & Jerry's is an ice cream brand, who has a history of advocating for a broad spectrum of social-political issues, including voting rights, racial justice, LGBTQ+ rights and refugee rights (Ben & Jerry's, 2021). Recently, Ben & Jerry's was very vocal in terms of the Israel and Palestine conflict issue. It terminated business operation in the occupied Palestinian territories (Cohen & Greenfield, 2021). Meanwhile, the most recalled social-political issue is racial justice. For participants who mentioned this issue, the most prominently recalled case is Black Lives Matter (BLM) and police brutality problem. The open-end question responses are listed in Table 5.4. In total 125 participants responded to the two open-end questions.

Before further analyzing the CSA legitimacy scale items, univariate normality distribution assumption is checked, based on the value of skewness and kurtosis (Hopkins & Weeks, 1990). For the moderately nonnormal distributed case or variable, Curran et al (1996) suggested that the average mean value of skewness is 1.973 and 6.648 for kurtosis. Similarly, Stevens (2012, p. 563) used threshold values of 2 for skewness and 7 for kurtosis. Kline's (2016) guideline is more conservative and provided a threshold value of 3 for skewness and 10 for kurtosis (p. 76).

**Table 5.4.** Open-end question responses (1)

	Top 5 recalled organizations	Top 5 recalled social-political issues
1	Ben & Jerry's (n=20)	Racial justice (n=42)
2	Nike (n=18)	LGBTQ+ equality (n=23)
3	Chick-fil-A (n=10)	Racial equality (n=9)
4	Pepsi (n=7)	Voting and election (n=7)
5	Starbucks (n=6)	Environmental protection (n=6)

This research will adapt the absolute threshold values of skewness and kurtosis as 2 and 7, according to previous discussions about the normality assumption for running EFA models (Curran et al., 1996; Kline, 2016, p. 76; Stevens, 2012, p. 563). These threshold values are used to evaluate the univariate normality distribution results of all the CSA legitimacy scale items. According to the results of skewness and kurtosis, all variables are normally distributed. The descriptive statistics of measurement items are presented in Table 5.5.

To assess the factorability assumption of the data, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test of sphericity are conducted. KMO measures sampling adequacy for each variable and provides an overall index for the complete model (Pett et al., 2003). KMO indicated whether variables are psychometrically correlated and feasible for EFA. A KMO value above .60 is

considered to be mediocre and suitable for factor analysis (Dziuban & Shirkey, 1974; Pett et al., 2003; Williams et al., 2010). Bartlett's test of sphericity evaluates the hypothesis that all variables in the correlation matrix are independent and the correlation matrix is an identity matrix (Pett et al., 2003). A significant value rejects this hypothesis and indicates that variables are related and suitable for EFA (Dziuban & Shirkey, 1974; Tobias & Carlson, 1969; Pett et al., 2003; Williams et al., 2010). The overall KMO value is 0.93. The KMO index values for nearly all the variables are above .90, with only two items CL4 (.64) and CL7 (.65) just over the threshold value of .60. The result of the Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant at .05 value, also indicating that this pretest dataset is available for EFA.

**Table 5.5.** Descriptive statistics of CSA legitimacy measurement items

Item	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
PL1	3.79	1.58	-0.20	-0.80
PL2	4.08	1.49	-0.09	-0.43
PL3	4.69	1.45	-0.61	-0.07
PL4	4.22	1.70	-0.25	-0.79
PL5	5.12	1.39	-0.86	0.76
PL6	4.74	1.50	-0.45	-0.39
PL7	4.61	1.54	-0.58	-0.16
PL8	5.37	1.44	-1.06	0.77
PL9	4.80	1.52	-0.78	0.08
ML1	3.73	1.53	-0.03	-0.71
ML2	3.84	1.55	-0.14	-0.90
ML3	4.51	1.40	-0.57	-0.35
ML4	4.48	1.30	-0.61	-0.08
ML5	4.56	1.36	-0.64	-0.20
ML6	4.28	1.54	-0.33	-0.59
ML7	4.20	1.57	-0.31	-0.74
CL1	4.40	1.61	-0.33	-0.64
CL2	4.21	1.64	-0.34	-0.74
CL3	5.22	1.29	-0.79	0.65
CL4	4.58	1.40	-0.46	-0.48
CL5	4.16	1.49	-0.32	-0.61
CL6	4.66	1.63	-0.65	-0.45
CL7	4.62	1.40	-0.26	-0.58
CL8	5.28	1.26	-0.98	0.81
CL9	4.93	1.39	-0.70	0.28

## **EFA Results**

To examine the proposed dimensionality and corresponding items of CSA legitimacy construct, there are several evaluation and interpretation criteria: factor loadings, reliability test of three sub-dimension, and theoretical convergence (Carpenter, 2018; Kline, 2016, p.197; Hair et al., 2019, p. 146). After the preliminary data cleaning and scrutiny, an EFA common factor analysis is conducted to examine 25 CSA legitimacy items. Maximum likelihood (ML) factor extraction method is chosen to estimate the factor solutions. The factor rotation method is oblique, which provides a more “realistic representation of how factors are interrelated” (Brown, 2015, p.28). Since three sub-dimensions of the CSA legitimacy are expected to correlate with each other. The estimation of factor correlations will also provide more information about the higher order construct of CSA legitimacy, in addition to three subdimensions.

As Kline (2016, p. 197) suggested, even though EFA usually relies more on the statistical power to explore and form construct the dimensionality rather than a priori theoretical guidance, there are some EFA usage and modes which could help to examine and verify construct dimensionality and retain valid scale items of each dimension. One example could be authorizing the statistical program to extract a priori proposed and preset number of construct dimensions. For CSA legitimacy measurement scale, there are three dimensions: pragmatic, moral and cognitive legitimacy. The proposed items are examined in terms of the factor loading, scale reliability of the sub-dimension, and theoretical and conceptual consideration. And after EFA analyses, it is recommended that the resulted model is tested through additional CFA analyses with independent sample datasets (Brown, 2015, P.26).

The EFA analysis is conducted by using R, an open-source statistical program, and the *psych* package (Baker & Kim, 2017; Beaujean, 2014; Luo et al., 2019; Revelle, 2018). A quick

principal factor parallel analysis with ML factor extraction method suggested a 4-factor model (Floyd et al., 1995; Humphreys et al., 1975), however, the dimensionality of the EFA model is preset to three, which is guided by previous theoretical supports (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019; Kline, 2016, p. 197; Suchman, 1995). In other words, there are three proposed dimensions of CSA legitimacy, pragmatic legitimacy, moral legitimacy, and cognitive legitimacy.

According to the first EFA of the initial CSA legitimacy item pool, there are some cross loading factors. And some of the items are not loaded on the proposed dimension. Accordingly, the first step of item retention process is removing the cross-loading item with the lowest loading value once at a time (Brown, 2015, p.114; Pett et al., 2003). Once the cross-loading items with the lowest loading value is removed from the item pool, the data is subjected to EFA analysis again without the presence of the removed items (Pett et al., 2003). The lowest cutoff factor loading value is set to 0.30 (Carpenter, 2018; Kachigan, 1986; Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). For the results of the first EFA analysis, ML4 with cross-loading values of 0.51 and 0.35 on the second and third dimensions is removed from the dataset. The next step is to re-run the EFA analysis with the new item pool, after the removal of ML4. The item pool is subjected to this iteration process for a more refined factor solution (Pett et al., 2003). The factor loadings of the first EFA analysis is listed in Table 5.6.

According to this second EFA analysis. ML5 had cross-loading on two dimensions. Hence ML5 is removed from the item pool. After these two re-run EFA, there are 23 items in the CSA legitimacy scale item pool. This iterative procedure is conducted again, based on the evaluation of factor loading. PL7, CL3, PL2, PL4, PL1 and CL9 are removed in the following rounds of EFA analysis. The factor loadings of the second EFA analysis is listed in Table 5.7.

**Table 5.6.** Factor loadings of EFA (1)

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
PL1	0.81		
PL4	0.81		
CL2	0.74		
PL2	0.72		
PL7	0.68		
CL1	0.56		
CL5	0.51		
PL6	0.47		
PL3	0.41		
PL9	0.34		
CL7	0.32		
CL8		0.83	
CL3		0.80	
CL6		0.66	
ML5		0.59	0.37
CL9		0.57	
ML4		0.51	0.35
PL5		0.49	
PL8		0.48	
CL4		0.31	
ML1			0.82
ML6			0.82
ML7			0.78
ML2			0.77
ML3			0.67

The EFA analysis result without significant cross loading factors resulted in a 17-items pool. CL8 had a 0.60 factor loading value and CL6 had a 0.56 factor loading value on pragmatic legitimacy dimension. The factor loadings of the final EFA analysis are listed in Table 5.8. However, in addition to the statistical results, priori theoretical background is also taken into consideration when retaining the CSA legitimacy scale (Suchman, 1995; Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019). CSA pragmatic legitimacy, CSA moral legitimacy, and CSA cognitive legitimacy are proposed as three-subdimensions of CSA legitimacy. Hence, even though CL6 and CL8, two measures of cognitive legitimacy dimension, are loaded on pragmatic legitimacy without cross loading, they are removed from the CSA legitimacy item pool.

**Table 5.7.** Factor loadings of EFA (2)

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
PL4	0.83		
PL1	0.82		
CL2	0.74		
PL2	0.73		
PL7	0.69		
CL1	0.55		
CL5	0.51		
PL6	0.47		
PL3	0.42		
PL9	0.35		
CL7	<0.30		
ML6		0.83	
ML1		0.82	
ML7		0.80	
ML2		0.78	
ML3		0.68	
CL8			0.85
CL3			0.83
CL6			0.64
CL9			0.57
ML5		0.38	0.55
PL5			0.49
PL8			0.46
CL4			0.32

**Table 5.8.** Factor loadings of EFA (3)

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
PL8	0.86		
PL5	0.83		
PL6	0.66		
CL8	0.60		
PL9	0.60		
CL6	0.56		
PL3	0.56		
ML1		0.86	
ML2		0.83	
ML6		0.81	
ML7		0.75	
ML3		0.64	
CL1			0.89
CL2			0.62
CL5			0.43
CL7			0.37
CL4			0.31

The final version of CSA legitimacy measurement model is presented in Table 5.9. After nine iterations of the EFA analyses, three identifiable dimensions of CSA legitimacy are confirmed. There are five items on each dimension. Even though for cognitive legitimacy dimension, there are two items with factor loading just over the threshold value of 0.30, at this stage of measurement scale screening and retainment, these two items (CL4 and CL7) are still included in the scale item pool. These items and the theoretical construct structure are further investigated in the later CFA analysis.

**Table 5.9.** Final refined factor loadings of EFA CSA legitimacy measurement model

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
PL8	0.86		
PL5	0.83		
PL6	0.66		
PL9	0.60		
PL3	0.56		
ML1		0.86	
ML2		0.83	
ML6		0.81	
ML7		0.75	
ML3		0.64	
CL1			0.89
CL2			0.62
CL5			0.43
CL7			0.37
CL4			0.31

In addition to the factor loading, percentage of variance explained by the factor is also an important criterion to refer to, during the factor analysis. It is an approach to look at the corresponding percentage of variance explained by each factor and the cumulative percentage of common variance explained by all the factors (Hair et al., 2019, p.142). According to the final iterations of the EFA analysis and model variance summary in Table 5.10, 56 percent of the

common variance could be explained by the 15-items CSA legitimacy factor solution. The eigenvalue, the sum of squared items' loading (SS loading), of all three factors are above 1.0 (Hair et al., 2019, p.141). Around 60 percentage of the common variance is suggested as a satisfactory reference point for evaluation of a factor extraction solution (Hair et al., 2019, p.142; Peterson, 2000). The variance proportion divided evenly between pragmatic legitimacy and moral legitimacy, which however higher than the cognitive legitimacy. The common variance explained by cognitive legitimacy is still of certain magnitude.

**Table 5.10.** EFA model variance.

	Moral legitimacy	Pragmatic legitimacy	Cognitive legitimacy
SS loading	3.50	3.01	1.93
Proportion variance	0.23	0.20	0.13
Cumulative variance	0.23	0.43	0.56
Proportion explained	0.41	0.36	0.23
Cumulative proportion	0.41	0.77	1.0

### **Reliability and Validity Assessment**

Cronbach's alpha and item-total correlation are assessed, in terms of the scale reliability of the EFA item pruning result. Overall, the scale reliability of all three sub-dimensions of CSA legitimacy is acceptable. For pragmatic legitimacy and moral legitimacy dimensions, reliability scores are around 0.90. Even though the reliability coefficient value of cognitive legitimacy is relatively lower at 0.70 level. Cronbach's alpha is reported for evaluation of reliability as it measures the internal consistency of the responses across the items of each sub-dimension (Kline, 2016). For the item-total correlation, CL4 and CL7 are two items with relatively low value as shown in Table 5.11.

To assess the discriminant validity of the CSA legitimacy scale, factor correlations between the three sub-dimensions are calculated. As suggested by Brown (2015, p.116), the

factor correlation over the 0.85 is considered as exceeding the acceptable level of discriminant validity. As shown in Table 5.12, the factor correlations from the EFA results indicated that the three sub-dimensions of CSA legitimacy are correlated with each other, however, without exceeding the threshold.

**Table 5.11.** Item reliability test

Dimension/ Items	Mean	Coefficient Alpha Reliability	Item-Total Correlations
Pragmatic Legitimacy		.88	
PL3	4.69		.67
PL5	5.12		.78
PL6	4.74		.74
PL8	5.37		.69
PL9	4.80		.70
Moral Legitimacy		.90	
ML1	3.73		.79
ML2	3.84		.78
ML3	4.51		.70
ML6	4.28		.80
ML7	4.20		.70
Cognitive Legitimacy		.71	
CL1	4.40		.65
CL2	4.21		.58
CL4	4.58		.26
CL5	4.16		.49
CL7	4.62		.38

**Table 5.12.** Correlation of three legitimacy dimensions

	Pragmatic legitimacy	Moral legitimacy	Cognitive legitimacy
Pragmatic legitimacy	1		
Moral legitimacy	0.56	1	
Cognitive legitimacy	0.41	0.44	1

In addition to the EFA factor results, the remaining items of three dimensions are composited based the mean value, to assess the factor correlation. The descriptive statistics of composite values are listed in Table 5.13. The overall CSA legitimacy is also computed based on

all 15 items of CSA legitimacy. The three sub-dimensions of CSA legitimacy are correlated at a medium level (Table 5.14). This indicated that these sub-dimensions are distinct from each other.

**Table 5.13** Descriptive statistics of CSA legitimacy composite values

Composite CSA legitimacy	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
CSA pragmatic legitimacy	4.95	1.20	-.76	.83
CSA moral legitimacy	4.11	1.29	-.37	-.37
CSA cognitive legitimacy	4.40	1.03	-.15	-.05
CSA legitimacy	4.48	.96	-.45	.18

**Table 5.14.** Correlation between the composite value of CSA legitimacy

	CSA pragmatic legitimacy	CSA moral legitimacy	CSA cognitive legitimacy	CSA legitimacy
CSA pragmatic legitimacy	1			
CSA moral legitimacy	.60**	1		
CSA cognitive legitimacy	.50**	.38**	1	
CSA legitimacy	.86**	.83**	.74**	1

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### CFA Analysis

As suggested by previous literatures and recommended model testing procedures (Brown, 2015; Kline, 2016), the second step of study 1 is to conduct follow-up CFA analyses, especially comparing different possible interpretations of the dimensionality of the CSA legitimacy. The previous EFA analysis results point to a theoretical model of CSA legitimacy with three correlated factors, each with corresponding five manifest indicators. Further tested are needed to test the feasibility of alternative models, such as a unidimensional model of CSA legitimacy, and

a hierarchical model of CSA legitimacy with three specified dimensions. The CFA analyses are conducted with a sample dataset different from the EFA analysis dataset.

### **Descriptive Statistics and Statistics Assumption**

Participants in the non-student Amazon MTurk sample also responded to two open-end questions and four questions about their existing experience with CSA activities, including their general familiarity with CSA, interest in CSA, attention to CSA, and subjective knowledge about CSA (Table 5.15). Participants are familiar with the idea of CSA (mean = 5.77, SD = 1.12) and they are interested (mean = 5.25, SD = 1.25) and aware of CSA activities (mean = 5.30, SD = 1.09). All these items were measured by 7-points scales.

**Table 5.15.** Descriptive statistics and correlations of individual's experiences with CSA

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. CSA familiarity	5.77	1.12	1			
2. CSA interest	5.25	1.25	.393**	1		
3. CSA attention	5.30	1.09	.459**	.824**	1	
4. CSA knowledge	5.05	1.26	.598**	.691**	.768**	1

Comparatively, they considered themselves to be less knowledgeable about CSA (mean = 5.05, SD = 1.26). This includes their confidence to bring up the discussion about CSA with their friends. However, with a mean value of 5.05, this should be considered as knowledgeable about CSA. Participants' recalls of one organization and its corresponding CSA activity are coded and descriptively summarized. These are the same open-end questions employed in the study 1. 66.5% of participants failed to recall one organization or brand who advocated for social-political issues. 68.7% of participants failed to recall the social-political issue. Among all the

organizations, Nike is the top-mentioned organization. Racial equality is the most mentioned social-political issue. There are 60 participants who commented and respond to these two open-end questions (Table 5.16).

**Table 5.16.** Open-end question responses (2)

Top 5 recalled organizations		Top 5 recalled social-political issues	
1	Nike (n=8)	1	Racial equality (n=12)
2	Chick-fil-A (n=3)	2	Gender equality (n=6)
2	Coca Cola (n=3)	3	Voting and election (n=5)
2	Microsoft (n=3)	4	Conservative values (n=3)
3	Target (n=2)	5	Gun control (n=2)

The normality assumption of the CSA legitimacy items is checked before the CFA analysis, based on same procedures as used in previous EFA analyses. These includes assessment of items' skewness and kurtosis (Hopkins & Weeks, 1990). According to results of the normality test based on the distribution skewness and kurtosis (Table 5.17), all the CSA legitimacy items are normally distributed.

### **CFA Model Specification**

The main purpose of this analysis is to further test the measurement model of CSA legitimacy, which is proposed to consist of three sub-dimensions, pragmatic legitimacy, moral legitimacy and cognitive legitimacy of CSA. The building and testing process of the measurement model rely on assessing, comparison and selection of various model alternatives. These different propositions of the measurement model involve consideration of the nature and characteristics of different models. Which will in turn lead to models with different model structure, complexity, fitness to the data, and theoretical interpretations.

**Table 5.17.** Descriptive statistics of CSA legitimacy measurement items

Item	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
PL1	5.06	1.59	-.95	.27
PL2	5.18	1.53	-.96	.55
PL3	5.18	1.46	-1.03	.96
PL4	5.16	1.43	-1.03	.98
PL5	5.31	1.38	-1.04	1.17
PL6	5.19	1.36	-.97	1.17
PL7	5.25	1.25	-1.04	1.57
PL8	5.35	1.37	-.94	.87
PL9	5.25	1.41	-1.02	.95
ML1	5.03	1.54	-.86	.27
ML2	5.23	1.43	-.91	.71
ML3	5.21	1.35	-.91	.93
ML4	5.19	1.30	-1.04	1.32
ML5	5.25	1.24	-.74	.89
ML6	5.20	1.40	-1.08	1.41
ML7	5.12	1.47	-.92	.71
CL1	5.16	1.49	-.98	.76
CL2	5.09	1.58	-1.07	.62
CL3	5.44	1.32	-1.24	2.00
CL4	5.17	1.40	-.74	.03
CL5	5.00	1.56	-.75	-.06
CL6	5.22	1.42	-.89	.64
CL7	5.09	1.48	-.71	-.04
CL8	5.37	1.32	-.91	.83
CL9	5.30	1.33	-.84	.52

Regardless of the model complexity, they all consist of the relationship between the latent variables and the indicators (Brown, 2015; Kline, 2016). The differences in these model specification features also embody in different depth, breath, and dimensionality of constructs and measures (Bagozzi & Edwards, 1998). The model specification process serves as a first step to introduce available model alternatives. The general guidelines for model specification consider several following information: the number of latent variables, the number of indicators, the relationship between variables, and the number of parameters (Brown, 2015; Kline 2016).

Based on this model specification guideline, there are four models in the CFA analysis. The purpose of model comparison analysis is to examine the proposed theoretical structure of the

CSA legitimacy construct. There have been some studies defined a unidimensional legitimacy construct while some other proposed sub-dimensions, such as pragmatic, moral, and cognitive legitimacy, under the influence of a general assessment of legitimacy (Díez-Martín et al., 2013; Elsbach 1994; Suchman, 1995). This is also an attempt to address the **RQ1: what is the possible theoretical structure of CSA legitimacy?** Hence, three CFA models are compared:

- (1) A unidimensional CSA legitimacy model;
- (2) A first-order CSA legitimacy model;
- (3) A second-order CSA legitimacy model;

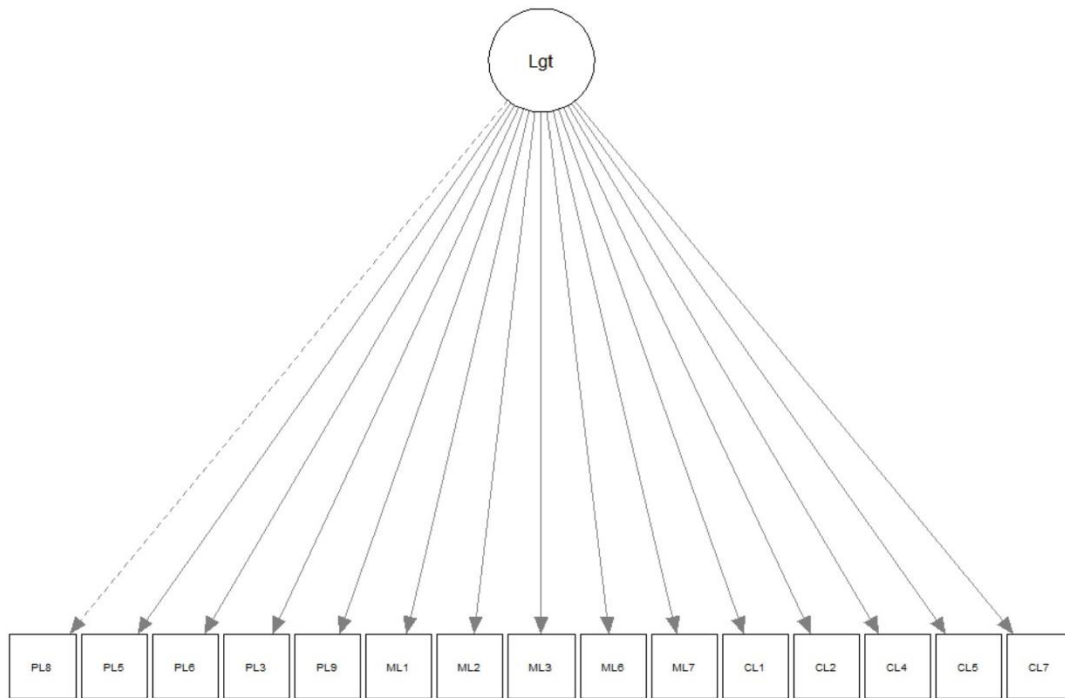
The CFA analysis of Study 1 involves comparison of multiple competing models so that alternative explanations of theoretical structure of the CSA legitimacy construct could be ruled out. These model comparison decisions are made based on the assessment of the model fit and also previous theories, literature and empirical evidence. Following the model comparison and CFA analysis procedure suggested by Brown (2015) and Kline (2016), this model specification section addresses the following information of each model: the number of latent variables, the number of indicators, the relationship between variables, and the number of parameters (Brown, 2015; Kline 2016).

Latent variables and the corresponding indicators are two of important elements and building blocks of a measurement model. To further test the measurement model of a theoretical construct, both previous theories and statistical evidence are required to guide the process and decision. Existing theoretical and empirical endeavors has been examined legitimacy as a multi-dimensional construct (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019; Díez-Martín et al., 2013; Elsbach 1994; Suchman, 1995). The propositions of four different models are based on these existing theoretical findings and previous EFA analyses in study 1. In the (1) unidimensional CSA

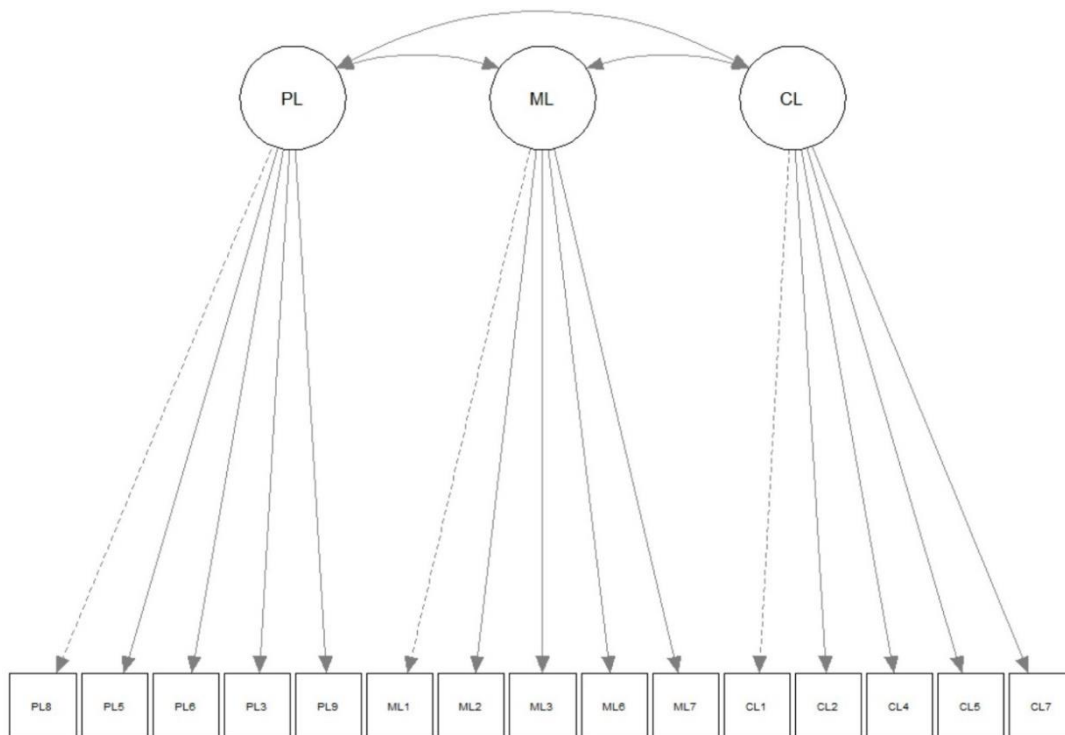
legitimacy model, there is only one latent variable, the overall CSA legitimacy. There are 15 indicators measuring this latent construct as presented in **Figure 5.1**. In the (2) first-order correlated CSA legitimacy model, there are three latent variables, pragmatic legitimacy, moral legitimacy, and cognitive legitimacy. Each of these dimensions has 5 indicators based on EFA analyses results as presented in **Figure 5.2**. In the (3) second-order model, there are four latent variables, overall CSA legitimacy, pragmatic legitimacy, moral legitimacy, and cognitive legitimacy. This second-order model is also referred to as a hierarchical model, which describes an overall CSA legitimacy latent construct and three sub-dimensions of it as presented in **Figure 5.3**.

These three models are also defined and differentiated based on the internal relationships between their variables. There are two major approaches to define the relationship between the latent variable and the manifest item: reflective measure model and formative index model (Diamantopoulos & Sigauw, 2006; Kline, 2016, p.352). These two approaches are different in terms of three major points: the “direction” or “flow” of the variable influence, the relationship between manifest items, and the method of error estimation (Edwards, 2011; Kline, 2016, p.352). All the models in this dissertation research are defined as reflective models, so that the direction of the causation influence is from latent construct to the manifest item, all manifest items are not free to covary with each other, and the measurement error is estimated at the individual indicator level.

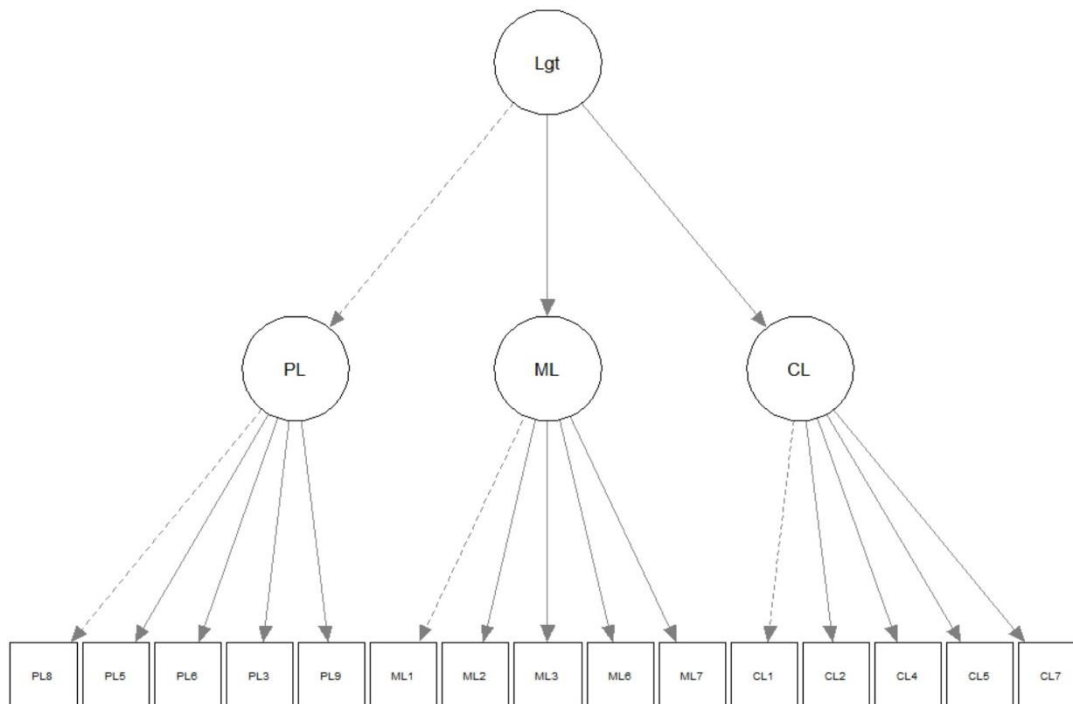
Latent variable scaling is a process to identify the measurement metrics of the unobserved latent variables. Certain parameter estimates are constrained in order to assign assessable unit of scale to not directly observed latent construct, through two main approaches (Beaujean, 2014; Brown, 2015).



**Figure 5.1.** The unidimensional CSA legitimacy model



**Figure 5.2.** The first-order correlated CSA legitimacy model



**Figure 5.3.** The second-order CSA legitimacy model

The most widely used approach of scaling the latent variable is to identify one of its indicators as the marker variable (Brown, 2015, p.61). This marker variable approach scales the latent factor by fixing or constraining the chosen marker variable's factoring loading to 1.0, and the marker variable's intercept to 0 (Beaujean, 2014, p.41; Little et al., 2006, p.61). And accordingly, the latent variable's variance is defined by the particular marker variable (Brown, 2015, p.54). Another latent variable scaling approach is to standardize the latent variable by constraining its variance to 1.0. However, compared with the marker variable approach, the fixed latent variance approach is a complete standardized solution, which provides less useful information about the unstandardized value, especially when assessing the scale reliability (Brown, 2015). These two different latent variable scaling approaches do not result in different overall model fit or completely standardized estimates of the factor covariance but might cause

differences in standard error and z-test statistics when examining statistical significance of parameters estimates (Brown, 2015, p.132). For the purpose of measurement model building, the first approach, marker variable scaling is preferred for this dissertation study.

There are some guidelines and consideration of choosing the marker variable for latent constructs (Brown, 2015). The choice of marker variable should be guided by previous literature and theoretical development. The marker variable item should also present stronger psychometric power, for example, possibility to pass more variable variance to the corresponding unobserved latent variable (Brown, 2015, p.91). One of the important criteria is looking for an item with the strongest factor loading, which is an indicator that this particular item accounts for a substantial amount of overall variance of the latent variable (Brown, 2015). Hence, the choice of the marker variable for all three of the CSA legitimacy dimensions is informed by the factor loading results of the EFA analysis. Accordingly, PL8 (Social advocacy by companies promotes more discussion about the social-political issues), ML1 (In general, when companies engage in corporate social advocacy, they are being sincere), and CL1 (I expect to see companies taking a clear stance on social-political issues) are chosen as the marker variable for CSA pragmatic legitimacy, moral legitimacy, and cognitive legitimacy.

The last step of the model specification process is to identify the number of model parameters. This requires information that is known, such as the total number of the variable variances and covariances in the dataset, and the total number of parameters that are freely estimated, which includes factor loading and error variances. When the former number is larger than the latter, the model is *overidentified* (Brown, 2015, p.58). Otherwise, if there are more model parameters than the known information in the dataset, the model cannot be estimated, or is *underidentified*. The difference between these two total numbers is the model's *degree of*

*freedom* (df). There are 15 indicators in CSA legitimacy item pool after EFA analyses.

Accordingly, the total number of the variable variances and covariances is 120. This is also the known information of the dataset.

The three competing CFA models have different numbers of estimated parameters. For the (1) unidimensional model, there are 30 estimated parameters, with the df value of 80. For the (2) first-order correlated model, there are 33 estimated parameters, with the df value of 87. For the (3) second-order model, there are 33 estimated parameters, with the df value of 87. The first order correlated model and the second-order model have the same number of estimated parameters and df, due to the fact that there are three correlated factors or subdimensions in these two alternative models. The detailed model fit, comparison, and theoretical implication are discussed in the later section.

### **Model Fit Criteria**

According to previous literature and recommended model testing procedures (Brown, 2015; Kline, 2016; West et al., 2012), several important statistical criteria are considered when comparing different models and alternative theoretical explanations. The first step is to evaluate the overall goodness-of-fit index, chi-square statistics, which test the null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant difference between the model estimated and the observed sample variances and covariances (Brown, 2015, p.69). However, the chi-square statistics of the overall model fit requires some other complementary model fit statistics, due to its contingent limitations. For instance, some small datasets are not chi-square distributed which compromises the test. On some occasions, chi-square test is sensitive to larger sample dataset. It is easier to reject the null hypothesis that there is a difference between the estimated and the observed

sample variances and covariances (Brown, 2015, p.69; Hu & Bentler, 1998; Perry et al., 2015; West et al., 2012). Hence additional model fit indices are considered.

Brown (2015, p.70) discussed three categories of indices for model evaluation and reporting. The first group of absolute fit includes chi-square goodness of fit as mentioned before, and another similar index, standardized root mean square (SRMR). Which indicates the difference between the model estimated and observed correlation. The second group of indices assess model parsimony, which focuses on model's degree of freedom and evaluate unnecessary model strains. Accordingly, models with fewer freely estimated parameters are preferred. Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is one of these indices. The third group indices assess the comparative model fit. These indices are comparative in the sense that the estimated model is evaluated against a more restricted baseline model. Comparative fit index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) are frequently used in applied model testing research.

Previous literatures also suggested some general guidelines and model fit indices cutoff value criteria (Brown, 2015; Hu & Bentler, 1998). The estimated model is well fitting to the data when (1) the value of SRMR is below .08; (2) the value of RMSEA is below .06; (3) values of CFI and TLI are above .95. The CFA model comparison process follows this guideline and reports the detailed statistics in the CFA analysis result section.

### **CFA Results**

A series of CFA analyses are conducted to further test the previous EFA analysis results and investigate the dimensionality of CSA legitimacy. The model testing process involves comparing model fit statistics and estimated parameters of four models. And this process follows the theoretical model building guidelines suggested by Brown (2015, p.287). At first, a construct is theorized and predicted as unidimensional. With more empirical research evidence,

complicated models are proposed. Some previously unexplained relationship and variance are captured and investigated with these alternative models. For example, correlated or first-order models focus on the nuance and interrelationship between the possible latent factors emerged out from the unidimensional model. Hierarchical or second-order model provides a parsimonious interpretation of the factor correlation.

### ***Unidimensional Model of CSA Legitimacy***

The unidimensional model of CSA legitimacy is the first hypothesized model. Even though based on previous theories about legitimacy (e.g. Suchman, 1995) and EFA analysis results in Study 1, there are both theoretical and empirical supports for a multi-dimensional construct of CSA legitimacy, this unidimensional model is investigated as a baseline model. It presents the direct influence of an overall CSA legitimacy construct on all 15 manifest indicators. The variance-covariance matrix of all the model indicators is used in the R program as input to estimate the model. R package lavaan is used as the main CFA analysis package. The estimation method is maximum likelihood estimation.

Overall, the estimated unidimensional model showed an acceptable model fit for the observed indicator covariances among the input data matrix. The chi-square model fit value is 185.73, with 90 degree of freedom ( $p < .001$ ). Even though the chi-square statistic is significant, as discussed before, additional model fit indices are also considered to form a comprehensive judgement. The SRMR value of this estimated model is .044, which is below the suggested cut-off value, .08. The RMSEA value, .077 with 90% confidence interval (.061; .093), exceeds the threshold value of .06. Ideally, the value should be below .06. The value of CFI, .95, and TLI, .94, approach the cut-off value, .95. The CFI and TLI value of a better fitted model should be above .95.

**Table 5.18.** Unidimensional model estimation and construct reliability (N=179)

Latent Variable/Indicators	Standardized Factor Loading	Standard Error	Cronbach Alpha	Item Error Variances	Average Variance Extracted
<i>CSA Legitimacy</i>			.95		.56
PL8	.76			.42	
PL5	.78	.09		.39	
PL6	.81	.09		.34	
PL3	.72	.10		.48	
PL9	.78	.10		.40	
ML1	.84	.10		.29	
ML2	.79	.10		.38	
ML3	.82	.09		.33	
ML6	.75	.10		.44	
ML7	.79	.10		.38	
CL1	.73	.10		.46	
CL2	.77	.11		.40	
CL4	.50	.10		.75	
CL5	.63	.11		.61	
CL7	.70	.10		.51	

Note. All factor loadings are significant at .01 level. Estimated value without standard error is set as marker items for latent variable scaling.

Fifteen indicators load to the latent construct of the unidimensional model of CSA legitimacy. The average factor loading is .74 (SD=.09). The detailed factor loading statistics are presented in Table 5.18. The two items with relatively lower factor loading are CL4 (.50) and CL5 (.63). The examination of the p value associated with all the factor loadings shows that all statistical significance test values are smaller than .01. This indicates that all items are related to the latent construct of overall CSA legitimacy at a statistically significant level. The unidimensional model's level of measurement errors is moderate, according to the model variances output from Lavaan, R. This reflect in following two aspects. The average error variance is .44 (SD=.12). And the average variance extracted (AVE) value is .56. This model statistic indicates the amount of common variance explained by all 15 manifest items of the latent construct. The recommend threshold value of AVE is .50, which reflects an acceptable

level of measurement validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Fuller et al., 2016). In another word, over half of the observed indicator variance is explained by the latent construct. Hence, the measurement error and unexplained indicator variance is at an acceptable level.

To assess the construct reliability of the unidimensional model, the Cronbach's coefficient alpha is calculated. The reliability test indicates the degree to which observed manifest items consistently measure the latent construct. This also refers to the internal consistency of the measurement scale. According to previous literatures and model validation guideline (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Kline, 2016, p.92), it is suggested that the acceptable value of the Cronbach's coefficient alpha is .70. The unidimensional model shows a good reliability with an alpha value of .95.

Overall, the unidimensional model has an acceptable model fit statistic, which, under more stringent criteria, need to be improved (i.e. RMSEA, CFI and TLI). This unidimensional model explains over half of the observed indicator variance in the data. The Cronbach's alpha scale reliability test indicated good internal consistency the model. However, it is still necessary to further investigate the possible dimensionality and alternative models. By further model testing, it is expected that there are stronger factor loading and more explained data variance of different models.

### ***First-Order Model of CSA Legitimacy***

Starting from the unidimensional model and related theoretical perspectives, the first-order model of CSA legitimacy proposes three separated yet correlated dimensions or factors, CSA pragmatic legitimacy, moral legitimacy, and cognitive legitimacy. Instead of having an overall CSA legitimacy construct, the first-order model focuses on the explanatory power of domain specific constructs. Statistically, these three latent constructs are respectively measured

by five manifest items, based on the previous EFA analysis results and existing literatures (e.g. Suchman, 1995). Through this model testing and comparison process, a much clearer image of the construct dimensionality can be achieved.

This first-order model is estimated in the same way through R, as the unidimensional model. Similar statistical criteria are used to judge the model fit, factor loading, model validity, and reliability. The estimated first-order model showed improved model fit. The chi-square fit value decreases to 132.459, with 87 degree of freedom ( $p < .001$ ). The SRMR value is .035, and the RMSEA value is .054, with 90% confidence intervals (.034; .072). The CFI value is .975. The TLI value is .970. All these model fit indices are satisfactory when comparing to suggested threshold values.

In terms of the factor loading of first-order model, all three of the CSA legitimacy dimensions hold strong loading indicators. The detailed factor loading values and model statistics are presented in Table 5.19. The average factor loading of the first dimension, CSA pragmatic legitimacy, is .788 ( $SD = .031$ ), CSA moral legitimacy, .814 ( $SD = .039$ ), and CSA cognitive legitimacy, .718 ( $SD = .097$ ).

All indicators' factor loading values are statistically significant. The level of measurement errors improves, when comparing to the unidimensional model. The average error variance of all 15 items is .40 ( $SD = .10$ ). The average AVE value of all three dimensions increases to .61. The improvement of the model estimates indicates that the first-order model explains more observed data variance. And it also reflects the improved measurement validity. In addition, all three CSA legitimacy dimensions show good scale reliability.

**Table 5.19.** First-order model estimation and construct reliability (N=179)

Latent Variable/Indicators	Standardized Factor Loading	Standard Error	Cronbach Alpha	Item Error Variances	Average Variance Extracted
<i>CSA Pragmatic Legitimacy</i>			.89		.62
PL8	.78			.39	
PL5	.81	.09		.35	
PL6	.82	.09		.32	
PL3	.75	.10		.44	
PL9	.78	.09		.39	
<i>CSA Moral Legitimacy</i>			.91		.67
ML1	.87			.25	
ML2	.82	.06		.33	
ML3	.83	.06		.31	
ML6	.76	.06		.42	
ML7	.80	.07		.37	
<i>CSA Cognitive Legitimacy</i>			.85		.53
CL1	.77			.40	
CL2	.81	.10		.34	
CL4	.56	.09		.68	
CL5	.69	.10		.51	
CL7	.75	.09		.44	

Note. All factor loadings are significant at .01 level. Estimated value without standard error is set as marker items for latent variable scaling.

Further inspection of the factor intercorrelation value (Table 5.20) shows that there is a need for a more parsimonious solution. The roughly same correlation level among all three factors suggests a single second-order factor (Brown, 2015, p,290). This higher order factor may sufficiently explain the similar factor covariance pattern. In addition, this further model specification is related to the conceptual structure of the CSA legitimacy, which is defined as a multi-dimensional construct with theoretical and statistical meaningful sub-dimensions.

**Table 5.20.** Factor correlations between latent constructs of first-order model

Latent Construct	CSA Pragmatic Legitimacy	CSA Moral Legitimacy	CSA Cognitive Legitimacy
CSA Pragmatic Legitimacy	1.000		
CSA Moral Legitimacy	.937	1.000	
CSA Cognitive Legitimacy	.891	.880	1.000

Overall, the first-order model has improved model fit statistics, including the value of chi-square statistics, SRMR, RMSEA, CFI, and TLI. Further examination of indicator's factor loadings and total explained variance of the input data shows that the first-order model has improved construct validity in comparison with the previous unidimensional model. The measurement scale is reliable based on the Cronbach's alpha value. The roughly equal level of first-order factor intercorrelations suggest the necessity of a more parsimonious solution factor solution with a single higher order factor. Hence, further model comparison and assessment of the construct dimensionality is necessary.

### ***Second-Order Model***

From a theoretical perspective, the second-order model is more "abstract" than the first-order model (Bagozzi & Edwards, 1998; Brown, 2015, p.288). In any first-order model, all latent constructs directly influence manifest indicators. In the second-order model, there are latent constructs that further explain first-order latent constructs and their interrelationships.

Accordingly, the higher order latent construct is indirectly influencing manifest indicators through the mediation of first-order latent construct. The second-order model is also referred to as hierarchical model, with more latent construct at higher level of theoretical abstractness.

Hence, second-order model is proposed as an alternative model to explain the similar level of factor intercorrelation among the previous three-factor first order model.

From a statistical perspective, especially in terms of model identification, the second-order model is specified as a nested model of the three factor first-order model. In addition, the numbers of estimated parameters (i.e. 33 estimated parameters; 87 degree of freedom) and degree of freedom are the same for these two models, due to the number of latent factors (i.e. three factors). Accordingly. The overall model fit is the same for these two models. Even though the second-order model is just-identified, it still provides meaningful insights to model comparison process by looking at the factor loading magnitude of second-order model (Brown, 2015, p.292).

The second-order model is estimated similarly as previous two models through R and Lavaan package. The overall model fit statistics and the factor loadings are the same as the first-order model. The chi-square fit value is 132.459, with 87 degree of freedom ( $p < .001$ ). The SRMR value is .035 and the RMSEA value is .054 with 90% confidence intervals (.34; .072). The CFI value is .975 and TLI value, .970. The model fit indices are satisfactory.

Even though the model fit indices and factor loadings are the same between the first-order and second-order model, due to the same numbers of estimated parameters and degree of freedom, one major difference is that the theoretical structure of second-order model count or explain both the influence of factors commonality and specific domain on manifest indicators. In contrast, the unidimensional model only explains the commonality or the influence of one overall latent construct. And the first-order model only explains the observed variance from the perspective of specific domains. To get a more comprehensive view of the, it is necessary to look at the practical usefulness of the model which estimates both the general latent factor and specific domains. The loadings of all three first-order factors on the second-order factor are strong, varying from .90 - .97. In addition, the error terms of these factor loadings are around low

level, ranging from .05 to .16. This indicates that the higher-order latent construct of CSA legitimacy reliably account for the observed patterns among three first-order factors.

**Table 5.21.** Second-order model estimation and construct reliability (N=179)

Latent Variable/Indicators	Standardized Factor Loading	Standard Error	Cronbach Alpha	Item Error Variances	Average Variance Extracted
<i>Second-order factors</i>					
<i>Overall CSA Legitimacy</i>					
CSA Pragmatic Legitimacy	.974			.05	
CSA Moral Legitimacy	.962	.11		.08	
CSA Cognitive Legitimacy	.914	.10		.16	
<i>First-order factors</i>					
<i>CSA Pragmatic Legitimacy</i>					
PL8	.78			.39	
PL5	.81	.09		.35	
PL6	.82	.09		.32	
PL3	.75	.10		.44	
PL9	.78	.09		.39	
<i>CSA Moral Legitimacy</i>					
ML1	.87			.25	
ML2	.82	.06		.33	
ML3	.83	.06		.31	
ML6	.76	.06		.42	
ML7	.80	.07		.37	
<i>CSA Cognitive Legitimacy</i>					
CL1	.77			.40	
CL2	.81	.10		.34	
CL4	.56	.09		.68	
CL5	.69	.10		.51	
CL7	.75	.09		.44	

Note. All factor loadings are significant at .01 level. Estimated value without standard error is set as marker items for latent variable scaling.

### Summary of Study 1

Study 1 is the first step of to create and validate the measurement model of the CSA legitimacy. This measurement model is also an important part of the whole theoretical model of CSA legitimacy. Two survey sample datasets were collected and analyzed. Through review of literature and previous studies, EAF analyses, and CFA analyses, the model building and testing process in Study 1 addresses **RQ1**, the dimensionality of CSA legitimacy. Previous theoretical literature (e.g. Suchman, 1995) and empirical studies have defined legitimacy as multidimensional construct (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019; Díez-Martín et al., 2013; Foreman & Whetten, 2002; Pollack et al., 2012).

These research attempts and EFA analysis results suggest a series of CFA analyses to further investigate the construct structure and dimensionality of CSA legitimacy. Both previous theoretical findings and model comparison results of EFA and CFA analyses favor the second-order model over the unidimensional model and first-order model. The model fit statistics of three models are summaries in Table 5.22.

Based on the overall model fit statistics, and measurement reliability results, first-order model and second-order model fit the observed data variance and covariance better than the unidimensional model. These two models both feature the multidimensionality of the construct, which account for better explanation of the data than the unidimensional model.

As suggested by Suchman (1995), sub-dimensions of CSA legitimacy, pragmatic legitimacy, moral legitimacy and cognitive legitimacy, as latent constructs provide meaningful theoretical understanding of the CSA legitimacy. “Each type of legitimacy rests on a somewhat different behavioral dynamic” (Suchman, 1995, p.577).

**Table 5.22.** Three models' fit and factor loadings statistics

<b>Fit measure</b>	<b>Model fit comparison</b>			
	<b>Unidimensional</b>	<b>Correlated factors</b>	<b>Higher order</b>	
Chi-square (df)	185.734 (90), p < .001	132.459 (87), p < .001	132.459 (87), p < .001	
RMSEA	.08	.05	.05	
SRMR	.04	.04	.04	
CFI	.95	.98	.98	
TLI	.94	.97	.97	
<b>Mean (SD) of factor loadings on observed variables</b>				<b>Loadings on higher-order factor (Higher order model)</b>
CSA overall legitimacy	.74 (.09)	NA	.95 (.03)	NA
CSA pragmatic legitimacy	NA	.79 (.03)	.788 (.03)	.96
CSA moral legitimacy	NA	.81 (.04)	.814 (.040)	.97
CSA cognitive legitimacy	NA	.72 (.10)	.718 (.10)	.91
<b>Factor correlations</b>				
PL-ML	NA	.94	NA	
ML-CL	NA	.89	NA	
PL-CL	NA	.88	NA	

CSA pragmatic legitimacy reflects a utilitarian understanding of the CSA influence, accordingly its legitimacy. This dimension related to the direct and instrumental benefit of CSA action and decision. CSA moral legitimacy involves normative evaluation and judgement of the CSA action, particularly the genuineness of organization's motives and the extent of being driven by shared values. CSA cognitive legitimacy refers to the "taken-for-granted" status of certain action and decision. Being cognitive legitimate indicates that the CSA action is perceived as common, well accepted, and expected without being questioned.

The similar magnitude of first-order factor loadings on the higher order factor favors the second-order model over the first-order model. Even though the second-order model is just-identified with the first-order model, a higher order factor solution helps to account for the factor interrelationship among the first-order factors. In addition, the size of the first-order factor loading on the second-order factor, and the related small error variance indicate that the higher order factor of CSA legitimacy adequately explain the observed data variance and covariance. From the reverse site, the manifest items and three latent constructs are also good indicators that reflect the overall legitimacy of CSA action. As Suchman (1995) and Suddaby et al (2017) theorized and reviewed, the legitimacy of certain entity and action is assessed through multiple perspectives and facets. The second-order model showcases that collectively, the assessment of CSA pragmatic legitimacy, moral legitimacy, and cognitive legitimacy contribute to the overall CSA legitimacy evaluation.

So far study 1 addresses **RQ1** the theoretical construct structure and dimensionality of the CSA legitimacy. Theoretically, CSA legitimacy is defined as the status that it is desirable, appropriate, and acceptable among key stakeholders and publics for organizations to take a clear stance on sociopolitical issues, according to socially constructed and shared pragmatic interests,

values, beliefs, and schemas. Operationally, CSA legitimacy can be measured through the measurement model with a higher order theoretical structure.

In Study 2, the measurement model is further validated through assessment of its measurement invariance, and its predictive validity. Which are two important indicators of a reliable and valid measurement model. The analysis also addresses research questions about the antecedent and outcome factors of the CSA legitimacy construct. This will contribute to better CSA theoretical building and practical implications.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **STUDY 2: VALIDATION OF MEASUREMENT MODEL**

#### **Study 2 Research Overview**

As tested and explained in Chapter 5, the most theoretically and statistically fitting model is the second-order model to present the structure and dimensionality of CSA legitimacy. After the confirmation of the measurement model, the main research goals of Study 2 are to (1) inspect the measurement invariance, which is an important aspect of a valid and reliable measurement model (Brown, 2015; Putnick & Bornstein, 2016); and (2) test the predictive validity of CSA legitimacy within the proposed structural model. Thus, Chapter 6 will address tests conducted to achieve the afore-mentioned goals.

Measurement invariance is an indicator of stable measurement properties across heterogeneous demographics and occasions, and hence the prerequisite of group differences comparison of the construct (Brown, 2015). The fundamental idea of measurement invariance assessment is to ensure that the measurement model and construct achieves equivalence and conveys same meaning across different groups (Putnick & Bornstein, 2016). In Study 1, the measurement model of CSA has shown a good model fit to the data. In Study 2, the measurement model is fitted to two groups of participants' data, while the model parameter is fixed or estimated as the same way in both groups. These model parameters include factor loading, intercept and residuals. Stricter conditions are increasingly posed to the model specification. In other words, the validation follows an incremental or "step up" procedures, orderly examining the model fit of baseline models (configural invariance), models with equal

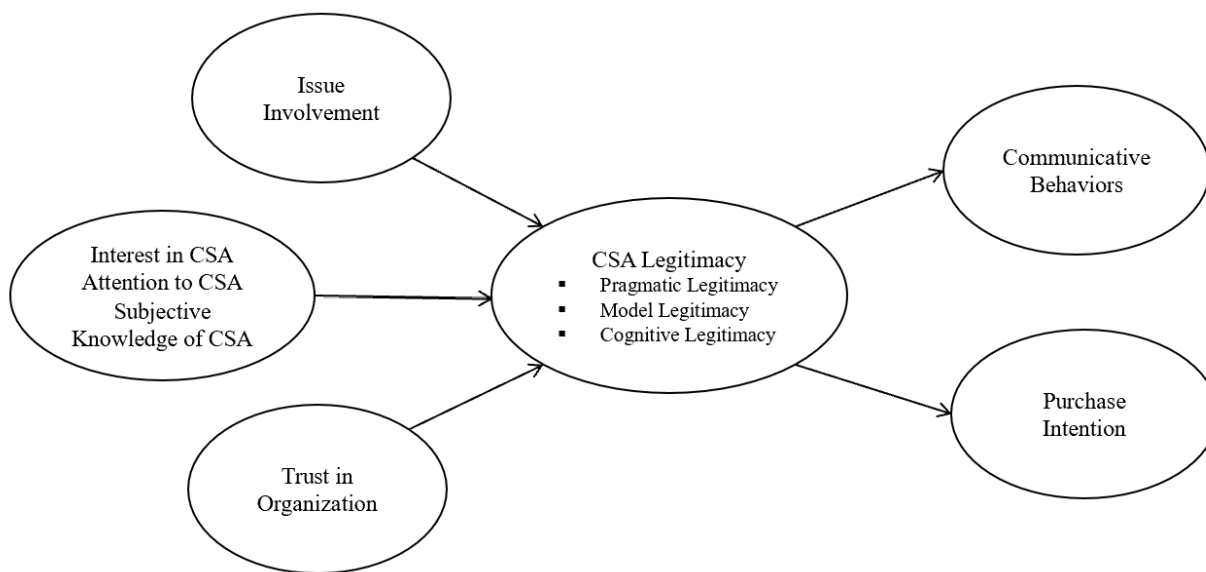
factor loading (metric invariance), models with both equal loadings and intercepts (scalar invariance), and models with equal loading, intercepts and residuals (strict factor invariance) (Brown, 2015). If models with stricter equal constraints still fit well and do not differ significantly from the baseline models, measurement invariance is assumed. If measurement invariance is failed, which means that the construct has poor generalizability across heterogeneous groups, it is difficult to contribute the observed group differences to the true differences of the psychometric construct or to the measurement error (Brown, 2015; Putnick & Bornstein, 2016).

After the measurement invariance assessment, the measurement model is tested within the structural model through SEM analysis. The testing of structural model of CSA legitimacy helps to validate the nomological relationship between the constructs and test the predictive validity of the CSA legitimacy model. More specifically, this process attempts to address following research questions. If proposed relationships are observed and consistent across different conditions and heterogeneous groups, predictive validity is assumed. Specifically, the design of Study 2 attempts to answer the following questions, which were also listed in Chapter 2 (literature review):

- **RQ2: How does issue involvement influence the assessment of CSA legitimacy?**
- **RQ3: How does trust toward organizations influence the assessment of CSA legitimacy?**
- **RQ4: How does individuals' experience with CSA activities affect their perceptions of CSA legitimacy?**
  - **RQ4a: What is the relationship between individuals' interest in CSA activities and their perceptions of CSA legitimacy?**

- **RQ4b: What is the relationship between individuals' attention to CSA activities and their perceptions of CSA legitimacy?**
- **RQ4c: What is the relationship between individuals' knowledge of CSA activities and their perceptions of CSA legitimacy?**
- **RQ5: How does CSA legitimacy influence individuals' communicative behaviors?**
- **RQ6: How does CSA legitimacy influence individuals' purchase intention?**

The estimated relationships among the proposed research questions are presented in Chapter 3 as Figure 3.1.



**Figure 3.1.** Theoretical model of CSA legitimacy

### **Research and Questionnaire Design**

Study 2 employs a similar online survey as Study 1 by adding other potential predictors and outcome variables based on review of previous literature in Chapters 2 and 3. To test the measurement invariance, it is necessary to administer and distribute the questionnaire to two

different groups of participants. Previous research and empirical testing of measurement invariance have tested the measurement of different theoretical constructs between different gender groups, age groups, and groups with different experimental treatment (Putnick & Bornstein, 2016; Rudnev et al., 2018). Accordingly, if model under stricter equal constraints on parameter estimates still receives acceptable model fit and does not differ from the baseline freely estimated model, it is argued that the measurement scale assesses the same construct in both female and male group, younger age group and senior age group, treatment A and treatment B.

For Study 2, two different conditions are set up to test the measurement invariance. These two conditions are created based on the open-end question results in Study 1. Participants from both student sample group and Amazon in Study 1 responded to these two open-end questions, asking them to recall one organization which advocate for social-political issues and one of the social-political issue that was advocated by organizations. Results of the two open-ended questions were summarized in Chapter 5, Table 5.4 (p. 78) and Table 5.16 (p. 89). According to the open-end responses in Study 1, Nike is one of the most recalled organizations, and the voting rights issue is one of the most recalled social-political issues. Delta is one of the prominent organizations that advocated against voting rights reform legislation in Georgia during 2021 (Gelles, 2021). Hence the scenario conditions and stimuli in Study 2 are chosen and designed by taking both the considerations of these frequently recalled organizations and social-political issues.

Two organizations and social-political issues are chosen as study stimuli and presented to two different groups of participants. The stimuli include one modified official website announcements and one modified official Twitter message. Both the announcement and the

tweet discuss about the corresponding social-political issue. The stimuli message content is directly quoted from the official information. Peripheral elements such as the overall style and font size are modified. The stimuli used in Study 2 are listed in Appendix C.

**Table 6.1** Final measurement Items of CSA Legitimacy based on Study 1

Variable Name	Item
PL1	In general, companies who advocate for a social-political issue or cause have a better understanding of their customer concerns than companies who do not advocate for a socio-political issue of cause.
PL2	By advocating for social-political issues, companies empower and support people who are affected by or care about the issues..
PL3	By taking a clear stance on social-political issues, companies help improve the well-being of people who are affected by or care about the issues.
PL4	Social advocacy by companies promotes more discussion about the social-political issues.
PL5	Companies' social advocacy is a good way to inform general publics about a debated social-political issues.
ML1	In general, when companies engage in corporate social advocacy, they are being sincere.
ML2	In general, when companies endorse social-political causes they genuinely care about the people who are at the heart of the cause.
ML3	In general, when companies take a stand on social-political issues they are being consistent with their mission and value.
ML4	By taking a clear stance on social-political issues, companies are sincerely promoting the value they believe.
ML5	Companies' advocacy for social-political issues is mainly driven by values they believe.
CL1	I expect to see companies taking a clear stance on social-political issues.
CL2	I believe that it is necessary for companies to take a stance on social-political issues.
CL3	It is very common for companies to take a clear stance on social-political issues.
CL4	I tend to take for granted that companies should advocate for social-political issues.
CL5	It is inevitable that companies will take a stand on major social-political issues.

After entering the survey, participants are randomly assigned into two of the conditions, Nike or Delta. Each participant was presented with one official announcement message and one official tweet. Then participants responded to 15 measurement items of CSA legitimacy (Table 6.1), proposed situational antecedents including individual's issue involvement, trust towards the

organization, previous interest, awareness, and subjective knowledge about the CSA, and proposed outcome variables including individual's communicative behavior, and purchase intention. The last section of the questionnaire asks demographic questions. The stimuli and survey were pretested with a small student sample (n=32) to ensure that the survey questionnaire was ready for formal distribution. The questionnaire of Study 2 can be found in Appendix E.

### **Sampling**

Gender, ethnicity, age group, and political orientation are four demographic variables that are preconditioned during the sampling process, so that the demographic characteristics of the sample is similar to the larger population. A national sample with similar percentage breakdown of ethnicity as U.S census data is collected through Qualtrics survey panel. 55.1% of participants are Caucasian, 19.6% African American, 16.8% Hispanic, 5.9% Asian, .7% Native Hawaiian or Pacific islander, and .7% American Indian or Alaskan Native. 51.9% of participants are female. The gender percentage breakdown was set to be equal, with 51.09% of female participants. The average age of participants is 39.17 years old. There were also nearly equal number of Democrats (45.1%) and Republicans (43.8%), with the rest 11.1% Independent and prefer not to identify politically. There are 239 participants randomly assigned to the Nike condition, and 220 in the Delta condition. A roughly balanced number of participants in different conditions helps the process of measurement invariance assessment (Yoon & Lai, 2018).

In addition to the four preconditioned demographic variables, the demographic variable participants' education level and household income were also collected. 33.3% of participants received high school level education, 53.3% undergraduate level, and 12.9% above undergraduate level. 52.7% of participants come from family with household income below \$50,000. The detailed participants demographics are presented in Table 6.2.

**Table 6.2.** Study 2 participants demographics

<b>Demographic variables</b>	<b>Qualtrics sample (N=459)</b>	
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Condition</b>		
Nike	239	52.1
Delta	220	47.9
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	238	51.9%
Male	221	48.1%
<b>Education</b>		
High school graduate or equivalent	153	33.3%
Some college	97	21.1%
Associate degree	47	10.2%
Bachelor's degree	101	22.0%
Master's degree	41	8.9%
Doctoral degree	15	3.3%
Law degree	3	.7%
Other	2	.4%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White/Caucasian	253	55.1%
Black/African American	90	19.6%
Spanish/Hispanic/Latino	77	16.8%
Asian/Asian American	27	5.9%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	3	.7%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	3	.7%
Other	5	1.1%
<b>Annual household income</b>		
Less than \$15,000	68	14.8%
\$15,001-\$30,000	80	17.4%
\$30,001-\$45,000	62	13.5%
\$45,001-\$50,000	32	7.0%
\$50,001-\$75,000	84	18.3%
\$75,001-\$80,000	31	6.8%
\$80,001-\$100,000	25	5.4%
\$100,001-\$115,000	25	5.4%
\$Above 115,001	47	10.2%
<b>Political party identification</b>		
Liberal Democrats	91	19.8%
Moderate Democrats	84	18.3%
Conservative Democrats	32	7.0%
Liberal Republican	36	7.8%
Moderate Republican	83	18.1%
Conservative Republican	82	17.9%
Independent	43	9.4%
Other or prefer not to answer	8	1.7%

### **CFA Analyses**

In Study 1, a second-order model of CSA legitimacy was obtained. The first step of Study 2 is to use a separated data sample to cross-validate the measurement model. The Study 2 data sample has one categorical variable that differentiate two study conditions, Nike and Delta condition. Accordingly, the complete dataset can be further divided into two sub-datasets. CFA analyses and model comparisons are conducted respectively on Nike and Delta sub-datasets.

The normality assumption of all items is checked before the analysis, based on same procedures as used in Study 1. The assessment of items' skewness and kurtosis indicate that all items are normally distributed (Hopkins & Weeks, 1990). The detailed descriptive statistics of all the variables are listed in Appendix D.

Similar CFA analyses and model comparison procedures as what were done in study 1 are applied to Study 2 dataset for cross-validation. First, for the Nike condition, unidimensional model, first-order model, and second-order model were estimated based on the data variance-covariance. The model fit statistics of all three models are compared and listed in Table 6.3. It is clear that first-order model and second-order model fit the observed data variance and covariance pattern better than the unidimensional model. The chi-square goodness of model fit of the unidimensional model is larger than the other two model alternatives and its RMSEA value is way above the threshold value of .80 (Hu & Bentler, 1998).

The inspection of the factor intercorrelation pattern (Table 6.4) shows that the magnitude of three factor correlations is at the same level. This suggests a necessity of a higher order factor to account for this factor covariance. The loadings of first-order factors on second-order factors are strong enough with little error variances. This indicates that the second-order factor of overall

CSA legitimacy serves as a good higher order factor solution to account for the factor interrelationship among three first-order factors.

**Table 6.3.** Three models fit statistics in the Nike case condition

	Chi-square	SRMR	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Nike unidimensional model	347.927 (df=90, p<.001)	0.046	0.918	0.904	0.110
Nike first-order model	171.127 (df=87, p<.001)	0.032	0.973	0.968	0.064
Nike second-order model	171.127 (df=87, p<.001)	0.032	0.973	0.968	0.064

**Table 6.4.** Factor correlations of the first-order model in Nike case

Latent Construct	CSA Pragmatic Legitimacy	CSA Moral Legitimacy	CSA Cognitive Legitimacy
CSA Pragmatic Legitimacy	1.000		
CSA Moral Legitimacy	.88	1.000	
CSA Cognitive Legitimacy	.89	.89	1.000

The Cronbach alpha reliability test and the AVE value of the sub-dimension suggest good measurement scale reliability and validity. All three sub-dimensions of the CSA legitimacy extract considerable amount of observed variance. CFA analysis results based on the Nike condition sub-dataset show a consistent pattern of measurement model, which is similar to the second-order model in Study 1. Among the three competitive models, second-order model is the most theoretically and statistically reasonable model. The detailed reliability statistics of the measurement model can be found in Table 6.5.

**Table 6.5.** Second-order model estimation and construct reliability in Nike case (N=239)

Latent Variable/Indicators	Standardized Factor Loading	Standard Error	Cronbach Alpha	Item Error Variances	Average Variance Extracted
<b>Overall CSA Legitimacy</b>					
CSA Pragmatic Legitimacy	.94				
CSA Moral Legitimacy	.94	.07			
CSA Cognitive Legitimacy	.96	.07			
<b>CSA Pragmatic Legitimacy</b>			.93		.72
PL1	.88			.22	
PL2	.84	.05		.30	
PL3	.82	.05		.33	
PL4	.85	.05		.17	
PL5	.86	.05		.26	
<b>CSA Moral Legitimacy</b>			.94		.76
ML1	.87			.24	
ML2	.89	.05		.22	
ML3	.85	.06		.28	
ML4	.89	.05		.21	
ML5	.86	.06		.27	
<b>CSA Cognitive Legitimacy</b>			.87		.58
CL1	.84			.30	
CL2	.89	.06		.20	
CL3	.63	.06		.59	
CL4	.67	.07		.55	
CL5	.67	.07		.55	

Note. All factor loadings are significant at .01 level. Estimated value without standard error is set as marker items for latent variable scaling.

This second order model is also validated by applying to the Delta condition sub-dataset. Similarly, the first-order model and second-order model of Delta sub-dataset fits the data variance and covariance better than the unidimensional model (Table 6.6). The factor interrelationship pattern and the relatively same magnitude suggest the influence of a higher order factor to account for the factor covariance (Table 6.7). And further inspection of first-order

factor loadings on second-order factor and the corresponding error variance show that the second-order factor fit the data variance and covariance. The inspection of the Cronbach alpha reliability test and the AVE value shows that all three sub-dimensions have good measurement scale reliability and validity (Table 6.8).

**Table 6.6.** Three models fit statistics in the Delta-case condition

	Chi-square	SRMR	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Delta unidimensional model fit	327.464 (df=90, p<.001)	0.052	0.91	0.90	0.110
Delta first-order model fit	150.735 (df=87, p<.001)	0.035	0.975	0.970	0.058
Delta second-order model fit	150.735 (df=87, p<.001)	0.035	0.975	0.970	0.058

**Table 6.7.** Factor correlations of the first-order model in Delta case

Latent Construct	CSA Pragmatic Legitimacy	CSA Moral Legitimacy	CSA Cognitive Legitimacy
CSA Pragmatic Legitimacy	1.000		
CSA Moral Legitimacy	.88	1.000	
CSA Cognitive Legitimacy	.84	.85	1.000

Study 2 first cross-validates the measurement model itself. Among competing models, the second-order model fit the data variance and covariance well in both Nike and Delta conditions. This cross-validation process also shows that the measurement model itself is valid and reliable. However, these CFA analyses and model comparisons are separately conducted in three occasions. The analyses so far indicate that the measurement model is fitting well to each sample data, but one of its important aspects is still unvalidated. It is still unclear that whether

the measurement model has the same meaning and function to different groups. Hence, the next step of Study 2 is to assess the measurement invariance of the CSA legitimacy measurement model.

**Table 6.8.** Second-order model estimation and construct reliability in Delta case (N=220)

Latent Variable/Indicators	Standardized Factor Loading	Standard Error	Cronbach Alpha	Item Error Variances	Average Variance Extracted
<b>Overall CSA Legitimacy</b>					
CSA Pragmatic Legitimacy	.93			.13	
CSA Moral Legitimacy	.95	.08		.11	
CSA Cognitive Legitimacy	.90	.08		.19	
<b>CSA Pragmatic Legitimacy</b>			.92		.70
PL1	.85			.29	
PL2	.85	.06		.28	
PL3	.87	.06		.25	
PL4	.78	.07		.40	
PL5	.83	.07		.31	
<b>CSA Moral Legitimacy</b>			.93		.72
ML1	.79			.38	
ML2	.88	.07		.23	
ML3	.87	.07		.24	
ML4	.88	.08		.23	
ML5	.83	.08		.31	
<b>CSA Cognitive Legitimacy</b>			.86		.56
CL1	.79			.37	
CL2	.87	.08		.25	
CL3	.63	.07		.60	
CL4	.75	.08		.44	
CL5	.64	.08		.59	

Note. All factor loadings are significant at .01 level. Estimated value without standard error is set as marker items for latent variable scaling.

### **Measurement Invariance Assessment of Measurement Model**

Measurement invariance refers to the psychometric equivalence of a construct's measurement model, when it is administered in heterogeneous participant groups (Brown, 2015; Davidov et al., 2014; Putnick & Bornstein, 2016; Yoon & Lai, 2018). Measurement invariance is an important indicator of measurement scale validity, and also the precondition of using the scale for group means comparison. If a measurement scale does not achieve measurement invariance, it is invalid to use it across groups and compare response means of different participants, since the measurement scale might mean different things to these participants. A measurement model is considered psychometrically equivalent, when its estimated parameters such as factor pattern, loadings, intercepts, and residuals are fixed the same across different groups. At the meantime, models with more equal constraints does not fit the data worse than the models with fewer constraints.

To assess the measurement invariance, a series of multiple group CFA analyses are conducted simultaneously on both sub-datasets of Nike and Delta conditions. As suggested by Putnick and Bornstein (2016, p.73), there are four measurement invariance assessment steps, and one of the following model parameters are fixed as the same across groups once at a time: (1) model pattern; (2) factor loading; (3) intercept; (4) residual. This stepwise procedure leads to four different models: configural invariance model, metric invariance model, scalar invariance model, and strict invariance model. Accordingly, four sets of model fit statistics are compared. Chi-square statistics and Chi-square value difference are used as important criteria for comparing the overall model fit. To overcome one disadvantage of Chi-square statistics, its sensitivity to large sample size, additional model fit statistics, such as CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and SRMR.

The configural invariance model assess whether the same measurement model pattern can be obtained from the two different groups (Nike and Delta conditions). As tested before in the CFA analysis section, the second-order model of CSA legitimacy achieves good model fit, reliability, and validity separately in both Nike and Delta conditions. The configural invariance model estimates this identical model pattern simultaneously based on these two conditions. The configural invariance model achieves good model fit: Chi-square=321.862 (df=87,  $p < .001$ ); CFI=.974; TLI=.969; RMSEA=.061; SRMR=.031. Two conditions contribute relatively same to the total Chi-square value (Nike=171.127, Delta=150.735). Further inspection of the model pattern shows that the factor solution in both conditions identify the same factor loading pattern and factor numbers. Hence, the configural invariance of the CSA legitimacy measurement model is supported. The configural invariance model is used as the baseline model for further measurement invariance assessment.

The second step is to impose the same constraint on factor loadings across two conditions. This also refers to the metric invariance model. Every indicator's loading on first-order factor, and first-order factor's loading on second-order factor are fixed as the same in both Nike and Delta conditions. Theoretically, metric invariance model implies that participants in different group perceive measures and sub-dimension of CSA legitimacy in a same way. The metric invariance model achieves good model fit: Chi-square=335.112 (df=174,  $p < .001$ ); CFI=.974; TLI=.971; RMSEA=.058; SRMR=.043. Two conditions contribute roughly the same to the total Chi-square value (Nike=176.988, Delta=158.124). As shown in Table 6.9, the overall model fit statistics of the metric invariance model does not significantly different from the baseline configural model. This model comparison result indicates that the measurement model of CSA legitimacy achieves metric invariance.

The third step is to assess the scalar invariance model, which further constrains the intercepts of every estimated model measure. The scalar invariance model achieves good model fit: Chi-square=343.188 (df=188,  $p < .001$ ); CFI=.975; TLI=.973; RMSEA=.056; SRMR=.044. Two conditions contribute roughly the same to the total Chi-square value (Nike=180.917, Delta=162.272). According to the model fit comparisons, the scalar model goodness of fit is not statistically different from the previous less constrained metric model. This indicates that the measurement model of CSA legitimacy also achieves scalar invariance.

The final step of measurement invariance is to assess the strict invariance model. In addition to general model factor pattern, factor loading, intercepts, Strict invariance model further constrains the residual of both models. The strict model also achieves good overall model fit: Chi-square=363.776 (df=214,  $p < .001$ ); CFI=.974; TLI=.974; RMSEA=.055; SRMR=.043. Two conditions contribute relatively the same to the total Chi-square value (Nike=190.202, Delta=173.574). The comparison between the scalar invariance model and strict invariance model shows that there is no statistically significant difference between the overall model fit. Hence, measurement model of CSA legitimacy achieves strict invariance.

**Table 6.9.** Measurement invariance model fit comparison

Model	Chi-square	Chi-square differences	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Configural model	321.862 (df=87)		0.974	0.969	0.061	0.031
Metric model	335.112 (df=174)	13.25 ( $p = .507$ )	0.974	0.971	0.058	0.043
Scalar model	343.188 (df=188)	8.077 ( $p = .706$ )	0.975	0.973	0.056	0.044
Strict model	363.776 (df=214)	20.587 ( $p = .151$ )	0.974	0.974	0.055	0.043

The results of measurement invariance assessment indicates that the measurement model of CSA legitimacy can be used to measure the same theoretical construct in the same way across

different groups. Table 6.10 and Table 6.11 summarize the completely standardized invariance metrics for the second-order measurement model of the CSA legitimacy construct across two conditions, and the corresponding means of latent construct when the Nike condition serves as the reference group. From Table 6.11, overall, mean values of three latent constructs, CSA pragmatic legitimacy, moral legitimacy, and cognitive legitimacy are lower in the Delta conditions. More specifically, participants in Delta condition gave lower values on the moral legitimacy sub-dimension (-.088). This indicates that participants who are exposed to the Delta CSA stimuli, consider this organizational action as less morally legitimate.

**Table 6.10.** Completely standardized invariant metrics for the second-order measurement model of the CSA legitimacy construct across two conditions (Nike and Delta)

First-order factor loadings					
Items	PL	ML	CL	Error Variance	Intercept
PL1	.87			.24	2.46
PL2	.85			.27	2.56
PL3	.85			.28	2.52
PL4	.83			.31	2.68
PL5	.86			.27	2.53
ML1		.85		.28	2.33
ML2		.89		.20	2.40
ML3		.87		.24	2.45
ML4		.89		.21	2.48
ML5		.86		.27	2.37
CL1			.83	.31	2.44
CL2			.89	.21	2.29
CL3			.64	.59	2.75
CL4			.72	.49	2.38
CL5			.67	.56	2.66
Second-order factor loadings					
Factors	CSA Legitimacy				
PL	.94				
ML	.94				
CL	.95				

**Table 6.11.** Completely standardized means of latent constructs by using Nike condition as the reference group

Conditions	Latent constructs		
	CSA Pragmatic Legitimacy	CSA Moral legitimacy	CSA Cognitive Legitimacy
Nike	.000	.000	.000
Delta	-.014	-.088	-.066

### Structural Model Assessment

As discussed in Chapter 3, there are two major components of the theoretical model of CSA legitimacy, (1) the measurement model and (2) the structural model. The first step of study 2 is to assess the validity of the measurement model itself. It is done through cross-validating the second-order model of CSA legitimacy and further assessment of its measurement invariance. These two procedures are about the (1) measurement model itself. Heterogeneous subgroups of the population respond to the construct of CSA legitimacy in a similar way. This is an important indicator of the measurement scale reliability and validity.

The next step of study 2 is to test the measurement model within the (2) theoretical structure, in terms of its measurement invariance and predictive validity. CSA legitimacy as a theoretical construct is proposed to be influenced by antecedent situational factors and influencing outcome factors. Based on the structural model summarized in Chapter 3, following research questions are addressed through the SEM analysis:

- **RQ2: How does issue involvement influence the assessment of CSA legitimacy?**
- **RQ3: How does trust toward organizations influence the assessment of CSA legitimacy?**
- **RQ4: How does individuals' experience with CSA activities affect their perceptions of CSA legitimacy?**

- **RQ4a: What is the relationship between individuals' interest in CSA activities and their perceptions of CSA legitimacy?**
- **RQ4b: What is the relationship between individuals' attention to CSA activities and their perceptions of CSA legitimacy?**
- **RQ4c: What is the relationship between individuals' knowledge of CSA activities and their perceptions of CSA legitimacy?**
- **RQ5: How does CSA legitimacy influence the individual's communicative behaviors?**

**RQ6: How does CSA legitimacy influence the individual's purchase intention?**

Building on the validated measurement model, if consistent factor relationships are found within the theoretical model across two conditions, it is argued that the CSA legitimacy as a construct has the predictive validity, and its theoretical relationships with other important variables are generalizable beyond one occasion. In the other words, the predictive power of the measurement model of CSA legitimacy is not only observed in one single occasion. Therefore, following analysis steps are conducted: (1) separate SEM analysis of Nike and Delta conditions; (2) Multiple group SEM analysis with parameter constraints (i.e. equal model pattern, equal regression path estimate, and equal residuals) in a stepwise order.

The proposed structural model of CSA legitimacy is tested separately in Nike and Delta conditions. Situational factors, including individual's social-political issue involvement, existing experience with CSA legitimacy, and trust towards the organization, directly influence the assessment of CSA legitimacy. Further, CSA legitimacy directly influences individual's communicative behavior and purchase intention. Two direct influence paths of issue involvement and trust towards the organization investigate the mediator role of CSA legitimacy. The role of

the CSA legitimacy in this structural model is further investigated. The items of all situational factors and outcome factors are summed and averaged as the measurement scores of these constructs. Correlations between composite scores are listed in Table 6.12.

**Table 6.12.** Correlations of the situational and outcome factors

	II	TO	PI	CB	CSA-I	CSA-A	CSA SK
II	1						
TO	.621	1					
PI	.738	.773	1				
CB	.693	.694	.731	1			
CSA-I	.638	.704	.727	.753	1		
CSA-A	.553	.553	.557	.672	.737	1	
CSA-SK	.530	.533	.561	.694	.685	.739	1

Note. II = Issue Involvement; TO = Trust toward Organization; PI = Purchase Intention; CB = Communicative Behavior; CSA-I = CSA Interest; CSA-A = CSA Attention; CSA-SK = CSA Subjective Knowledge.

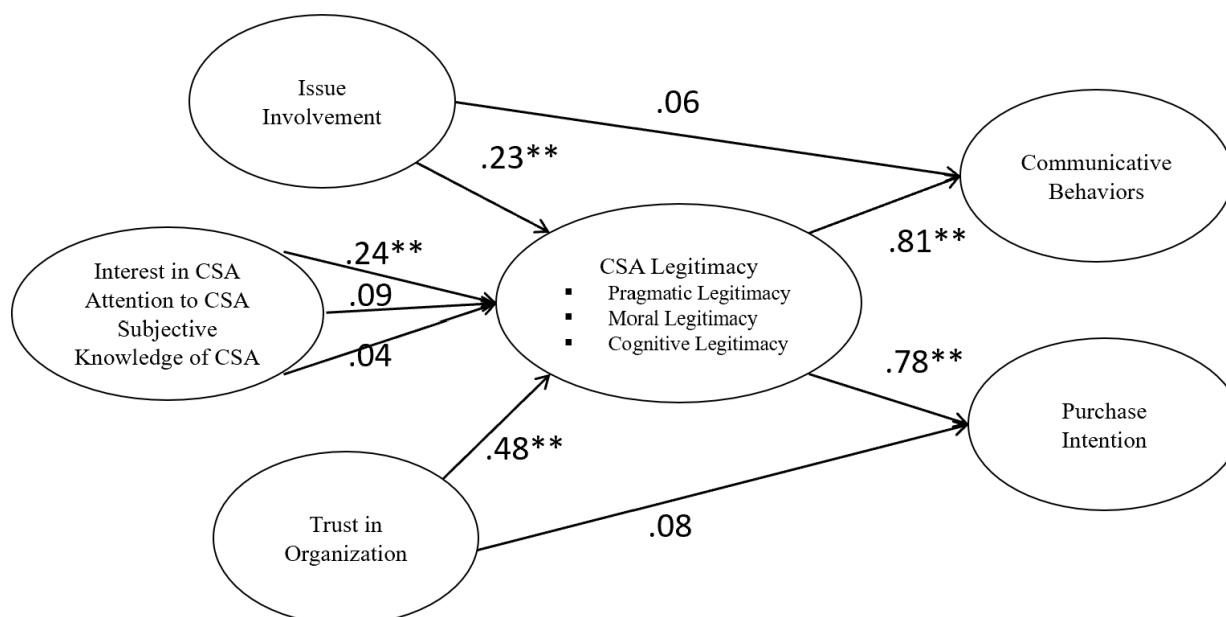
The overall model fit statistics of Nike conditions indicates that the structural model fit the data: Chi-square value = 466.346 (df=193,  $p < .001$ ); SRMR = .040; CFI = .935; TLI = .926; RMSEA = .077. The detailed SEM model statistic fit, direct and indirect effect can be found in Table 6.13. Further examination of the structural path and regression coefficient suggest that issue involvement, CSA interest, and trust towards organization have significant direct influence on CSA legitimacy. And the CSA legitimacy has significant influence on communicative behavior and purchase intention. The mediation effect of the CSA legitimacy is also significant and achieves a considerable effect size. The significant indirect effect indicate that the assessment of CSA legitimacy plays an important role as the mediator within the theoretical model. The regression coefficients of all paths are presented in Figure 6.1.

**Table 6.13.** SEM model fit statistics of Nike condition

	Chi-square	SRMR	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Nike Condition	466.346 (df=193, p<.001)	0.040	0.935	0.926	0.077

Model Effect	Model Estimate	z statistics	p value	Standardized Estimate
Indirect	1.940	13.440	p<.001	1.706
Total	2.106	26.640	p<.001	1.852

**Figure 6.1.** Structural model of CSA legitimacy and regression coefficient in Nike condition

For the Delta condition, the structural model also achieves a good overall model fit (Table 6.14): Chi-square value = 466.346 (df=193, p<.001); SRMR = .040; CFI = .935; TLI = .926; RMSEA = .077. Inspection of the structural path and regression coefficient (Figure 6.2) found that except the direct path of issue involvement on CSA legitimacy, CSA interest and trust toward organization have significant direct influence on CSA legitimacy. And consistently, CSA legitimacy shows significant direct influence on communicative behavior and purchase intention. The mediation effect of CSA legitimacy is also statistically significant. As mentioned before, the

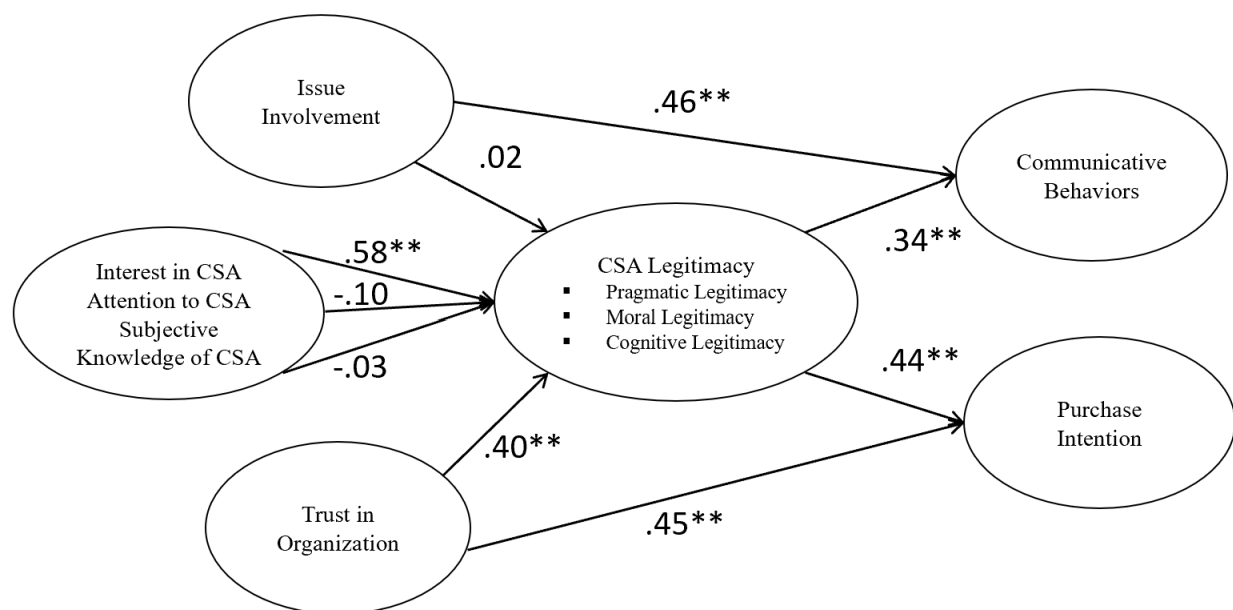
regression path from issue involvement to CSA legitimacy is different in Delta condition. Further examination of all direct and indirect paths and corresponding mediation effect and total model effect indicates that there may be some differences in terms of final values. However, the overall structural model fits both conditions and main proposed regression paths show a consistent pattern. Therefore, further multiple group SEM analysis is conducted, and parameter constraints are imposed on the structural model in a stepwise order.

**Table 6.14.** SEM model fit statistics of Delta condition

	Chi-square	SRMR	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Delta Condition	452.008 (df=193, p<.001)	0.056	0.924	0.913	0.078

Model Effect	Model Estimate	z statistics	p value	Standardized Estimate
Indirect	.694	7.246	p<.001	.671
Total	1.619	19.254	p<.001	1.575



**Figure 6.2.** Structural model of CSA legitimacy and regression coefficient in Delta condition.

Three measurement invariance assessment models are estimated: configural invariance model (equal model pattern), metric invariance model (equal regression coefficient), and residual invariance model (equal residual). As shown in Table 6.15, all three models have good overall model fit. However, there is a significant Chi-square difference between the metric model and residual model, with a value of 38.107. Further examination of the other model fit statistics found that differences are within .003. As suggested by Putnick and Bornstein (2016) that from a slightly less conservative standard, there is no prominent discrepancies between two model fit. However, even though with a stricter threshold value, the structural model achieves metric invariance. Which indicates that when holding the factor loading and regression coefficient as equal across two different groups, the structural model still provides good overall model fit and does not significantly differ from the model with less constraints (configural model).

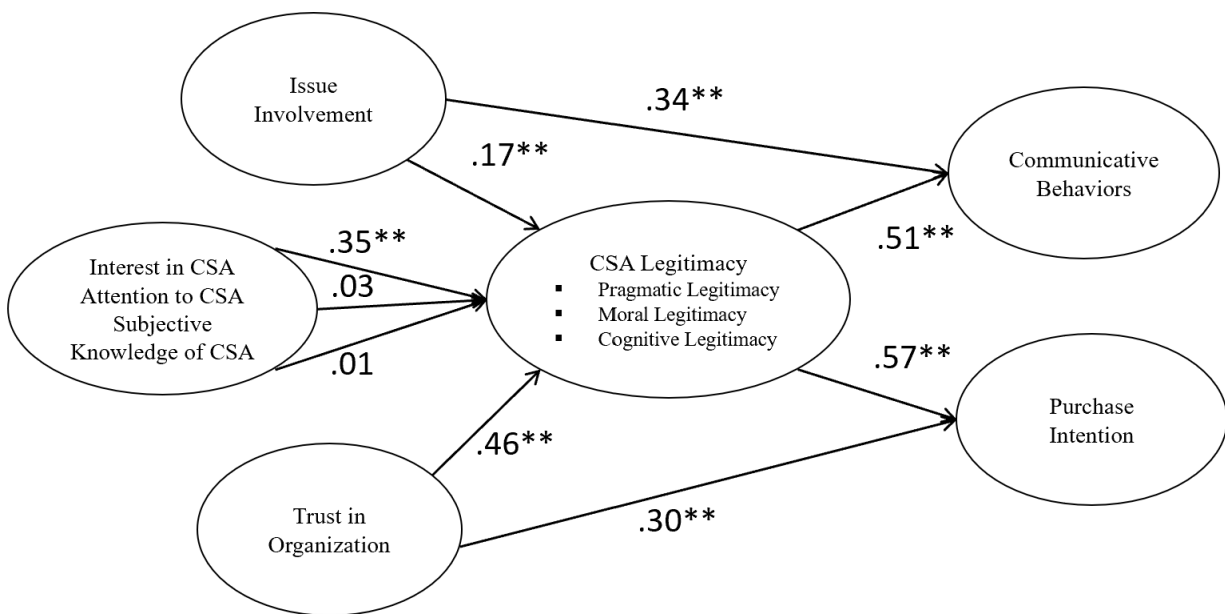
**Table 6.15.** Structural model measurement invariance model fit comparison

Model	Chi-square	Chi-square differences	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Configural model	979.925 (df=395)		0.923	0.914	0.080	0.067
Metric model	988.492 (df=409)	8.567 (p =.858)	0.924	0.918	0.079	0.088
Scalar model	997.740 (df=422)	9.25(p=.75)	0.924	0.921	0.077	0.087
Strict model	1026.599 (df=426)	38.107 **(p=.002)	0.921	0.918	0.078	0.086

Further inspection of the regression path (Figure 6.3) and model effect (Table 6.16) indicates that, even though holding parameters as equal across two groups, all the proposed direct influence of main factors are significant, and the mediation effect of CSA legitimacy is significant at a considerable model effect size. These results support measurement invariance and the predictive validity of the structural model across two conditions.

**Table 6.16.** Residual invariance model effect.

Model Effect	Model Estimate	z statistics	p value	Standardized Estimate
Indirect	1.220	14.534	p<.001	1.091
Total	1.894	32.131	p<.001	1.729

**Figure 6.3.** Standardized common metric solution for the structural model across two conditions (Nike and Delta)

### Summary of Study 2

Study 2 assessed the validity and applicability of the theoretical model of CSA legitimacy to heterogeneous sub-groups of a general population sample. This is both a major step of building the theory of CSA legitimacy and good indicator of model psychometric equivalence for meaningful comparison across different groups. The measurement invariance is tested at both measurement model level and structural model level. Therefore, the higher-order measurement model of the theoretical construct, CSA legitimacy, is established with satisfactory reliability, validity, and generalizability. Even though minor discrepant variance exists at the structural level, the consistent pattern of regression coefficient and mode effect indicate that the CSA

legitimacy as a construct provides a reasonable explanations for the phenomenon of CSA actions.

Study 2 also helps to fully validate the answer to **RQ1**, the dimensionality of CSA legitimacy measurement model. A higher-order factor model of CSA legitimacy with three sub-dimensions, CSA pragmatic legitimacy, moral legitimacy, and cognitive legitimacy, is theoretically and statistically fitting to the data. In addition, the structural model estimates the proposed relationship of CSA legitimacy, its situational antecedents, and its outcome factors. More specifically, **RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4** address the influence of situational factors, such as individual's issue involvement, previous experience with CSA, and trust towards organization. **RQ5 and RQ6** address potential outcomes of CSA legitimacy assessment, including individual's communicative behavior and intention to purchase the product and service of the organization after the CSA action. These results are discussed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

The purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss the results of this dissertation research, including two studies to create and validate the theoretical model of CSA legitimacy. First, the results and insights of two studies are discussed in relation to the proposed research questions. Second, this chapter presents the overall contribution, theoretical, and practical implications of the research. The third section discusses the limitations of the current study, possible future research directions and suggestions.

#### **General Discussion**

This dissertation research arose from interest in the growing prominence of organizations' active participation in discussion and advocacy of certain social-political issues. Different from traditional corporate social responsibility (CSR) campaigns, corporate social advocacy (CSA) focuses on social-political issues with more existing controversies. Organizations are oftentimes driven by their mission and values to engage in these advocacies. As addressed in previous chapters, CSA as an organization's public relations action and practice is constantly facing the challenges of general public's scrutiny (Heath & Palenchar, 2008; Rim et al, 2020). Based on theoretical frameworks of organizational communication and public relations, the current dissertation research argues that it is necessary to understand and investigate the phenomenon of CSA through the perspective of legitimacy. The fundamental question is whether the organization's CSA action is perceived as legitimate, in terms of its direct and instrumental benefit of contributing to the solution of the social-political issue; its

motives and the extent of being driven by shared values; and its existing cognitive readiness of being accepted by publics. In other words, the legitimacy of CSA action can be assessed through three facets, the pragmatic, moral, and cognitive legitimacy.

The current investigation also argued that the assessment of CSA legitimacy is based on the changed theoretical perspective of legitimacy. Different from traditional view of legitimacy at the macro and/or overall organizational level, the CSA legitimacy is conceptualized and operationalized as a micro and individual level construct (Deephouse, 1996; Suddaby et.al., 2017). Therefore, from the perspective of public relations research, CSA legitimacy is an indicator of public approval about a specific organizational public relations practice by responding to a controversial socio-political issue (Boyd, 2000). In addition, the legitimacy of CSA needs to be assessed within contingent situations and by different individuals (Grunig, 1997; Kim & Grunig, 2011) since the assessment of CSA legitimacy can lead to further behavioral outcomes (Dodd & Supa, 2014; Rim et al, 2020).

Guided by research literatures on organizational legitimacy, and CSA research in public relations, this dissertation research (1) conceptually defines CSA legitimacy within public relations frameworks; (2) investigated and established the key dimensions of CSA legitimacy; (3) created and validated the theoretical model of CSA legitimacy. These research procedures are also directed by several research questions which are summarized and discussed with the study results together in the following section.

**RQ1:** What are the important dimensions CSA legitimacy?

To conceptually and operationally define the CSA legitimacy and its key dimensions, three specific streams of research were reviewed: research of CSR and CSA, institutional theory and research of legitimacy, research of legitimacy in public relations. The traditional definition

of institutional theory defines legitimacy as a “generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions (Suchman, 1995, p. 574)”. Legitimacy in public relations research can be conceptualized as the outcome of strategic congruence between the organization and its contingent environment (Boyd, 2000; Gilpin, 2010). There are natural connections between how the institutional research and public relations theory view the construct of legitimacy. From the perspective of public relations research, the construct of CSA legitimacy is investigated as the actional legitimacy of a public relations practice or action. Furthermore, this construct is conceptualized and operationalized at the individual and micro level rather than at the organizational and macro level, due to changes of theoretical and methodological perspective (Suddaby et.al., 2017). And the idea of legitimacy has been defined and investigated as a multi-dimensional construct, with consideration and evaluation of the pragmatic, moral, and cognitive facets (Alexiou & Wiggins, 2019; Suddaby et.al., 2017; Suchman, 1995). Based on these studies, the conceptual and operational definitions of CSA legitimacy and three sub-dimensions are proposed.

To empirically test and validate the dimensionality and theoretical structure of the construct of CSA legitimacy, two serial studies were conducted. The measurement model comparison results in Study 1 provide empirical support for the second-order model of CSA legitimacy, with the existence of three sub-dimensions, CSA pragmatic legitimacy, moral legitimacy, and cognitive legitimacy. The three sub-dimensions factor pattern is consistent across two studies. Inspections of the factor covariance pattern, second-order and first-order factor loading, and item error terms indicate the validity of the second-order model. The second-order model achieves measurement invariance, at the level of measurement model and structural

model. Separately, each sub-dimension reflects and measures an important aspect of the overall legitimacy. The higher order factor of overall CSA legitimacy also accounts for the covariance of three sub-dimensions.

The measurement model receives further validation in Study 2. The assessment of measurement invariance indicates that the measurement model of CSA legitimacy is valid and applicable to a general population. Therefore, taking both the theoretical and empirical findings together, the second-order measurement model is tested as a reliable and valid instrument to investigate how individuals assess the legitimacy of CSA.

**RQ2:** How does issue involvement influence the assessment of CSA legitimacy?

The issue involvement is an important factor of the situational theory of publics (Gruinig, 1997). It refers to the personal relevancy of the social-political issue to an individual. The relationship between issue involvement and CSA legitimacy is assessed through the structural model testing and SEM analysis. As proposed, there is a positive significant relationship between the issue involvement and CSA legitimacy assessment. The result implies that as individuals perceive more personal relevancy and involvement with the social-political issue, they are more likely to consider the organization's advocacy as legitimate. This result corresponds to several previous studies which found that individuals' issue involvement varies with the legitimacy assessment of organizations' advocacy for sociopolitical issues (Hoffmann et al., 2020; Park & Jiang, 2020). As indicated at the sub-dimension of pragmatic legitimacy, organization's advocacy can contribute to better solution of the social-political issue by facilitating more social discussions about the issue.

**RQ3:** How does trust in organizations influence the assessment of CSA legitimacy?

The trust in organizations is proposed as an antecedent situational factor of CSA legitimacy assessment. Previous theories and research suggested that organization's legitimate right to advocate for certain social-political issues cannot be taken for granted in the first place. Trust in an organization is an important antecedent factor (Bachmann and Ingenhoff, 2017; Sethi & Williams, 2000). Therefore, the trust in an organization is proposed and tested as an important factor within the structural model of CSA legitimacy. The result indicates a positive relationship between individual's existing trust toward the organization and the assessment of the CSA legitimacy. In other word, individuals with higher levels of trust in the organization are more inclined to consider the CSA action as legitimate.

**RQ4:** How does individuals' experience with CSA activities affect their perceptions of CSA legitimacy?

- RQ4a: What is the relationship between individuals' interest in CSA activities and their perceptions of CSA legitimacy?
- RQ4b: What is the relationship between individuals' attention to CSA activities and their perceptions of CSA legitimacy?
- RQ4c: What is the relationship between individuals' knowledge of CSA activities and their perceptions of CSA legitimacy?

RQ4 concerns individuals' previous experience with the CSA, particularly their interest in CSA, their attention or awareness to CSA, and how they think they understand the phenomenon of CSA. However, among these three factors of individual's previous experience with CSA, only the interest in CSA significantly predicts the assessment of CSA. For individuals who are more interested in CSA, they are inclined to consider the organization's CSA legitimate. Past CSR research found that when individuals have more personal interest of, knowledge in,

and attention to the issues or causes promoted by organizations' CSR campaigns, they are more likely to positively evaluate the campaigns (Carlini & Grace, 2021; Kim, 2019; Rodrigo, P., & Arenas, 2008). Therefore, the current research questions provide certain insights about the case of CSA phenomena. If individuals are more intentionally engaged, they are more likely to consider the CSA decision legitimate.

RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4 are all related to the situational antecedent factors of CSA. And all three of these factors are about individual's existing status and experience related to the social-political issue, the organization, and the CSA action. The results of structural model analysis indicate that as individuals become more involved with the social-political issue, and trust in the organization, they tend to also consider it is beneficial to the solution of this controversial issue that the organization as a prominent societal entity takes a stance to advocate for the cause. And individual's existing trust in the organization may channel into further legitimization of organization's stance related to the issue.

**RQ5:** How does CSA legitimacy influence the individual's communicative behaviors?

Individuals' communicative behavior is an important outcome factor of CSA legitimacy assessment. The result of structural model analysis indicates that higher level of CSA legitimacy assessment positively predicts individual's further communicative behavior intention. In other words, for individuals who consider organization's advocacy and taking a clear stance on the issue as legitimate, they are more likely to bring up the discussion about this particular issue within their close network and further communicate the related information. In the public arena of social-political issues, organizations' advocacy is directly appealing to the general public. Advocators with similar shared mission and values are identifying with the value upheld by CSA campaigns among many other competing voices and entities.

**RQ6:** How does CSA legitimacy influence the individual's purchase intention?

Purchase intention is the other outcome factor which is proposed to be influenced by individual's CSA legitimacy assessment. The structural model analysis result implies that a higher level of CSA legitimacy positively predicts individuals' intention to purchase the product or service of the organization. Purchase intention as one of the important behavioral intention outcomes has been related to the phenomenon of CSA, particularly as one of the pro-organization indicators (Dodd and Supa, 2014). When individuals perceive the CSA action as legitimate, they are more likely to support the organization and show their caring about the issue. Dodd and Supa's (2014) study did not directly measure the legitimacy of CSA actions but experimentally designed the congruence and incongruence of the stance taken by organizations and individuals. Therefore, the positive relationship between CSA legitimacy and purchase intention is consistent with the previous findings that when an individuals' attitudes towards the issue are incongruent with the organization, further behavioral intention are impacted.

Both RQ5 and RQ6 consider the role of CSA legitimacy assessment within the structural model and its influence on outcome factors. As also indicated in the structural model analyses, the CSA legitimacy assessment also plays a role as the mediator between the antecedent situational factors and the further outcome variables. Even though with the presence of two variables, which according to previous research may cause direct influence on two outcome factors, the mediation effect still accounts for a considerable amount of overall model effect (Hegner et al, 2016; Kim & Grunig, 2011; Tsai et al, 2015). This further indicates the role of CSA legitimacy as a construct within the nomological relationship with other important situational and outcome factors.

### **Overall Contributions**

Based on an extensive literature review, research design, data analyses and model testing, it is important to highlight several contributions of this dissertation research. One major contribution is that this study integrates the theoretical frameworks of institutional research and public relations into the study of CSA legitimacy. This is a needed action to the changing paradigm of the theorization of legitimacy. It also presents a new perspective to understand the public relations practice of corporate social advocacy. Rather than understand CSA through the traditional public relations and crisis management research, this dissertation argues that the foundation of CSA is an issue about legitimacy and legitimization, since the arena of competing social-political interests is also a process of legitimization and delegitimization.

In addition to the theoretical insights, one of the major contributions is the establishment of the measurement model of CSA legitimacy. This study empirically tests and validates the hierarchical structure of the construct of CSA legitimacy, which consists of key sub-dimensions of pragmatic legitimacy, moral legitimacy and cognitive legitimacy. As discussed and reviewed, there is a lack of prior research in public relations that has conceptualized and operationalized the construct of CSA through the perspective of legitimacy. And there is no prior systematic attempt to approach and investigate how individuals assess the CSA as a public relations initiative. The results of this dissertation research argues and supports the measurement model by confirming the legitimacy function of any CSA initiatives.

In addition, the structural model tests the construct of CSA legitimacy within a nomological relationship with other important situational and outcome factors. This empirical process further confirms the predictive validity of the construct of CSA legitimacy. As argued by Suddaby et al. (2017) and Tost (2011), the changing perspective of viewing the idea of

legitimacy through the assessment at the individual level is necessary and complementary to traditional insights about the success of organizations operation. This is also the case for theory building in public relations research, since few previous attempts formally have conceptualized and empirically investigated CSA at the individual level from the perspective of stakeholder management. This dissertation argues that this approach is growingly more important within today's context and social-political environment. It is crucial for organizations, especially the public relations professionals in those organizations, to understand how individual stakeholders evaluates the legitimacy of CSA initiatives and the potential influence CSA legitimacy could generate on individuals' communicative behaviors and product-related purchase decisions.

Thus, this dissertation offers a new perspective to the theorization and operationalization of investigating the phenomenon of CSA as an important action in public relations practice. The established construct, dimensions, associated measurement items, as well as the theoretical model can be used to advance knowledge in related subjects in CSA research. It also can facilitate further model testing and theory building in public relations by integrating other potential factors in public engagement and strategic communication.

### **Research and Practice Implications**

This dissertation research is greatly inspired by the research and literature of public relations, such as the theoretical frameworks related to CSR, the situational theory of publics, and few but insightful theories of legitimacy from the perspective of public relations. In addition, this dissertation research is also benefited from knowledge and insights from the traditional institutional theory and organization management research, especially the theoretical construct and investigation of legitimacy. Therefore, this dissertation is an attempt to continue and

integrate these two great research traditions and provide more theoretically fine and methodologically valid insights to current research discussion related to CSA legitimacy.

An important and direct implication for future investigation about the phenomenon of CSA as a public relations practice is that the current theoretical mode of CSA legitimacy clearly conceptualizes and operationalizes the CSA legitimacy, so that this construct can be empirically measured and theoretically validated. The building of this theoretical model, related sub-dimensions, and the corresponding manifest indicators imply that this research instrument can be utilized for future investigation. Researchers can further explore the relationship between CSA legitimacy and other important indicator constructs. The theoretical model building and associated validation results suggest that this theoretical model is reliable, valid, and applicable to larger populations, as well as in different scenarios and contexts. Both the measurement model and theoretical model achieved measurement invariance at different levels, accordingly ready for experimental design study and group comparisons. For future research of model improvement, this dissertation research and the theoretical model can also serve as a good start of measurement building and refinement, and further theoretical conceptualization.

For the public relations industry and professionals, this dissertation research may facilitate further the understanding of the phenomenon of CSA as a public relations practice and its legitimacy assessment. Even though the theoretical model cannot encompass all the complexity in real world situations, it highlights certain aspects of the individual assessment process and suggests certain key relationships for issue monitoring and tracking. CSA as a public relation practice is constantly under the scrutiny of general publics and stakeholders. It is an action that strongly signal the value and mission held by the shared and immediate community where the organization is rooted. It is also a tough decision, as suggested by many existing cases

like Delta, Nike, Spotify, Starbucks, Chick-fil-A and so on, the decision can be crucial to the final results related to the socio-political causes and the organization's image. From the individual perspective, stakeholders' existing interest and involvement with the advocated issue, and their trust in the organization can greatly affect their legitimacy assessment. Accordingly, identifying the key enthusiastic public groups who shared the burden for advocacy is a key to the success of CSA action. After the campaign, continuously monitoring of the outcomes is also suggested, such as individuals' communicative behaviors and intention to purchase products or utilize the service. Therefore, the understanding of the individual assessment of the CSA legitimacy will provide a list of outcome prediction and monitoring metrics. This is

### **Limitations of the Research**

The statistical results of model testing and comparisons suggest the reliability, validity and applicability of the CSA legitimacy measurement model and structural model. More specifically, this conclusion is based on the strength and consistency of the higher-order model factor pattern, factor loading, explained variance, factor interrelationship, and overall model fit statistics. In addition, these model comparisons and analysis are guided by previous theoretical assumptions about the construct of legitimacy and research about CSA as a public relations practice. However, some of the results should be also interpreted with the research limitations in mind.

First of all, the study lacks qualitative insights related to CSA legitimacy. Even though in study 1, two open-end questions are presented in the survey, and certain important insights are incorporated into the design of study 2, more qualitative research should be carried out to gain a deep understanding of individuals' motivations and intentions to be associated and engaged with certain socio-political issues and/or organizations. This will also help to further interpret the

quantitative findings and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the CSA legitimacy construct.

Second, the testing of residual invariance model at structural model level in study 2 is not fully supported if using a stricter conventional threshold value, especially considering the differences of two models' chi-square statistics. Future refinement of the theoretical model should cross-validate the measurement invariance pattern with more distinct groups in different settings and across different societies to understand the interpretation of CSA legitimacy as influenced by different cultures and societal expectations.

Third, even though the current dissertation reviewed extensive literature about the conceptualization and operationalization of CSA legitimacy, the current theoretical model is not a definitive and settled model to investigate the phenomenon of CSA. More future cross-validation, refinement of the measurement model items, and exploration of more possible facets of the construct are in the research plan.

### **Future Research Directions**

To further develop the theoretical model of CSA legitimacy, some future research possibilities and directions are suggested. These endeavors may help to better theorize, operationalize, and validate the construct of CSA legitimacy and its theoretical model.

Although in both studies, some other demographic questions were asked, such as gender, age, income level, and political ideology, the data analyses did not focus on the potential effects of these variables on CSA legitimacy before the establishment and validation of the theoretical model. Future research will continue to examine how different demographic groups assess CSA legitimacy under various situations and contexts. One of the potential directions is to explore the polarization of the political ideology and its influence on individual's assessment of the CSA

legitimacy. Future research can investigate the influence of this individual difference in an experimental setting. For example, participants with polarized political ideology, especially different political party identification, are asked to assess the legitimacy of CSA campaigns.

Another potential direction of investigation is the influence of cultural differences on individuals' assessment of CSA legitimacy. The Study 2 stimuli featured two U.S. social-political issues, racial justice and voting rights. These are two prominent issues of American society. However, in a different culture, general public may have distinct priorities and react to social-political issues and organizations' advocacy differently. Hence, it is necessary to investigate the generalizability of CSA legitimacy in another cultural context. For example, general public in China have distinct priorities and discuss social-political issues differently. The more reserved culture and norms can be important factors that influence individuals' assessment of CSA legitimacy. People may also have different expectations of how and to what extent an organization should advocate for public issues. More in-depth knowledge about how people understand the idea of CSA and larger scale cross-validation will help further theorize and validate the construct of CSA legitimacy.

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## Appendix A

### List of studies with legitimacy measurement items

#### **Elsbach (1994) study**

<b>Scale items</b>	<b>Reliability</b>
The general public approves of the organization's operating procedures.	No report
The organization follows government regulations for operating procedures in the cattle industry.	
Workers support the organization's operating decisions.	
Most of the organization's employees would recommend working for the organization to their friends.	
Most of the general public would approve of the organization if asked their opinion.	
The organization is committed to meeting cattle industry standards in its production operations.	
Most employees would continue working for this organization even if they could get a job with any other organization in the cattle industry.	
The organization is concerned with meeting acceptable standards for environmental protection, food safety, and animal welfare.	
The organization is viewed by business writers as one of the top firms in the cattle industry.	
The organization's leaders believe in "playing by the rules" and following accepted operating guidelines.	
The organization has one of the lowest rates of employee turnover in the cattle industry.	
Most consumers in the general public approve of the organization's operating practices	

**Foreman & Whetten (2002) study**

<b>Scale items</b>	<b>Reliability</b>
<b>Pragmatic legitimacy</b>	0.922
Compared with similar businesses, co-ops, in general...	
Have staff and managers with superior professional skills.	
Offer greater opportunity for customers and members to influence the way things are done.	
Are more innovative in developing new products and services	
Better understand their customer's needs and concerns	
Are more supportive when members and patrons have financial problems	
Are better managed and operated	
Have a friendlier and more helpful atmosphere	
<b>Cognitive legitimacy</b>	0.820
In general, I believe that co-ops...	
Are the lifeblood of the rural community	
Have outlived their usefulness (R)	
Have forgotten how important their members are (R)	
Are of little value to the larger farmer (R)	
Are of little value to the small farmer (R)	
Are struggling to find their niche in agribusiness (R)	

**Pollack et al. (2012) study**

<b>Scale items</b>	<b>Reliability</b>
Cognitive legitimacy	0.807
I envision this business receiving high-profile endorsements in the future.	
I envision this business receiving favorable press coverage in the future.	
I envision this business having a top management team that will benefit the organization.	

**Humphreys & Latour (2013)**

Scale items	Reliability
The general public approves of the ONLINE GAMBLING industry's operating procedures.	0.95
The ONLINE GAMBLING industry follows government regulations for operating procedures.	
Casino workers support the ONLINE GAMBLING industry's operating decisions.	
Most of the ONLINE GAMBLING industry's employees would recommend working in this industry to their friends.	
Most of the general public would approve of the ONLINE GAMBLING industry if asked their opinion.	
The ONLINE GAMBLING industry is committed to meeting casino industry standards in its operations.	
Most employees would continue working in the ONLINE GAMBLING industry even if they could get a job with any other organization in the casino industry.	
The ONLINE GAMBLING sites are concerned with meeting acceptable standards for ethical behavior, fair play, and nonpredatory practices.	
The ONLINE GAMBLING industry is viewed by business writers as one of the top fields in the gambling industry.	
The ONLINE GAMBLING industry's leaders believe in "playing by the rules" and following accepted operating guidelines.	
The ONLINE GAMBLING industry has one of the lowest rates of employee turnover in the gambling industry.	
Most consumers in the general public approve of the ONLINE GAMBLING's industry's operating practices.	

**Díez-Martín, Prado-Roman & Blanco-González (2013) study**

<b>Scale items</b>	<b>Reliability</b>
<b>Pragmatic legitimacy</b>	0.543
You believe that all your organization's actions help it achieve its goal	
Your colleagues believe that all your organization's actions help it achieve its goal	
Your bosses believe that all your organization's actions help it achieve its goal	
The community consider that the organization's actions are beneficial to them	
Clients consider that the organization's actions are beneficial to them	
Allies consider that the organization's actions are beneficial to them	
Governments consider that the organization's actions are beneficial to them	
<b>Moral legitimacy</b>	0.808
You believe that all your organization's actions are "what should be done," regardless of whether they contribute to meeting goals.	
Your colleagues believe that all your organization's actions are "what should be done," regardless of whether they contribute to meeting goals.	
Your bosses believe that all your organization's actions are "what should be done," regardless of whether they contribute to meeting goals.	
The community believe that all your organization's actions are "what should be done," regardless of whether they contribute to meeting goals.	
Clients believe that all your organization's actions are "what should be done," regardless of whether they contribute to meeting goals.	
Allies believe that all your organization's actions are "what should be done," regardless of whether they contribute to meeting goals.	
Governments believe that all your organization's actions are "what should be done," regardless of whether they contribute to meeting goals.	
<b>Cognitive legitimacy</b>	0.647
You believe that your organization carries out its activities in the best possible manner.	
Your colleagues believe that your organization carries out its activities in the best possible manner.	
Your bosses believe that your organization carries out its activities in the best possible manner.	
The community believe that your organization carries out its activities in the best possible manner.	
Clients believe that your organization carries out its activities in the best possible manner.	
Allies believe that your organization carries out its activities in the best possible manner.	
Governments believe that your organization carries out its activities in the best possible manner.	

**Chung et al. (2016)**

<b>Scale items</b>	<b>Reliability</b>
<b>Organizational legitimacy items</b>	0.78
I have a positive opinion about prescription drug companies	
I believe that the prescription drug companies follow government regulations	
The prescription drug companies do a good job making their drugs	
I think that the prescription drug companies are honest	
I think that the prescription drug industry is a necessary part of our society	
<b>Issue legitimacy items</b>	0.81
I have a positive opinion about advertisements for prescription drugs	
Prescription drug advertisements have helped me	
Prescription drug advertisements have helped other people I know	
Prescription drug advertisements help people learn about the symptoms for different medical problems	
I think that any problems associated with prescription drug advertisements could be solved	
Overall, the benefits from prescription drug advertisements outweigh the problems	

**Alexiou & Wiggins (2019) study**

<b>Scale items</b>	<b>Reliability</b>
<b>Pragmatic legitimacy</b>	0.89
In general, this organization creates value for its stakeholders.	
The policies of this organization cater to the interests of its stakeholders.	
I believe the activities of this organization benefit their immediate stakeholders.	
<b>Moral legitimacy</b>	0.93
The general public would approve of this organization's policies and procedures.	
Most people would consider this organization's practices to be moral.	
The way this organization operates promotes the common good.	
This organization is concerned with meeting acceptable standards for ethical behavior in their field.	
This organization's policies seem appropriate.	
If more organizations adopted policies and procedures like this one, the world would be a better place.	
<b>Cognitive legitimacy</b>	0.89
I believe that this organization is necessary.	
In general, this organization provides an essential function.	
It is difficult to imagine a world in which this organization did not exist.	

**Randrianasolo & Arnold (2020) study**

<b>Scale items</b>	<b>Reliability</b>
<b>Pragmatic legitimacy</b>	0.89
Organization' activities benefit me.	
Organization's activities have my best interests at heart.	
Organization's activities have my community's best interests at heart.	
Organization shares my values.	
<b>Moral legitimacy</b>	0.93
Organization is honest.	
Organization is trustworthy.	
Organization is decent.	
Organization is wise.	
<b>Cognitive legitimacy</b>	0.95
Organization is a permanent part of my community.	
Organization is a necessary part of my community.	
Organization is an inevitable part of my community.	
My community depends on this organization.	

## Appendix B

### Survey questionnaire of study 1

#### Consent Form

Dear participant:

We would like to invite you to participate in this online survey, which will ask questions related to corporate social advocacy. It will take about 15-20 minutes to complete all survey questions.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary; you may withdraw from the study at any time without loss of benefits. However, if you chose to finish the survey, you will receive an incentive based on the MTurk agreement consent.

Please note that, even if you completed the survey, payment of the incentive may be withheld, and your responses will be discarded if researchers believe that you did not answer the questions to the best of your ability. In order to receive the full amount of compensation, please answer each question to your best knowledge.

The information you provide in this survey will be kept confidential. You will not be asked to put your name in this survey and your answers will not be linked to you in any way.

This research involves the transmission of data over the Internet. Every reasonable effort has been taken to ensure the effective use of available technology; however, confidentiality during online communication cannot be guaranteed.

The data of this study may be used or shared after the identifiers have been removed with other researchers and/or for future studies without additional consent.

If you have questions about this research, please feel free to contact Tong Xie, doctoral candidate at the University of Georgia at [tx73582@uga.edu](mailto:tx73582@uga.edu), or Dr. Juan Meng, Associate Professor at the University of Georgia at [jmeng@uga.edu](mailto:jmeng@uga.edu). If you have any complaints or questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact the IRB office at the University of Georgia at 706-542-3199 or by email at [IRB@uga.edu](mailto:IRB@uga.edu). We appreciate your time and efforts in helping us finish the survey.

By clicking the NEXT button on this page, you are agreeing to participate in the above-described research project.

## Legitimacy of corporate social advocacy survey

### Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participating. We are conducting a study on how people feel about corporate social advocacy. We will define this term for you in just a moment.

While reading and answering the following questions, **please do not visit other websites.** Please read each item carefully and select the appropriate option to indicate your response. To start, here is a common definition of corporate social advocacy:

**Corporate social advocacy is defined as “an organization making a public statement or taking a public stance on social-political issues” (Dodd and Supa, 2014, p.5).**

Q1. As we start this survey, how familiar would you say you are about corporate social advocacy?

Not familiar at all    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Very familiar

Q2a. In the space provided below, please tell us about one company you remember taking a stand on a social-political issue. What was the name of the company? Please do not mention the examples provided above.

\_\_\_\_\_.

Q2b. And, what was the social-political issue they took a stand on? Please do not mention the examples provided above.

\_\_\_\_\_.

(Q2a & Q2b will be shown to participants who give scores higher than 1 “Not familiar at all” for Q1.)

### Individual interest in CSA

Q3. This set of questions asks about your personal interest in corporate social advocacy. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

- I am personally interested in the social-political issue of corporate social advocacy.
- I have significant interest in companies’ activities related to corporate social advocacy.
- It is interesting to see how companies are taking stances on social-political issue.
- I personally think corporate social advocacy is an interesting business action.

Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Strongly agree

### Individual attention to CSA

Q4. Next, we would like to get a sense of how much attention you have paid to corporate social advocacy. Once again, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

- I often pay attention to companies who engage in social-political issues and respond to the issues. .
- I usually recognize it immediately when companies take a stand on social-political issues.

- I often read news about companies communicating with the public about their viewpoints or positions on social-political issues.
- I often pay attention to the messages companies share with the public about their stance on social-political issue.

Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Strongly agree

### **Individual subject knowledge about CSA**

Q5. Next, please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following:

- Overall, I know a lot about corporate social advocacy.
- I feel very knowledgeable about corporate social advocacy.
- Among my circle of friends, I am one of the “experts” in corporate social advocacy.
- Compared to most other people, I know more about corporate social advocacy.
- When it comes to corporate social advocacy, I am able to share a lot of my thoughts with others.

Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Strongly agree

### **CSA legitimacy section**

#### **Pragmatic Legitimacy**

Q6. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about whether companies should or should not take a stance on different social-political issues.

Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Strongly agree

1. I personally benefit when companies advocate for a socio-political cause.
2. It protects my personal interests when companies take a clear stance on social-political issues
3. In general, companies who advocate for a social-political issue or cause have a better understanding of their customer concerns than companies who do not advocate for a socio-political issue of cause.
4. The world would be a better place if more companies took a clear stance on social-political issues.
5. By advocating for social-political issues, companies empower and support people who are affected by or care about the issues.
6. By taking a clear stance on social-political issues, companies help improve the well-being of people who are affected by or care about the issues.
7. Social advocacy by companies benefits society.
8. Social advocacy by companies promotes more discussion about the social-political issues.
9. Companies’ social advocacy is a good way to inform general publics about a debated social-political issues.

#### **Moral legitimacy**

Q7. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement about the legitimacy of corporate social advocacy.

Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Strongly agree

1. In general, when companies engage in corporate social advocacy, they are being sincere.
2. In general, when companies endorse social-political causes they genuinely care about the people who are at the heart of the cause.

3. In general, when companies take a stand on social-political issues they are being consistent with their mission and value.
4. The company advocates the social-political issues in an appropriate and moral manner.
5. Companies delivered their advocacy message in a morally acceptable way.
6. By taking a clear stance on social-political issues, companies are sincerely promoting the value they believe.
7. Companies' advocacy for social-political issues is mainly driven by values they believe.

### **Cognitive legitimacy**

Q8. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement about the legitimacy of corporate social advocacy.

Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Strongly agree

1. I expect to see companies taking a clear stance on social-political issues.
2. I believe that it is necessary for companies to take a stance on social-political issues.
3. There are various good reasons for companies to advocate for social-political issues.
4. It is very common for companies to take a clear stance on social-political issues.
5. I tend to take for granted that companies should advocate for social-political issues.
6. I see no problem with companies taking a clear stance on social-political issues.
7. It is inevitable that companies will take a stand on major social-political issues.
8. It is understandable that companies advocate for social-political issues.
9. Taking a clear stance on social-political issues is an acceptable practice for companies.

### **Demographics section**

This following section asks some basic demographic questions, which will be used to aggregate answers.

Q9. What is your gender?

Male  
 Female

Q10. How old are you?

\_\_\_\_\_

Q11. What is your highest academic degree? Please select one:

High school graduate or equivalent  
 Some college  
 Associate degree  
 Bachelor's degree  
 Master's degree  
 Doctoral degree  
 Law degree  
 Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Q12. Please choose one or more races that you consider yourself to be.

White  
 Asian/Asian American  
 Black or African-American

- Hispanic or Latino  
 Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander  
 American Indian or Alaskan Native  
 Multi-racial  
 Other

Q13. The terms “liberal” and “conservative” may mean different things to people, depending on the kind of issue one is considering. In terms of economic issues, would you say you are...

Very liberal            1        2        3        4        5        6        7        Very conservative

Q14. Now, thinking in terms of social issues, would you say you are...

Very liberal            1        2        3        4        5        6        7        Very conservative

Q15. Generally speaking, do you consider yourself a(n)...?

- Liberal Democrats;  
 Moderate Democrats;  
 Conservative Democrats;  
 Liberal Republican;  
 Moderate Republican;  
 Conservative Republican  
 Independent  
 Other or Prefer not to answer

### **Thank you so much for your time and opinions!**

Thank you very much for participating in our study. The purpose of this study is to create and validate a measurement scale to assess individual’s legitimacy perception of corporate social advocacy.

If you have questions about the research after today, you should contact the Principal Investigator, **Tong Xie** (email: [tx73582@uga.edu](mailto:tx73582@uga.edu))

We would like to remind you that your participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you would like to withdraw from this study, please the Principal Investigator know and we will destroy any data collected about you during this study. The decision to withdraw from this research will involve no penalty or loss of any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. This will not affect your relationship with the investigators.

**Institutional Review Board:** Contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) if you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant. Also, contact the IRB if you have questions, complaints, or concerns which you do not feel you can discuss with the investigator. The University of Georgia IRB may be reached by phone at (706) 542-3199 or by e-mail at [irb@uga.edu](mailto:irb@uga.edu).

## Appendix C

### Study 2 stimuli

**DELTA** NEWS HUB VISIT DELTA.COM LANGUAGES TRAVEL WELL ROUTES & WAIVERS

ARTICLE | STRATEGY & LEADERSHIP

## Ed Bastian memo: Your right to vote

Staff Writer | Mar 31, 2021 9:40am

**IN SUMMARY**

EDITOR'S NOTE: CEO Ed Bastian shared the below memo with employees on Wednesday.

Last week, the Georgia legislature passed a sweeping voting reform act that could make it harder for many Georgians, particularly those in our Black and Brown communities, to exercise their right to vote. Since the bill's inception, Delta joined other major Atlanta corporations to work closely with elected officials from both parties, to try and remove some of the most egregious measures from the bill. We had some success in eliminating the most suppressive tactics that some had proposed.

However, I need to make it crystal clear that the final bill is unacceptable and does not match Delta's values. The right to vote is sacred. It is fundamental to our democracy and those rights not only need to be protected, but easily facilitated in a safe and secure manner.

After having time to now fully understand all that is in the bill, coupled with discussions with leaders and employees in the Black community, it's evident that the bill includes provisions that will make it harder for many underrepresented voters, particularly Black voters, to exercise their constitutional right to elect their representatives. That is wrong.

The entire rationale for this bill was based on a lie: that there was widespread voter fraud in Georgia in the 2020 elections. This is simply not true. Unfortunately, that excuse is being used in states across the nation that are attempting to pass similar legislation to restrict voting rights.

In the weeks and months ahead, we will be working with leaders across the political spectrum in states nationwide in this effort. We're also closely monitoring legislation in Congress – named after the late Atlanta civil rights hero and Delta friend John Lewis – that will expand voting rights nationwide and working with the Representatives and Senators that represent our communities.



(1/3) "Last week, the Georgia legislature passed a sweeping voting reform act that could make it harder for many Georgians, particularly those in our Black and Brown communities, to exercise their right to vote."



10:00 AM · Mar 31, 2021 · Twitter Web App

150 Retweets 45 Quote Tweets 1K Likes



Delta [@Delta](#) · Mar 31  
Replying to [@Delta](#)

(2/3) However, I need to make it crystal clear that the final bill is unacceptable and does not match Delta's values," said Ed Bastian, CEO of Delta Air Lines.

82 43 330



Delta [@Delta](#) · Mar 31

(3/3) "The right to vote is sacred. It is fundamental to our democracy and those rights not only need to be protected, but easily facilitated in a safe and secure manner."

110 82 349



## NIKE NEWS

Your source for the latest NIKE, Inc. stories

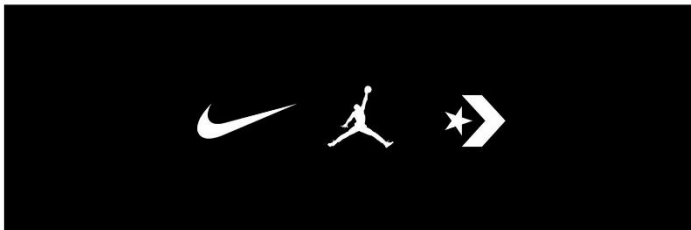


### COMPANY

## NIKE, Inc. Statement on Commitment to the Black Community

June 05, 2020

GALLERY SHARE



“Systemic racism and the events that have unfolded across America over the past few weeks serve as an urgent reminder of the continued change needed in our society. We know Black Lives Matter. We must educate ourselves more deeply on the issues faced by Black communities and understand the enormous suffering and senseless tragedy racial bigotry creates,” said John Donahoe, President and CEO of NIKE, Inc. “The NIKE, Inc. family can always do more but will never stop striving to role model how a diverse company acts. We will continue our focus on being more representative of our consumers while doing our part in the communities we serve.”

During this past year, we’ve stepped up our own efforts and measures of accountability in the areas of Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging to foster an inclusive environment and attract a more diverse workforce. We are driven by a commitment to transparency, accountability and impact and share our progress in these areas annually through the Nike Impact Report.

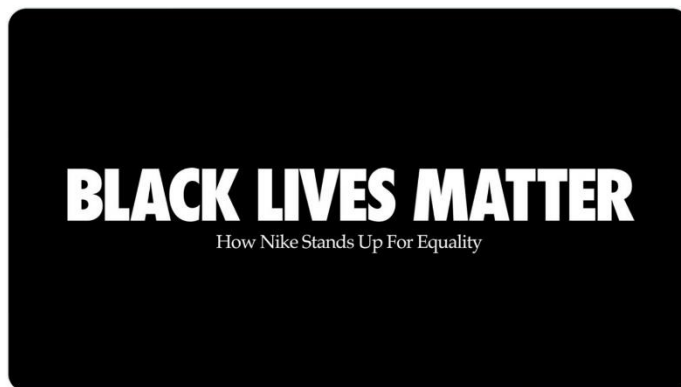
**Read More:** [Company](#) [Black Community Commitment](#) [Black Lives Matter](#)





Nike  
@Nike

(1/3) “Systemic racism and the events that have unfolded across America over the past few weeks serve as an urgent reminder of the continued change needed in our society.



7:30 PM · Jun 12, 2020 · Twitter Web App

142 Retweets 50 Quote Tweets 1,002 Likes



Nike  
@Nike · Jun 12  
Replying to @Nike

(2/3) We know Black Lives Matter. We must educate ourselves more deeply on the issues faced by Black communities and understand the enormous suffering and senseless tragedy racial bigotry creates,” said John Donahoe, President and CEO of NIKE, Inc.

[#NikeImpactReport](#) [go.nike.com/LrIBDkQrbKW](https://go.nike.com/LrIBDkQrbKW)

18 25 192



Nike  
@Nike · Jun 12

(3/3) “The NIKE, Inc. family can always do more but will never stop striving to role model how a diverse company acts. We will continue our focus on being more representative of our consumers while doing our part in the communities we serve.”

[#NikeImpactReport](#) [go.nike.com/LrIBDkQrbKW](https://go.nike.com/LrIBDkQrbKW)

166 97 544

### Appendix D

#### Study 2 descriptive statistics and normality check

	Mean	SD	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
CSA PL1	4.48	1.79	-.44	.11	-.66	.23
CSA PL2	4.64	1.78	-.59	.11	-.53	.23
CSA PL3	4.60	1.80	-.53	.11	-.60	.23
CSA PL4	4.76	1.75	-.67	.11	-.29	.23
CSA PL5	4.66	1.81	-.63	.11	-.52	.23
CSA ML1	4.31	1.80	-.37	.11	-.71	.23
CSA ML2	4.45	1.79	-.44	.11	-.67	.23
CSA ML3	4.55	1.80	-.54	.11	-.56	.23
CSA ML4	4.65	1.81	-.61	.11	-.50	.23
CSA ML5	4.54	1.86	-.54	.11	-.69	.23
CSA CL1	4.48	1.85	-.46	.11	-.71	.23
CSA CL2	4.42	1.95	-.42	.11	-.92	.23
CSA CL3	4.53	1.65	-.38	.11	-.52	.23
CSA CL4	4.19	1.85	-.23	.11	-.94	.23
CSA CL5	4.59	1.73	-.45	.11	-.63	.23
II1	4.15	2.04	-.26	.11	-1.16	.23
II2	4.29	2.12	-.27	.11	-1.22	.23
II3	4.19	2.13	-.27	.11	-1.25	.23
PI1	4.36	2.05	-.40	.11	-1.04	.23
PI2	4.06	2.09	-.19	.11	-1.25	.23
PI3	4.11	2.05	-.22	.11	-1.19	.23
PI4	4.37	2.04	-.37	.11	-1.06	.23
PI5	4.44	2.06	-.44	.11	-1.04	.23
TO1	4.86	1.73	-.72	.11	-.19	.23
TO2	4.45	1.81	-.42	.11	-.70	.23
TO3	4.70	1.71	-.58	.11	-.27	.23
TO4	4.58	1.89	-.50	.11	-.77	.23
TO5	4.85	1.78	-.72	.11	-.32	.23

**Table continues**

TO6	5.01	1.65	-.71	.11	.01	.23
TO7	4.73	1.81	-.64	.11	-.43	.23
TO8	4.66	1.75	-.58	.11	-.42	.23
TO9	4.99	1.64	-.81	.11	.17	.23
CB1	4.31	1.98	-.30	.11	-1.07	.23
CB2	4.31	1.94	-.30	.11	-1.00	.23
CB3	4.39	1.90	-.42	.11	-.88	.23
CB4	4.41	1.89	-.44	.11	-.86	.23
CB5	4.66	1.96	-.55	.11	-.85	.23
CB6	4.30	1.99	-.36	.11	-1.10	.23
CSA Interest 1	4.19	1.92	-.22	.11	-1.02	.23
Interest 2	4.17	1.93	-.24	.11	-1.06	.23
Interest 3	4.62	1.80	-.52	.11	-.63	.23
Interest 4	4.42	1.87	-.39	.11	-.83	.23
CSA Attention 1	4.41	1.75	-.32	.11	-.76	.23
Attention 2	4.59	1.68	-.43	.11	-.52	.23
Attention 3	4.58	1.66	-.46	.11	-.61	.23
Attention 4	4.49	1.75	-.43	.11	-.72	.23
CSA Subjective Knowledge 1	4.18	1.82	-.12	.11	-.91	.23
Subjective Knowledge 2	4.25	1.79	-.25	.11	-.88	.23
Subjective Knowledge 3	4.02	1.85	-.12	.11	-1.01	.23
Subjective Knowledge 4	4.21	1.79	-.21	.11	-.86	.23
Subjective Knowledge 5	4.24	1.80	-.27	.11	-.91	.23

II = Issue Involvement. TO = Trust Towards Organizations. CB = Communicative Behavior. PI = Purchase Intention.

## Appendix E

### Survey questionnaire of study 2

#### Consent Form

Dear participant:

We would like to invite you to participate in this online survey, which will ask questions related to corporate social advocacy. It will take about 15-20 minutes to complete all survey questions. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary; you may withdraw from the study at any time without loss of benefits. However, if you chose to finish the survey, you will receive an incentive based on the MTurk agreement consent.

Please note that, even if you completed the survey, payment of the incentive may be withheld, and your responses will be discarded if researchers believe that you did not answer the questions to the best of your ability. In order to receive the full amount of compensation, please answer each question to your best knowledge.

The information you provide in this survey will be kept confidential. You will not be asked to put your name in this survey and your answers will not be linked to you in any way.

This research involves the transmission of data over the Internet. Every reasonable effort has been taken to ensure the effective use of available technology; however, confidentiality during online communication cannot be guaranteed.

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If you have questions about this research, please feel free to contact Tong Xie, doctoral candidate at the University of Georgia at [tx73582@uga.edu](mailto:tx73582@uga.edu), or Dr. Juan Meng, Associate Professor at the University of Georgia at [jmeng@uga.edu](mailto:jmeng@uga.edu). If you have any complaints or questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact the IRB office at the University of Georgia at 706-542-3199 or by email at [IRB@uga.edu](mailto:IRB@uga.edu). We appreciate your time and efforts in helping us finish the survey.

By clicking the NEXT button on this page, you are agreeing to participate in the above-described research project.

## Legitimacy of corporate social advocacy survey

### Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participating. We are conducting a study on how people feel about corporate social advocacy. We will define this term for you in just a moment.

While reading and answering the following questions, **please do not visit other websites.** Please read each item carefully and select the appropriate option to indicate your response. To start, here is a common definition of corporate social advocacy:

**Corporate social advocacy is defined as “an organization making a public statement or taking a public stance on social-political issues” (Dodd and Supa, 2014, p.5).**

Some examples include:

- Nike, Inc. – Made a public commitment to the Black community to advocate for social justice, education and address racial inequality.
- Delta Air Lines publicly opposed Georgia’s new voting law, and stated that such voting reform act may harm people’s right to vote.

### Stimuli

#### Nike scenario

In the following section, we will present Nike’s official statement and Tweets about their decision to advocate for Black Lives Matter (BLM).

The image displays two stimuli: a Nike News article and a series of tweets. The Nike News article, titled "NIKE, Inc. Statement on Commitment to the Black Community" (dated June 10, 2020), features a black header with the Nike logo and three icons (Nike swoosh, Jordan shoe, and a hand holding a heart). The text states: "Systemic racism and the events that have unfolded across America over the past few weeks serve as an urgent reminder of the continued change needed in our society. We know Black Lives Matter. We must educate ourselves more deeply on the issues faced by Black communities and understand the enormous suffering and senseless tragedy racial bigotry creates," said John Donahoe, President and CEO of NIKE, Inc. "The NIKE, Inc. family can always do more but will never stop striving to role model how a diverse company acts. We will continue our focus on being more representative of our consumers while doing our part in the communities we serve."

The tweets show Nike's public response on June 12, 2020. The first tweet (1/3) reads: "(1/3) 'Systemic racism and the events that have unfolded across America over the past few weeks serve as an urgent reminder of the continued change needed in our society.'" Below this is a graphic with the text "BLACK LIVES MATTER" and "How Nike Stands Up For Equality". The second tweet (2/3) reads: "(2/3) We know Black Lives Matter. We must educate ourselves more deeply on the issues faced by Black communities and understand the enormous suffering and senseless tragedy racial bigotry creates," said John Donahoe, President and CEO of NIKE, Inc." The third tweet (3/3) reads: "(3/3) 'The NIKE, Inc. family can always do more but will never stop striving to role model how a diverse company acts. We will continue our focus on being more representative of our consumers while doing our part in the communities we serve.'"

**Corresponding measurements for Nike scenario (issue involvement, trust in Nike, CSA legitimacy, purchase intention, communicative behavior)**

**We are interested in your opinion about Nike's advocacy for BLM and racial issues. The following section will ask you some questions about the legitimacy of their decision.**

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about whether companies such as Nike should or should not take a stance on different social-political issues.

Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Strongly agree

**Pragmatic legitimacy**

1. In general, companies who advocate for social-political issues have a better understanding of their customer concerns than companies who do not advocate for a socio-political issue.
2. By advocating for social-political issues, companies empower and support people who are affected by or care about the issues.
3. By taking a clear stance on social-political issues, companies help improve the well-being of people who are affected by or care about the issues.
4. Social advocacy by companies promotes more discussion about the social-political issues.
5. Companies' social advocacy is a good way to inform general publics about a debated social-political issues.

**Moral legitimacy**

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about whether companies such as Nike should or should not take a stance on different social-political issues.

Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Strongly agree

1. In general, when companies engage in corporate social advocacy, they are being sincere.
2. In general, when companies endorse social-political causes they genuinely care about the people who are at the heart of the cause.
3. In general, when companies take a stand on social-political issues they are being consistent with their mission and value.
4. By taking a clear stance on social-political issues, companies are sincerely promoting the value they believe.
5. Companies' advocacy for social-political issues is mainly driven by values they believe.

**Cognitive legitimacy**

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about whether companies such as Nike should or should not take a stance on different social-political issues.

Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Strongly agree

1. I expect to see companies taking a clear stance on social-political issues.
2. I believe that it is necessary for companies to take a stance on social-political issues.
3. It is very common for companies to take a clear stance on social-political issues.
4. I tend to take for granted that companies should advocate for social-political issues.
5. It is inevitable that companies will take a stand on major social-political issues.

### **Social-political issues involvement**

Please indicate to what extent you are involved with the social-political issue of BLM and racial issues

Not at all      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      extremely

1. In your mind, how much of a connection do you see between yourself and this social-political issues?
2. To what extent do you believe this problem could involve you or someone close to you at some point?
3. How much do you believe this problem affects or could affect you personally?

### **Purchase intention**

Please indicate to what extent you would purchase Nike's products after they decided to advocate for BLM.

1. I would buy a product by Nike who advocates for social-political issues.
2. I would pay more money to buy products from Nike who advocates for social-political issues.
3. I would buy a product made by Nike advocating for social-political issue, even if the product is a little more expensive than one made by a brand that does not advocate for social-political issue.
4. I would buy the products of Nike that shows caring for the social-political issue.
5. If the price and quality of two products are the same, I would buy from Nike that has reputation of advocating for social-political issues.

### **Measurement items of trust in organization.**

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement about Nike.

Strongly disagree      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Strongly agree

1. Nike treats people like me fairly and justly.
2. Whenever Nike makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.
3. Nike can be relied on to keep its promises.
4. I believe that Nike takes the opinions of people like me into making decisions.
5. I feel very confident about Nike's competence.
6. Nike has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.
7. Sound principles seem to guide this Nike's behavior.
8. Nike does not mislead people like me.
9. Nike is known to be successful at the things it tries to do.

### **Communicative behavior: active information forwarding**

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement about your intention to actively talk about the social-political issues, particularly BLM and racial issues.

1. I sometimes find I am engaging in aggressive conversations on this social-political issue.
2. It is one of my top priorities to share my knowledge and perspective about this social-political issue.
3. If it is possible, I take time to explain this social-political issue to others.
4. I look for chances to share my knowledge and thoughts about this social-political issue.
5. I believe raising this social-political issue is important.
6. I bring this social-political issue to the attention of people I know

Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Strongly agree

**Stimuli**

**Delta scenario**

**In the following section, we will present Delta’s official statement and Tweet about their decision to advocate against limitations on voting rights.**

**DELTA**  
NEWS HUB    VISIT DELTA.COM    LANGUAGES  
TRAVEL WELL    ROUTES & WAIVERS

ARTICLE | STRATEGY & LEADERSHIP

**Ed Bastian memo: Your right to vote**

Staff Writer | Mar 31, 2021 9:40am

**IN SUMMARY**

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Last week, the Georgia legislature passed a sweeping voting reform act that could make it harder for many Georgians, particularly those in our Black and Brown communities, to exercise their right to vote. Since the bill's inception, Delta joined other major Atlanta corporations to work closely with elected officials from both parties, to try and remove some of the most egregious measures from the bill. We had some success in eliminating the most suppressive tactics that some had proposed.

However, I need to make it crystal clear that the final bill is unacceptable and does not match Delta's values. The right to vote is sacred. It is fundamental to our democracy and those rights not only need to be protected, but easily facilitated in a safe and secure manner.

After having time to now fully understand all that is in the bill, coupled with discussions with leaders and employees in the Black community, it's evident that the bill includes provisions that will make it harder for many underrepresented voters, particularly Black voters, to exercise their constitutional right to elect their representatives. That is wrong.

The entire rationale for this bill was based on a lie: that there was widespread voter fraud in Georgia in the 2020 elections. This is simply not true. Unfortunately, that excuse is being used in states across the nation that are attempting to pass similar legislation to restrict voting rights.

In the weeks and months ahead, we will be working with leaders across the political spectrum in states nationwide in this effort. We're also closely monitoring legislation in Congress – named after the late Atlanta civil rights hero and Delta friend John Lewis – that will expand voting rights nationwide and working with the Representatives and Senators that represent our communities.

**Delta** @Delta

(1/3) "Last week, the Georgia legislature passed a sweeping voting reform act that could make it harder for many Georgians, particularly those in our Black and Brown communities, to exercise their right to vote."

10:00 AM · Mar 31, 2021 · Twitter Web App

150 Retweets    45 Quote Tweets    1K Likes

**Delta** @Delta · Mar 31

(2/3) However, I need to make it crystal clear that the final bill is unacceptable and does not match Delta's values," said Ed Bastian, CEO of Delta Air Lines.

82    43    330

**Delta** @Delta · Mar 31

(3/3) "The right to vote is sacred. It is fundamental to our democracy and those rights not only need to be protected, but easily facilitated in a safe and secure manner."

110    82    349

**Corresponding measurements for Delta scenario (issue involvement, trust in Delta, CSA legitimacy, purchase intention, communicative behavior)**

**We are interested in your opinion about Delta’s advocacy against limitation on voting rights. The following section will ask you some questions about the legitimacy of their decision.**

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about whether companies such as Delta should or should not take a stance on different social-political issues.

Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Strongly agree

**Pragmatic legitimacy**

1. In general, companies who advocate for a social-political issue have a better understanding of their customer concerns than companies who do not advocate for a socio-political issue.
2. By advocating for social-political issues, companies empower and support people who are affected by or care about the issues.

3. By taking a clear stance on social-political issues, companies help improve the well-being of people who are affected by or care about the issues.
4. Social advocacy by companies promotes more discussion about the social-political issues.
5. Companies' social advocacy is a good way to inform general publics about a debated social-political issues.

### **Moral legitimacy**

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about whether companies such as Delta should or should not take a stance on different social-political issues.

Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Strongly agree

1. In general, when companies engage in corporate social advocacy, they are being sincere.
2. In general, when companies endorse social-political causes they genuinely care about the people who are at the heart of the cause.
3. In general, when companies take a stand on social-political issues they are being consistent with their mission and values.
4. By taking a clear stance on social-political issues, companies are sincerely promoting the values they believe.
5. Companies' advocacy for social-political issues is mainly driven by values they believe.

### **Cognitive legitimacy**

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about whether companies such as Delta should or should not take a stance on different social-political issues.

Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Strongly agree

1. I expect to see companies taking a clear stance on social-political issues.
2. I believe that it is necessary for companies to take a stance on social-political issues.
3. It is very common for companies to take a clear stance on social-political issues.
4. I tend to take for granted that companies should advocate for social-political issues.
5. It is inevitable that companies will take a stand on major social-political issues.

### **Social-political issues involvement**

Please indicate to what extent you are involved with the social-political issue of voting rights

Not at all    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    extremely

1. In your mind, how much of a connection do you see between yourself and this social-political issues?
2. To what extent do you believe this problem could involve you or someone close to you at some point?
3. How much do you believe this problem affects or could affect you personally?

### **Purchase intention**

Please indicate to what extent you would purchase Delta's service after they decided to advocate against limitations on voting rights

1. I would use the services of Delta because they advocate for social-political issues.

2. I would pay more money to purchase services from Delta because they advocate for social-political issues.
3. I would purchase the services of Delta because they advocate for social-political issues, even if the services are a little more expansive than one offered by a brand that does not advocate for social-political issues.
4. I would purchase the services of Delta because it shows they care about social-political issues.
5. If the price and quality of two services are the same, I would buy from Delta because they have a reputation of advocating for social-political issues.

### **Measurement items of trust in organization.**

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement about Delta.

Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Strongly agree

1. Delta treats people like me fairly and justly.
2. Whenever Delta makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned with people like me.
3. Delta can be relied on to keep its promises.
4. I believe that Delta takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions.
5. I feel very confident about Delta's competence.
6. Delta has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.
7. Sound principles seem to guide Delta's behavior.
8. Delta does not mislead people like me.
9. Delta is known to be successful at the things it tries to do.

### **Communicative behavior: active information forwarding**

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement about your intention to actively talk about social-political issues, particularly voting rights.

1. I sometimes find I am engaging in aggressive conversations on this social-political issue.
2. It is one of my top priorities to share my knowledge and perspective about this social-political issue.
3. If it is possible, I take time to explain this social-political issue to others.
4. I look for chances to share my knowledge and thoughts about this social-political issue.
5. I believe raising this social-political issue is important.
6. I bring this social-political issue to the attention of people I know

Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Strongly agree

**In the following section, we are interested in your general experience with CSA.**

### **Individual interest in CSA**

This set of questions asks about your personal interest in corporate social advocacy. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

1. I am personally interested in the social-political issue of corporate social advocacy.
2. I have significant interest in companies' activities related to corporate social advocacy.
3. It is interesting to see how companies are taking stances on social-political issue.
4. I personally think corporate social advocacy is an interesting business action.

Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Strongly agree

### Individual attention to CSA

Next, we would like to get a sense of how much attention you have paid to corporate social advocacy. Once again, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

1. I often pay attention to companies who engage in social-political issues and respond to the issues.
2. I usually recognize it immediately when companies take a stand on social-political issues.
3. I often read news about companies communicating with the public about their viewpoints or positions on social-political issues.
4. I often pay attention to the messages companies share with the public about their stance on social-political issue.

Strongly disagree    1        2        3        4        5        6        7        Strongly agree

### Individual subject knowledge about CSA

Next, please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following:

1. Overall, I know a lot about corporate social advocacy.
2. I feel very knowledgeable about corporate social advocacy.
3. Among my circle of friends, I am one of the “experts” in corporate social advocacy.
4. Compared to most other people, I know more about corporate social advocacy.
5. When it comes to corporate social advocacy, I am able to share a lot of my thoughts with others.

Strongly disagree    1        2        3        4        5        6        7        Strongly agree

### Demographics section

This following section asks some basic demographic questions, which will be used to aggregate answers.

Q9. What is your gender?

Male  
 Female

Q10. How old are you?

\_\_\_\_\_

Q11. What is your highest academic degree? Please select one:

High school graduate or equivalent  
 Some college  
 Associate degree  
 Bachelor’s degree  
 Master’s degree  
 Doctoral degree  
 Law degree  
 Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Q12. Please choose one or more races that you consider yourself to be.

White  
 Asian/Asian American

- Black or African-American  
 Hispanic or Latino  
 Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander  
 American Indian or Alaskan Native  
 Multi-racial  
 Other

Q13. The terms “liberal” and “conservative” may mean different things to people, depending on the kind of issue one is considering. In terms of economic issues, would you say you are...

Very liberal            1        2        3        4        5        6        7        Very conservative

Q14. Now, thinking in terms of social issues, would you say you are...

Very liberal            1        2        3        4        5        6        7        Very conservative

Q15. Generally speaking, do you consider yourself a(n)...?

- Liberal Democrats;  
 Moderate Democrats;  
 Conservative Democrats;  
 Liberal Republican;  
 Moderate Republican;  
 Conservative Republican  
 Independent  
 Other or Prefer not to answer

### **Thank you so much for your time and opinions!**

Thank you very much for participating in our study. The purpose of this study is to create and validate a measurement scale to assess individual’s legitimacy perception of corporate social advocacy.

If you have questions about the research after today, you should contact the Principal Investigator, **Tong Xie** (email: tx73582@uga.edu)

We would like to remind you that your participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you would like to withdraw from this study, please the Principal Investigator know and we will destroy any data collected about you during this study. The decision to withdraw from this research will involve no penalty or loss of any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. This will not affect your relationship with the investigators.

**Institutional Review Board:** Contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) if you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant. Also, contact the IRB if you have questions, complaints, or concerns which you do not feel you can discuss with the investigator. The University of Georgia IRB may be reached by phone at (706) 542-3199 or by e-mail at irb@uga.edu.